

# Indian Christian Theological Conference

The Indian Christian Theological Conference was held at Gurukul on December 28th–31st, 1960. The Convener of the conference was Dr. P. David.

The following papers were read and discussed at the conference on the general theme, 'Christian View of Man in Society':

1. The Biblical Understanding of Man's Origin, Nature and Destiny—by Rev. C. S. Thoburn.
2. Man's Nature and Destiny as interpreted by Christian Theology—by Rev. J. Kumaresan.
3. Society and the Kingdom of God as interpreted by Christian Theology—by Dr. W. Stewart.
4. The Modern Conception of Man (Psychological and Philosophical) in the Light of the Christian Faith—by Rev. A. B. Masilamani.
5. Contemporary Forms of Society in the Light of the Christian Faith—by Dr. P. David.
6. Man in Society according to Neo-Hinduism in the Light of the Christian Faith—by Dr. P. D. Devanandan.
7. Man in Society according to Islam in the Light of the Christian Faith—by Rev. E. Sadiq and Rev. E. H. Smith.
8. Christian Man in Indian Society—by Rev. J. R. Chandran (not read—but ideas were presented during discussions).

Owing to unavoidable circumstances papers on The Biblical Understanding of the Foundation, Nature and Destiny of Society by Rev. D. Rajarigam and The Indian Primitive Conception of Man in the Light of Christian Faith by Rev. M. M. Bage could not be available for the conference. The paper by Principal Chandran was not read but during the discussion he was able to help us in our study and discussion on 'Christian Man in Society' which was the subject of his paper. Dr. C. S. Thoburn, the Rev. A. B. Masilamani and the Rev. E. Sadiq were unable to be present at the conference, but their papers were read and discussed.

Among the delegates present, a list of whom is appended to this report, mention must be made of the Rev. V. S. D. Sathyanathan from Ceylon who had attended the South-East Asia Institute for Theological Teachers (conducted under Nanking Foundation, designed to be a refresher course for teachers in Theological

institutions) and the Rev. Dr. E. H. Smith from Gujuranwala Theological Seminary, Pakistan ; both of them were able to tell us how the theme of the conference appealed to the Christian thinking and communication of the Gospel in their countries. There was also present at this conference Fr. P. De Letter of Kurseong.

The Rev. Dr. P. D. Devanandan was unanimously elected Chairman of the conference. The Rev. C. S. Sundaresan and the Rev. Basil Manuel were appointed recording secretaries. The conference had daily morning devotions conducted by Dr. P. D. Devanandan, Rev. Basil Manuel, Rev. J. R. Chandran and Rev. C. S. Sundaresan. Each session of the day was closed with prayer.

In this report for the sake of convenience we divide the theme of the conference, 'Christian View of Man in Society', into (a) The Origin, Nature and Destiny of Man, and (b) Man in Society. In discussing the former the paper by Dr. C. S. Thoburn helped us to understand the Biblical approach to this subject, while the Rev. J. Kumaresan's paper dealt with it as interpreted by Christian Theology. The modern philosophical and psychological approaches to the subject were discussed in the light of Christian faith in the paper by the Rev. A. B. Masilamani.

The second division of the theme, viz. Man in Society in the Light of Christian Faith, was considered by the following papers : Society and the Kingdom of God as interpreted by Christian Theology (Dr. W. Stewart), Contemporary Forms of Society (Dr. P. David), Man in Society according to Neo-Hinduism (Dr. P. D. Devanandan), Man in Society according to Islam (Rev. E. Sadiq and Rev. E. H. Smith).

#### *(a) The Origin, Nature and Destiny of Man*

While discussing the origin, nature and destiny of man, it was noted that it is in the historical revelation of Jesus Christ that we can fully understand man.

It was emphasized that the New Testament clearly teaches that man is a creature distinct from God, created in the image of God with freedom and with possibility of fellowship and dialogue or otherwise with God. The redemption of man, alienated from God, is in Christ through incorporation by baptism in the body of Christ. In the Bible God calls man even after the fall as an individual and as a nation as we see in the case of Abraham and in the call of Israel. The true nature and purpose of God's call can only be understood in the call of Jesus Christ. Because of His Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, the value of man is revealed, and therefore in Him we have the only clue to the meaning of man. This is the Gospel to be proclaimed in the midst of the different conceptions of man, secular, orthodox, Neo-Hindu, Liberal, etc. At the same time the practical implication of this for the evangelistic task of proclaiming, interpreting and appropriating the Gospel in and through the Church was also emphasized.

During the discussion, questions were raised not only regarding the perfection and consummation of man in relation to the

content of, and process in, such perfection, but also in the light of modern religious and secular movements which take into consideration the value and worth of man both individually and corporately. It was also suggested by some that while we are convinced of the all-sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ for every man, we in India cannot afford to ignore the several types of religious disciplines which claim to help man to attain enlightenment and communion with God. Therefore it will be profitable for us to study the role of the mind and human endeavours in the soul's desire for the realization of God in Christ. Such a study will be of value to Christians and non-Christians for understanding how God can be realized in and through Christ.

