

# Twenty-Four Years' Journey : A Survey of Vols. I-XXIV of The Indian Journal of Theology

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Reading through the volumes of *The Indian Journal of Theology* which have appeared since 1952 is an experience rather similar to taking one of our interminable Indian train journeys. The traveller finds himself encapsulated in a little world on wheels, trundling through a changing landscape. The train stops at wayside stations and major junctions; crowds scramble in and out with their assorted luggage; there are chance encounters and chats with fellow-passengers. As the long hot dusty day wears on there is a feeling of unreality, somewhere between a half-forgotten starting-point and the distant terminus which will be reached tomorrow or the day after, or even the day after that.

A theological journal is not meant to be read from cover to cover. Rather, it is the deposit in print of a series of 'happenings'. It reflects controversies and excitements, flashes of insight and passing fancies, some of which may be recognised in retrospect as creative, but many of which are dead-ends. In some ways it is all rather depressing: so much paper and ink and energy devoted to what now looks transitory. Most of it will never be read again, except possibly by some other poor hack, writing another survey article twenty-five years from now. But in other ways it is all enormously exciting: the month-by-month record of a whole generation of theological activity, wrestling with new situations and problems, and perhaps displaying something of the activity of the Holy Spirit running like an electric current through the minds of christians in all the diversity of the on-going life of the christian community.

The purpose of this survey is to identify the major themes which have preoccupied us in India in the last quarter of a century, to point to certain recurrent tendencies and shifts of emphasis and interest, and perhaps to rescue from oblivion some of the forgotten but still valid insights which have been buried under the accumulated pages of print. There are other theological journals in India which have perhaps more adequately reflected certain aspects of Indian theological activity, and

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from which a rather different picture might be obtained. A spirit of healthy self-criticism is very necessary. Yet *IJT* does seem to have succeeded in maintaining over the years a fairly wide-ranging flexibility of interests, and a reasonably ecumenical coverage. Its performance can best be judged against the aims set forth in the Editorial of the first issue (1952, No. 1, p. 1):

It is the purpose of the Journal to be a medium for the expression of the best theological thought in the countries of South-East Asia, and particularly of India. It is also our hope that it will stimulate theological thinking in the Church. It will attempt to encourage every effort to re-accent and to re-interpret Christian theology in the light of the needs and problems of the indigenous cultures of these countries. . . It will endeavour to meet the needs of pastors and ministers in the rural as well as in the urban areas. It will try to bring the best theological thinking in these lands to the doorstep of the ministers. It will also seek to guide the intelligent layman in the Church by focusing sound theological thinking on the practical issues that confront him in his life in the work-a-day world. We hope also that this Journal will serve as a link between the East and the West in the matter of theological enquiry and thinking.

It must be admitted that in two respects at least *IJT* has failed to live up to this prescription. Contributions from other countries in South-East Asia have largely failed to materialise. Also, judging by the record of subscriptions, *IJT* has failed to sell itself to more than a very insignificant percentage of the ordinary working clergy in India. Here, straight away, are two rather disturbing facts. On the one hand, the failure of Christians in India to relate to the Churches in other parts of Asia (still less, Africa) and a tendency to maintain links exclusively with the West. Secondly, have we convinced our clergy and laity of the need to keep abreast of what is being thought and written? Theology has come to be regarded as a matter for 'experts', and is often an object of fear and suspicion. The average pastor has little inclination to spend even a few rupees on a theological journal, and it is noticeable that student-subscribers let their interest lapse as soon as they have safely passed their exams. At the present moment only five out of the 40-odd bishops of the C.S.I. and C.N.I. are subscribers, despite strenuous efforts by the Business Manager to hook more.

When *IJT* commenced publication in 1952, two events commanded immediate attention. One was the adoption, two years previously, of a democratic Constitution for the Indian Republic. The other was the inauguration, five years previously, of the Church of S. India. Both were unique; and both had enormous implications for the Christian community in India. Taken together with the achievement of Independence in 1947, it was possible to regard the two events as having a significant relationship.

## Involvement in...or Confrontation with?

The formal commitment of India to a system of parliamentary democracy, though welcome, posed the challenge of how Christians should now respond, and to what extent they should involve themselves in the processes of an 'open' political life. There was an awareness that in some ways democracy rested on some very 'un-Indian' assumptions, and that to make it work much costly effort would be required. Dr V. E. Devadutt, writing in the middle of the first all-India General Elections (*A Theology for Democracy*, 1952, No. 1, p. 3)\* pointed out that modern democracy calls for acceptance of three things: the individuality and personhood of people, a compelling sense of social responsibility and a belief in an ultimate purpose embodied in the social and political processes. These three factors, he pointed out, are inherent in Christianity, but alien to the Hindu tradition. The responsibility of the Christian community in India is correspondingly great: they are the people who embody the values to which India has committed herself. W. G. Wickramasinghe made the same point, in the same issue of *IJT*, in relation to Sri Lanka. There, he pointed out, political development was proceeding in an opposite direction to many of the basic assumptions of Buddhism—and yet paradoxically against a background of Buddhist revival and religious chauvinism.

The following year the same theme recurs in a series of articles which examined *The Idea of the Secular State* (T. K. Thomas, 1953, No. 2, p. 7), *Christian Responsibility in Indian Society* (R. W. Scott, p. 16) and related topics. T. K. Thomas, like Dr Devadutt, insisted that:

We must recognise the fact that the Secular State has no supporting culture in India. It has been imported from the West, and to assert (with J. S. Venkatraman) that 'Indian culture, civilisation, life, thought and outlook in their essentials are quite favourable to the establishment of a tolerant secular democratic State' is merely to indulge in the doubtful luxury of wishful thinking.

The Christian community, he suggested, does stand for these very values, and if prepared to enter fully into the social and political life of the country 'can thus in a very real sense become the conscience of the nation'. The Christians are the 'creative minority'—'What use will they make of this strategic position?'

This was heady stuff, and preoccupation with the role and responsibilities of the Church in relation to society and the State was obviously very real in the 1950s. Chandran Devanesan (*The Church: Can it meet the social challenge today?*, 1952 No. 2, p. 66) sounded a warning, pointing to 'the vicious circle of our own terrible selfishness' which hampers the Church from making any effective contribution to social change, 'while the Communist Party marches down the street with red banners fluttering'—and forecast the need for a violent shaking-up of the Church as we know it before the Gospel can be preached to contem-

\* Articles are referred to by year and page at which they begin, except for 1952-1956, when the issue number is also given.

porary society. M. M. Thomas (*Some Views on the Ideal of a Responsible Society for India*, 1952, No. 2, p. 70) had some equally uncomfortable things to say, and wondered after all just what, if anything, the Christian Church had to contribute in the choice confronting the country between social democracy and Communism; while Dr Devadutt found much to criticise in Western patterns of democracy and appealed to Christians in India to work out a truly Biblical approach to democracy, giving full expression to human personality and growth (*A Critique of Contemporary Democracy*, 1952, No. 2, p. 76). It is noticeable that in all the early volumes of *IJT* writer after writer instinctively writes off Communism as 'a bad thing' and the ultimate horror. In the later volumes we sometimes find a much more positive attitude towards at least the goals which Communists profess.

This great area of Christian concern has only intermittently been followed up in *IJT*. This undoubtedly reflects a growing realisation, in the 1960s, that Christianity may be set to challenge rather than 'contribute to' things as they are; and that the role of Christians is to question the very structures which seemed so full of promise ten years earlier. This is certainly the message of M. M. Thomas (*The Ecumenical Movement and Christian Social Thought*, 1961, p. 64), and it is developed by such writers as S. K. Chatterji (*Humanisation as a Goal of Revolution*, 1972, p. 185) and D. B. Forrester (*Towards a Theology of Protest*, 1970, p. 30) and in articles written in the wake of the Bangkok 'Salvation Today' conference in 1972. It was the theme, too, of a powerful broadside by S. K. Biswas which was delivered as an Industrial Sunday sermon in Calcutta, and which caused something of a furore amongst the lounge-suited industrialists who reacted sharply to hearing a text picked from Chairman Mao rather than from Holy Writ. It has been several times reprinted elsewhere (*Some Critical Issues in Industrialization*, 1968, p. 170); and its basic message powerfully reiterated in another Industrial Sunday order of service (1973, p. 1) and *Voices of the City* (1973, p. 89). A very thoughtful reflection on much popular and shallow 'Christian activism' is provided by Paul Verghese (now Mar Gregorios) in an article which certainly ought to be pondered: *The Theology of Development: Can it Lead us Astray?* (1970, p. 99).

Rather oddly, *IJT* seems to have left it to other journals to explore the relationship between Christianity and Marxism, and one searches in vain for any systematic attempt at dialogue with Marxist writing in India. J. G. Johnson's *God and Marxism* (1972, p. 107) is the only serious attempt to examine the topic, and there is surely a pressing need for this to be pursued.