While equal emphasis should be placed upon Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, it was felt that in order to claim that on the cross the regeneration of man was achieved as a matter of fact, and that we now live in the new age of the new man, it needs to be demonstrated especially in our generation. This involves that the fellowship within the Church must manifest itself in the concrete situations of everyday life. The Hindu intellectual sees no difficulty in accepting the Gospel of new humanity, but not the new being in Christ. These problems need our attention. In our communication we must begin with the fact of love of God revealed in Christ.

#### *(b) Man in Society*

Considerable discussion was devoted to the factors in secular life and religious thought in our country today which call for a restatement of the Christian doctrine of man.

The spread of communism, the acceptance of the democratic way of life, the insistence upon the secularization of society, the recognition of material values of life as contributing to the wholeness of the mind and body of man—these were some of the factors that were stressed in the discussion.

The Christian responsibility in the context is to relate the significance of these new emphases to the religious understanding of man in society. Already there are indications of this within both Hinduism and Islam, because of different forces operating in society which necessitate new ways of organizing human life in terms of natural concern, commitment and responsibility. The impact of the Christian thought concerning man on non-Christian understanding of man in society should take this into account.

Thus a matter of pressing urgency for the Church is the question how can Christian doctrine of man be interpreted in the light of their own understanding of man and society. Now this calls for closer study of contemporary movements of thought and social action within Hinduism itself. Reference was made in that connection to the teaching of Aurobindo and to that in Sarvodaya Movement.

The revolutionary consequences of transformation in Christ have led to the belief and doctrine that Christian is a 'new' man. But our claim that a man in Christ is a new creation though at

best partially experienced by many, and little experienced by most, is the greatest hindrance for communication.

While we may not accept the early optimism regarding human nature which underlies a great deal of contemporary activism, we should recognize that in Hinduism, it is a sign of recognition of the worth and value of man as man.

Nevertheless, the Christian understanding of man as a sinner should be stressed without preventing the possibility of a dialogue. There is danger in interpreting the Christian teaching about forgiveness, if it is considered negatively as taking off the load of sin and not positively putting new worth into the person of man.

While we should stress the price God had to pay for restoring sinful man, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as a present reality in man should be given prominence in our exposition of the Christian faith. The present work of the Holy Spirit is a continuation of the work of Christ directed towards the final consummation of God's purpose. Thus here and now, the Christian faith should recognize the fulfilment of the promise of God Himself that the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin will also convert it from sin and consecrate it through sanctification until the final consummation.

There was some amount of dissatisfaction about the persistence of personal pietism unrelated to social concerns among the Christians in India. The mistaken understanding of the exclusiveness of the Christian faith has tended towards an aloofness from our environment. Sometimes it leads to unhealthy Pharisaical attitude of excluding ourselves from the rest of our fellowmen. The Church is not sufficiently involved in the social ferment, the economic upheaval, and the Quest of just ordering of society. Indian Christians as committed Christians should undertake greater political and social responsibility by intelligently understanding the present situation and identifying themselves with those who are playing a vital role in the life of the nation.

The Church cannot compromise with atheistic communism, but at the same time the Church should not justify the social evils either by indifference or by giving its support both direct and indirect to outworn and unjust institutions. Christian social action will always be a concern of committed conscience of Christians as individuals and as groups, and the Church must recognize the freedom of such Christian people to so act in regard to social evils.

The fact of Islam as a living faith among a noticeable section of the population should be given sufficient recognition. We must not become so absorbed in our concern in proclaiming the Gospel to our Hindu neighbours as to neglect them. One of the strong points of the conference was to stress this fact.

An attempt at defining more clearly some lines of Indian Christian theological approach resulted in the suggestion of forming an Indian Christian Theological Association. A sub-committee was formed to work out and present to the business session a constitution and by-laws of such an Association.

### *Business Session*

1. A constitution, prepared by a sub-committee, for the Indian Christian Theological Association was adopted. The constitution is herewith appended.

2. The following were elected for the period until the next regular conference or for a period of five years, whichever is less :

Chairman	...	The Rev. Dr. P. D. Devanandan.
Secretary-Treasurer	...	Dr. H. Jai Singh.
Advisory Committee	...	The above officers. Editor of <i>The Indian Journal of Theology</i> (appointed by the Editorial Committee), The Rev. Fr. P. De Letter, The Rev. Dr. W. Stewart, The Rev. Dr. P. David, and The Rev. J. R. Chandran.

3. It was resolved that all papers be summarized by the writers of the papers for publication in *The Indian Journal of Theology* as a special number, leaving the editorial board free to edit the summaries to suit the *Journal*.

4. Thanks were conveyed to :

- A. The Rev. Dr. P. David, Convener.
- B. The Rev. Dr. P. D. Devanandan, Chairman.
- C. The Staff of the Gurukul Theological College, Mr. Paulraj, Caterer.
- D. The members of the conference for having come from distant places.
- E. The Revs. C. S. Sundaresan and Basil Manuel, Recording Secretaries.
- F. The National Christian Council of India, and the W.C.C. Study Division for their generous financial assistance.