### **Ecumenism takes itself by Surprise**

Early issues of *IJT* reflect a justifiable pride in the other great fact of contemporary life, the achievement of organic union between episcopal and non-episcopal Churches in the C.S.I. It was recognised that this was a unique event in Christian history, and some writers while duly registering gratification seem slightly dazed that the thing had

actually happened. It was held up (quite rightly) as something which India had done for the world-wide Church: nothing could now ever be quite the same again. At the same time there was an awareness that this achievement might be a 'sign' not only for a divided Church but for a fragmented world.

The 2nd issue of *IJT* (November 1952) was devoted to an assessment of the implications of the C.S.I. in a year which witnessed the meeting on Indian soil of the Central Committee of the W.C.C. and a number of other ecumenical organisations. The Editorial raises the question of whether behind much pious ecumenical verbiage the desire and pursuit of Union had not been largely pragmatic and based on convenience rather than principle. The acid test will be whether or not the united Church expresses its essential unity in a massive new commitment to evangelism, and a corresponding purging out from our own ranks of the demons of 'caste, lingualism and communalism'.

In the same issue D. S. Chellappa analysed the various challenges which the C.S.I. posed (characterised by a British writer as 'a dangerous experiment which ought, nevertheless, to be tried'!). In particular, in words prophetic also for the C.N.I. twenty years later, he insisted that the C.S.I. is no mere amalgamation of differing traditions (episcopal, congregational, presbyterial). Seen from the inside (the only standpoint from which judgment is valid) *everything* now looks different, and everything has turned out rather differently to what anybody had expected. The experience of union is something which cannot be anticipated, and it has taught us that the Church evolves—'the demand to know where we are going is one which no Christian has the right to make'. Bishop Lash (*An Outsider Looks at the C.S.I.*, 1952, No. 2, p. 12) was quick to apply one of the lessons of the C.S.I. to the situation in the North. The problems created by the lack of any initial unification of the Ministry had, he suggests, strengthened the determination of all denominations (not just Anglicans) to seek unification from the start. Bishop Kulandran (*Theology for a Missionary Church*, 1952, No. 2, p. 37) drew attention to the need for a more conscious theological enterprise in India, and deprecated the tendency to regard 'theology' as something unnecessary or even dangerous to the life of a united Church. 'A Church that refuses to theologize is not merely abdicating one of its functions, it is refusing to accept the very principle of its life.' He feared that the C.S.I. might develop a sort of tacit 'theology of not having any theology', which would be disastrous. One wonders how far this fear has been fulfilled?

Inevitably in the run-up period before the inauguration of the C.N.I. in 1970 there has been much discussion of problems and fears. It is often insufficiently realised outside India (and even within India?) that the C.N.I. is no mere carbon-copy of the C.S.I. Not only was the same basic problem (the unification of episcopal and non-episcopal traditions) tackled in a radically different way, but a series of quite different problems (e.g. the inclusion of the Baptist tradition) had to be faced. Tension was heightened by the fact that the Anglican Communion had, since 1947, maintained its refusal to recognise the Ministry of the C.S.I., and despite the growth of an increasingly warm ecumenical spirit in

general, worldwide denominational barriers had hardened. Union negotiations in other continents had broken down; and in some cases the very concept of organic union was being questioned.

Some of these problems are reflected in *IYT*. There is for example an uncharacteristic note of asperity in Dr William Stewart's *The Lambeth Quadrilateral: Bane or Blessing?* (1959, p. 125), in which he criticises the 1958 Lambeth Conference for re-issuing verbatim the old 1920 formula 'as a kind of ready-made footnote for determining whether or not other bodies are fully part of the Catholic Church', and he appealed to Anglicans to re-think their tiresome Quadrilateral 'in the light of all that has been shown to the Churches through the years, and in the light of the Gospel itself'.

A suspicion (not altogether unjustified) that some Anglicans were interpreting the Act of Unification of the Ministry as a *de facto* bestowal of episcopal ordination on those not already so ordained gave rise to much controversy and affected the drafting of the 4th edition of the *Plan of Union* in 1965. This is reflected in an eirenic article by the Anglican W. J. Marshall (*The Unification of the Ministry in the C.N.I.*, 1970, p. 20) in which he pointed out that the rite is without precedent in Church history, and that therefore any attempt to interpret it within existing categories is futile. 'Theology develops as Christians face practical tasks'—and it is greatly to the credit of Indian Christians that they have firmly grasped the nettle and contributed a new solution to an old problem.

Still very much with us is the question, deliberately left open in the C.N.I. 4th edition of the *Plan*, of the relationship between Infant and Believers' Baptism within the united Church. Oblique references to the problem occur in K. C. Mathew's *The Sacrament of Infant Baptism* (1962, p. 143) and in a book-review by D. F. Hudson (1962, p. 163). The latter made some interesting points, and roundly declared that as a Baptist he could not accept the *Plan* as it then stood. Further difficulties about this thorny subject have arisen within the C.N.I. and two papers prepared at the request of the Theological Commission are to be found in 1972 (Vol. 21, No. 3).

The statements about the Lord's Supper in the *Plan* aroused similar apprehension and were accused of being 'Romanist'. This particular canard was shot down by R. H. S. Boyd, himself a Presbyterian. With gentle irony he showed that each statement in the *Plan* could be paralleled from the most approved Evangelical and 'Reformed' sources (*The Theological Basis of the Teaching on the Lord's Supper in the N. India Plan*, 1963, p. 47).

Meanwhile the ecumenical debate had broadened. So far there has been little reflection in *IYT* of what the C.N.I. experience has meant to its members. There has however been a welcome number of articles in recent issues dealing with the relationship of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches. A. M. Bermejo's *Growing Convergence on the Eucharist* (1972, p. 195), J. Kottukapally's *Infallible?—Fallible?* (1973, p. 92) and C. Winkelmann's *Catholicity and the Petrine Office* (1973, p. 113) all contain comprehensive surveys of recent thinking—

mostly from outside India, alas—by joint study-groups. These articles to some extent compensate for the remarkable lack of interest in the Vatican II Council, which received very scant mention in *IJT*.

Finally, before leaving the sphere of Ecumenism, it is odd that *IJT* contains very little material on the Orthodox understanding of the Church and Sacraments. Many distinguished Orthodox scholars have written articles for *IJT*, but mostly on neutral topics or on specifically theological issues. As the possibility begins to open up of Mar Thoma-C.S.I. unity, and with the increasing Syrian Orthodox participation in ecumenical affairs in India, one hopes that something of their ancient and authentically 'Eastern' experience and ecclesiology may be reflected in *IJT*.

### **Theologians in search of a Theology**

Can it honestly be claimed that the past quarter of a century has seen the emergence of the long-awaited 'Indian Theology'? Has India contributed anything of ultimate significance in the long process of reflection and formulation which makes up the history of Christian doctrine? Can we point to any Indian theologian who is doing for the world-Church what an Origen, an Aquinas, a Luther or a Karl Barth have done in their day? And, if anything exciting has been going on, is it reflected in the pages of *IJT*?

These are perhaps unfair questions. An Origen or a Barth are given to the Church only rarely, and they themselves only focus and systematise, however brilliantly, what lesser mortals have been wrestling with in obscurity and frustration. They in turn ask the questions which will keep others busy for generations. It is not the theologians who invent the problems: it is the community face to face with changing situations which generates its own questions. The theologian tries to respond sensitively, but he too is part of the question, an aspect of the problem, a factor in the process. For the Church in India the situation in the 1950s and '60s has been extraordinarily complex, and this is not the time to look for 'solutions'—still less a great constructive system of Indian theology. Rather, we should be thankful for the many keen minds which have been identifying the right questions, suggesting procedures and methodologies, and sketching route-maps for the theological enterprise in India. This is no mean achievement, and a certain amount of it is reflected in *IJT*. Without this essential donkey-work, much of which will no doubt be forgotten, no breakthrough can occur: and it is now time that a breakthrough should be sought.

At first sight one is tempted to ask, 'Where have all the giants gone?' In early issues of *IJT* one is likely to find an article by Appasamy rubbing shoulders with a contribution from Chenchiah. One notices a quality of assurance and self-confidence, and a sense that something exciting is just round the corner. In the 1960s this confidence seems to have evaporated, and been replaced by a slightly shrill note. On page after page we are told that the Indian Church 'ought' to be doing this or saying that or re-thinking something else. We 'ought' to explore

the possibilities of an indigenous Christology, or the use of Vedanta as a framework for doctrine, we 'ought' to develop a fully Indian terminology and categories of thought, and we 'ought' to make use of indigenous symbols in our worship. We 'ought' to be doing a thousand and one things . . . but there is very little sign of anyone actually getting down to the hard work entailed in thinking through these things and telling us how to achieve them. Much of the material in the later volumes had been said many times over, and rather more cogently, many years before.