(Sd.) Basil Manuel

(Sd.) C. S. Sundaresan  
*Recording Secretaries*

### *Delegates Present*

1. Dr. P. D. Devanandan (Chairman), Bangalore.
2. Dr. P. David (Convener), Gurukul, Madras.
3. Rev. C. S. Sundaresan (Recording Secretary), Andhra Union Theological College, Dornakal.
4. Rev. Basil Manuel (Recording Secretary), Bishop's College, Calcutta.
5. Rev. J. R. Chandran, U.T. College, Bangalore.
6. Dr. W. Stewart, Serampore College, Serampore.
7. Dr. S. Estborn, Gurukul, Madras.
8. Rev. A. E. D. Frederick, N.C.C., Nagpur.

9. Rev. G. Solomon, Ramapatnam Baptist Theological Seminary, Andhra Pradesh.
10. Rev. K. Devasahayam, Lutheran Theological College, Rajahmundry.
11. Dr. E. H. Smith, Gujuranwala Theological Seminary, Gujuranwala, West Pakistan.
12. Rev. A. D. Manuel, Tamilnad Theological College, Tirumariyur.
13. Dr. R. M. Clark (Secretary), B.T.E., N.C.C.
14. Rev. T. S. Garret, Tamilnad Theological College, Tirumariyur.
15. Rev. T. Gnanandam, Baptist Theological College, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.
16. Dr. V. P. Thomas, Leonard Theological College, Jabalpure.
17. Dr. H. Jai Singh, Leonard Theological College, Jabalpure.
18. Rev. V. S. D. Satyanathan, Diocesan Divinity School, Buller's Road, Colombo 7.
19. Rev. Fr. P. De Letter, St. Mary's Theological College, Kurseong, West Bengal.
20. Rev. V. T. Kurien, U.T.C., Bangalore.
21. Rev. Dr. R. A. Martin, Gurukul, Madras
22. Rev. H. J. David Lyon, Allipur, Vardha District, Maharashtra.
23. Rev. J. Kumaresan, Gurukul, Madras.
24. Rev. B. G. Prasada Rao, Medak, Andhra Pradesh.
25. Rev. N. D. Anandarao Samuel, Krishna Diocese, Bezwada.

#### *Visitors*

1. Rev. Fr. P. Anthony, S.J., Loyola College, Madras 13.
2. Rev. Fr. Bechers, St. Xavier's College.
3. Rev. J. D. Asirvadam, Tambaram, Madras.
4. Miss O. M. Valentine, C.S.V., Madras.
5. Rev. M. A. Thomas, Madras.

### INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

#### *Constitution*

1. *Name*.—The name of the Association shall be THE INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.
2. *Purpose*.—The purpose of the Association shall be to promote study and exchange of views on Christian Theology, especially in relation to the task of interpreting the Christian faith to the people of India and its neighbouring countries.
3. *Membership*.—Membership in the Association will be open to (a) any Christian theological institution, and (b) any professing Christian who pays the annual subscription fixed by the Association.

4. *Activities.*—The activities of the Association shall consist of (a) the holding of periodical conferences devoted to the study of particular aspects of Christian doctrine, (b) encouraging the writing and publishing of papers on Indian Christian Theology, and (c) other projects which the Association may decide to undertake in furtherance of its purpose.

5. *Officers.*—The officers of the Association shall be (a) a Chairman, and (b) a Secretary-Treasurer who shall be elected at each conference and will hold office until the next regular conference or for a period of five years, whichever is less.

6. *Advisory Committee.*—The plans for the periodic conferences and other activities of the Association will be made by an Advisory Committee consisting of the officers, one of the editors of *The Indian Journal of Theology* and four others elected at each conference.

### *By-laws*

1. The subscriptions for the Association shall be Rs.15 per year for institutions and Rs.7/50 per year for individuals.

2. Members will receive copies of *The Indian Journal of Theology* without additional charge.

3. The conferences of the Association will be normally held every three years.

4. All members of the Association will be invited to attend the conference. The Member Institutions will be invited to send one representative each.

In addition to the members, the Advisory Committee is authorized to invite other persons to the conference who, in their judgment, will have a contribution to make.

5. *Finances.*—The income of the Association will consist of (a) membership fees, and (b) special contributions from individuals or institutions. The expenses will consist of (a) subscription to *The Indian Journal of Theology*, (b) postage, stationery, etc., of the officers spent for the purposes of the Association, (c) the cost of holding conferences, and (d) any other item approved by the Advisory Committee. To the extent that funds permit subsidies will be provided for the members attending the conferences towards travel and other expenses.

### *Nominations*

Chairman	...	Dr. P. D. Devanandan.
Secretary-Treasurer	...	Dr. H. Jai Singh.
Editor of <i>I.J.T.</i>	...	To be appointed by the Editorial Committee.
Members	...	Rev. Fr. P. De Letter, Rev. Dr. P. David, Rev. J. R. Chandran and Rev. W. Stewart.