In recent years another tendency has become apparent. Apparently overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task of re-thinking the outlines of theology in an Indian framework, writers have either retreated into a rather abstract and unrelated world of Biblical study (often without any obvious 'Indian' relevance at all)—or contented themselves with surveying again and again what the great Indian theologians of the past have said. It is disturbing to note signs of a mood which seems to regard the palmy days of Indian theology as already lying somewhere behind us.

What we propose to do here is merely to draw attention to some of the more constructive contributions which have been offered in *IJT*, and to note some of the tendencies which emerge.

In 1953 A. J. Appasamy made a characteristic plea for clarifying the categories of Christian thought in purely Indian terms (*The Christian Pramanas, or the Norms of Theological Thought*, 1953, No. 1, p. 1). It is a moving and beautiful piece of writing in which the author dwells on the place of *Shabda* (Testimony, of Scripture), *Anumana* (Reason) and *Pratyaksha* (Perception). He gently but firmly questions Chenchiiah's well-known insistence on 'direct experience' of 'the raw fact of Christ', and argues that, as in art and poetry, so in christian apprehension, *Pratyaksha* (literally, 'before the eyes') is made possible only by sharing in the experience of others. There can be no apprehension of Christ without a sharing also in the way our fellow-christians have apprehended Him. 'Every valuable insight into the Divine Nature which God has given to man in the past, especially in the Bible, becomes an imperishable part of the spiritual heritage of man.' He warns that Chenchiiah's rejection of the Bible record will inhibit rather than encourage a genuinely Indian spirituality.

The attraction of Vedanta as a possible starting-point for a re-thinking of christian theology is nothing new; but a reasoned attempt was made in 1955 to take a fresh look at the problem. Carl Keller (*The Vedanta Philosophy and the Message of Christ*, 1955, No. 1, p. 6) concluded his appeal with the words, 'Must we not encourage our Indian brethren to interpret Christ as Vedantists?' and in the same issue Ashananda Nag, who had taught for several years at Shantiniketan, was perhaps more aware than Keller of the philosophical difficulties, but equally enthusiastic for the enterprise: 'Let Indian Christians now tackle the more difficult task that is waiting to be accomplished. Let them Christianize the Vedanta. A Christianized Vedanta would be a gift worthy of a free and independent India' (*To Christ through Vedanta?*, p. 19).

It took Chenchiah only six months to react to Keller's article (*The Vedanta Philosophy and the Message of Christ*, 1955, No. 2, p. 18). He welcomed it, and was gratified that Keller (unlike others) apparently did not regard Chenchiah and his circle as beyond the pale of orthodoxy! He fires off a number of typical Chenchiaisms, and characteristically urges Indian Christians to break loose from 'photos on the Church panels or . . . canned voices in the Scriptures' and rather to seek direct meeting with Jesus through *pratyaksha*. 'The Jew, the Greek and the Indian are chosen people in religion', and while the Jewish and Greek contributions have been made through Paul and John respectively, the Indian contribution remains to be offered: 'Hinduism is our spiritual eye'—and he therefore appeals for a truly Hindu interpretation of the experience of Christ. Where he differs from Keller is over the type of Advaita which we should press into service. He mistrusts Sankara's version, which can never support the concept of Incarnation; and therefore he suggests that it would be more fruitful to turn to Vallabha's Suddhadvaita, or to Aurobindo. This challenge was taken up by J. G. Arapura in an interesting article *A Christian looks at Sri Aurobindo* (1958, p. 99), in which he notes some of the intractable differences between Aurobindo and Christianity: he does not seem to have been greatly impressed with the possibilities of a fruitful dialogue.

There are many articles scattered through *IJT* in which different aspects of Hindu thought are explored as a possible vehicle for communicating the Christian experience. 1958 was something of a vintage year: V. Paranjoti's *The Uniqueness of the Saiva Siddhanta Concept of God* (p. 86), P. de D. May's *The Trinity and Saccidananda* (p. 92), and another article by Chenchiah, *Indian Christians and Cooperation with Non-Christians* (p. 1). This line of approach has been followed up over the years, and attention should be drawn to Mathew P. John's *The Idea of Grace in Christianity and Hinduism* (1970, p. 59) and a very original and arresting contribution by P. M. John, *The Teacher as Hermeneut of Faith* (1970, p. 114).

Obviously if Christian theology is to be rooted in Indian classical concepts a vast amount of work has yet to be done on purely linguistic study. This is no new insight, and much pioneering work was performed already in the 19th century. In the present century the linguistic analysis of the Bible itself has undergone massive development, and this has to be applied in the context of an equally rigorous examination of Indian terminology. In 1958 Emani Sambayya used a review of J. S. M. Hooper's *Greek NT Terms in Indian Languages* as an occasion to utter a timely plea for the eventual production of a 'Theological Word-Book of the Bible for India', which would serve not only translators but theologians. A few years later P. D. Devanandan warned of some of the difficulties (*Changing Content of Hindu Religious Terminology*, 1961, p. 58) but commended the enterprise. Quite a lot of detailed work has been done, and the 'linguistic' approach may yet turn out to be the crucial area of advance. The fact that it requires hard work in place of woolly generalisations or platitudes may be a deterrent. P. de D. May's *The Self and the Spirit* (1957, p. 131) is a

painstaking analysis of *ruach*, *pneuma* and *ātmā*, pointing out that in fact *ātmā* is a very misleading rendering of the Biblical terms. J. C. Hindley (*The Translation of Words for Covenant*, 1961, p. 13) found both *sandhi* and *vyavasthan* unsatisfactory and suggested that here is a case where we must coin something new: christian concepts will not always fit neatly into existing stereotypes. I. Jesudasan (*Interpreting the Christian Doctrine of Creation in India*, 1963, p. 11) found himself up against the same problem. 'Direct equivalence' is not possible or desirable, and there lies ahead of us the task which faced the Biblical writers themselves—the work of developing an Indian terminology packed with Christian content and meaning. One who has specialised in this field is R. M. Clark, and two articles by him are of fundamental importance: *The Christian Approach to the Hindu through Literature: Problems of Terminology* (1963, p. 139) and *Vocabulary for NT Theology in India* (1965, p. 127). The latter contains a valuable check-list of terms used in recent translation work, and ends with a powerful appeal to develop the sort of christian vocabulary in India which will stimulate 'significant theological expression'.

It does seem that, with the partial exception of the field of linguistics, thinkers have been more prolific in bright ideas than in the will to carry them through at a scholarly level. Recent collections of papers read at conferences have been rich in suggestive titles (*Knowing Christ in India Today*, ICTA 1969; *The Meaning of God for Modern Man*, ICTA 1972; *Interpreting Christ to India Today*, 1974), but all too often the papers are scrappy, or merely tell us again what we 'ought' to be doing, or take refuge in historical summaries of what has been said before. Moreover there is little sign of any interest in what has been going on elsewhere in Asia (Kosuke Koyama is represented in *IJT* by two articles, one in 1963, and a more characteristic effusion, *Fish in Rice*, in 1968). There have certainly been some notable attempts to interpret theological movements in the West in the Indian context, the most outstanding of which are perhaps M. V. George's *Existentialism and its Message to Indian Thought Pattern* (1962, p. 68), C. Winckelmans' *Trinity and Existence* (1973, p. 24), and the superb article by Paul Verghese, *On God's Death—An Orthodox Contribution* (1968 p. 151).

R. H. S. Boyd, whose knowledge of Indian christian theology is unrivalled and whose contributions to *IJT* have always been thought-provoking, commented on Chakkarai's writings on the Resurrection thus (*Some Indian Christian Interpretations of the Resurrection*, 1968, p. 49):

We cannot always *choose* the way in which the Indian outlook will respond to the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Chakkarai is less interested in the soul-body polarity than in that of *atman-paramatman*, of *Isvara-Brahman*, of God and the world, of power and love. These are the traditional *crucis* of the Indian world-view. And we should listen with respect when a man of Chakkarai's stature seeks to unravel them in the light of the resurrection.

Boyd believes that anything on the lines of a comprehensive *Summa* of systematic theology would be fundamentally alien to India and her religious tradition. On the other hand, if theology is not to become even more piecemeal and *ad hoc*, some formal 'Shape' is necessary. He suggests that the most congenial 'Shape' for an Indian theology would be that of the traditional procedure of *bhasya*—the theological exposition of the scriptures (*Sruti*). Such *bhasya* may be written from many angles (*jnana marga*, as in Brahmabandhab; *bhakti marga*, as in Appasamy; *karma marga*, as in M. M. Thomas):

It would seem that such a *bhasya* offers greater possibilities for the development of a genuine Indian theology than is to be found either in the piecemeal approach which has hitherto predominated, or in any effort to compose a comprehensive Indian *Summa* in the shape of western models like Aquinas, Calvin or Barth..

This theme is further developed in *The Use of the Bible in Indian Christian Theology* (1973, p. 141), where Boyd again stresses the need not for some grand synthesis but for much patient, scholarly and well-equipped scriptural exegesis in the Indian context and in the light of Indian religious experience—free from Western methods and critical presuppositions and concerns. This he regards as the essential, as well as traditional, groundwork for an Indian theology.

### Flirtation and Indigenisation

There are two other related fields in which Christians in other parts of the world have come to expect a lead from India. In the unique pluralistic religious situation of the sub-continent they expect to find some constructive thinking about the relationship of Christianity to other religions. They also look to India for light on the indigenisation of worship.

In fact many of the articles already referred to are directly relevant to both these themes. Looking at *IJT* as a whole there seems to have been an interesting shift of emphasis somewhere in the 1960s. In the earlier volumes writers still laboured under a delayed action shock from the 1938 Tambaram Conference and the publication of Kraemer's epoch-making *Christian Message in a non-Christian World*. Everyone felt it necessary to make some reference to Kraemer. Almost everyone hinted that Kraemer should somehow be refuted; but preferred to leave this task to someone else, hedging their bets by referring to Kraemer's 'stature' and 'importance'. S. Estborn (*In the Light of Christ*, 1958, p. 33) is one of the few to grapple with the principles raised by Kraemer, and he acknowledged that Kraemer's radically Biblical orientation must be taken seriously and not sidestepped. If we confess Christ as Master, and as *the Way, the Truth and the Life*, are we prepared to accept the full consequences of this affirmation here in India, in our minority situation, surrounded by religious diversity but also by a more ancient

religious tradition than our own? This, says Estborn (himself now neatly sidestepping his own question!), is something which 'the next generation will have to wrestle with seriously'. But why the *next*?

A shift in Kraemer's own position, signalled in *World Culture and World Religions*, published in 1960, enabled J. G. Arapura to exorcize the ghost (*Dr Kraemer's New Book*, 1960, p. 156). He welcomed Kraemer's admission that the time had arrived for 'dialogue' on the global scale; and from 1960 onwards we find less sense of guilt among writers of articles on 'Christianity and . . .' Of these there have always been plenty in *IJT*, but hitherto their authors seem to have felt it necessary to justify their task or merely to examine other faiths without committing themselves to drawing any conclusions (cf K. D. W. Anand, *The Christ of the Quran*, 1958, p. 56; P. D. Devanandan, *Christian and non-Christian Faith*, 1957, p. 74; S. B. Kulandran, *The Christian Faith and Hindu Bhakti*, 1957, p. 118). More recently it has been taken for granted that the experience of other religious communities is a valid area of Christian exploration, from which valid insights may be expected and in which the desirability of 'dialogue' is axiomatic. (This perhaps corresponds to the extension of the privilege to the sphere of Marxist-Atheist social concern noted earlier.) This more 'open' attitude to other faiths makes possible a frank avowal of points of difference, not just to prove the superiority of Christianity, but in the hope that a brotherly christian critique may help to deepen the self-understanding of others and further enrich the mutual quest for light. A fine example of this, reflecting social concern also, is S. J. Samartha's *The Significance of the Historical in Contemporary Hinduism* (1967, p. 97), in which he urges that the christian understanding of history is precisely the factor which, lacking in Hinduism, has fatally weakened the Hindu ability to cope with the challenges of 20th century social and political change:

This is an area where one can expect greater possibilities of a fruitful dialogue between the Hindu and the Christian . . . perhaps at no other time in the life of this country is it more necessary than now to emphasize the Biblical faith in God as the Lord of history. What is important in the present context is not so much the theories about the nature of Christ as the social consequences of the Incarnation and the power of Christ to renew man and to remake society.

Samartha incidentally writes the final epitaph on Kraemer (*Contact, Controversy and Communication*, 1968, p. 21). The Kraemer era has now ended. Vatican II has radically altered the whole climate of discussion with men of other faiths. A post-Kraemer theology of Mission is waiting to be built. Its emergence, he believes, 'will depend, to a large extent, on the Christian concern in men of other faiths, sharing together our conflicts and tragedies, our difficulties and problems, our continuing hope and abiding faith'.

The indigenisation of worship may seem something of a sidetrack at this point; yet it is surely the point at which attitudes, hammered out in other fields, come to be expressed at the heart of christian life, and it is also the point at which abstract theological discussion in the pages of *IJT* comes home to 'the man in the pew' (or on the floor, if he is taking the matter seriously). Logically one might expect to find a growing interest in the subject in the later volumes in response to the more open dialogue of recent years. This in fact is not so. The most important articles on indigenisation occur in the early volumes; and this perhaps confirms a suspicion once expressed by the present writer that the liturgists are often away out in front while the theologians come lumbering along behind (I. D. L. Clark, *On the Place of Liturgy in the Renewal of the Church*, 1969, p. 233).

An article which deserves to be more widely known was contributed by Bishop Lash (*Reflections on Indigenization*, 1955, No. 2, p. 24) and reflects some of the thinking of a conference held that year under the auspices of the E. Asian Theological Commission. He touches on most of the aspects of the problem, which have been discussed almost *ad nauseam* since; and in particular he insists that any authentic move towards a more indigenous pattern of worship must arise naturally and spontaneously and cannot be imposed 'from above'. He also pointed out that in fact this is what has been happening in rural areas for decades. It is the christians in the cities (and theological colleges) who are out of touch with the very large degree of indigenisation which has already been achieved. It can never be something we consciously 'do'—still less will it be authentic if it is regarded as a sort of evangelistic trick (the mistake made by De Nobili).

The following year the psychologist S. P. Adinarayan tackled the question from an original angle, and pointed out a number of deeply rooted Indian symbols and attitudes which have been neglected by the christian community: e.g. the taking of a bath before worship and the ritual use of water. He also appealed to christians to purge their hymn-books and prayer-books of imagery reflecting the 'crusading' and 'Christian-as-a-warrior' mentality of the West (*Indigenization of Worship and its Psychology*, 1956, No. 2, p. 27).

Three other notable contributions should be mentioned. J. F. Butler produced one of the most massively documented (and the only illustrated) contributions ever to appear in *IJT*: *The Theology of Church Building in India* (1956, No. 2, p. 1) and followed it up with *Some Further Thoughts* in 1959 (p. 135) which is also illustrated charmingly and contains additions to the bibliography. Secondly, in *Hindu Festivals and the Christian Calendar* (1957, p. 111), R. D. Immanuel boldly tackled a highly sensitive subject which has not yet been taken seriously by the Churches. Finally, as might be expected, T. S. Garrett's *The Indian Church at Worship* (1958, p. 127) contains much wisdom and commonsense.

## A Cook's Choice

We have surveyed a quarter of a century of *IJT* under various convenient headings but inevitably much of value has slipped through the net. We are conscious of important omissions: e.g. the perennial discussion of the shape of Theological Education for India, including the place of Greek (mostly in Vol. 13, 1964) and Church History (the late John Foster, 1955; and further discussion in 1957 and 1960). Kaj Baago's notorious views on Baptism in the Indian context drew a reply from J. A. Bergquist (1967, p. 180); and mention of that reminds us that it is followed by the sole contribution to *IJT* from Abhishiktananda. J. C. Hindley's review of *Honest to God* (1964, p. 2) drew a swift retort from *Honest to Robinson* himself (1965, p. 26)—one of the very few letters to appear in *IJT*, despite appeals from various Editors including the present writer.

'Women's Lib' raises its head for the first time in 1958, in a decorous but deeply-felt article by Carol Graham (p. 145) in which the ordination of women is ventilated. The following year the matter was again discussed by E. M. Hudson in a review of Miss Thrall's book on the subject (1959, p. 34). There was a passionate running battle about the Virgin Birth in 1959 and 1960; and equally passionate, though quite unconnected, were a series of articles in which V. C. Samuel strove manfully to prove that Orthodox Syrians are not Monophysites (1962). On the whole it is the passionate outpourings which are still the most entertaining.

Perhaps a convenient tailpiece might be provided by a reminder that the future of Indian christian theology probably lies in the regional languages of India. A series of surveys on vernacular christian theological literature appeared in the 1960s, and badly needs to be brought up to date: on Kannada (S. J. Samartha, 1960, p. 92), Tamil (D. Rajarigam, 1960, p. 146; 1962, p. 130; 1963, p. 3; 1964, p. 41), Bengali (A. P. Carleton, 1961, p. 8) and Gujarati (R. H. S. Boyd, 1963, pp. 43, 83). If *IJT* survives to the year 2000 we trust that an even richer harvest may be gathered in; but we are not entirely ashamed of what has been achieved since 1952.