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Some Indian Christian Interpretations of the Resurrection

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Chenchiah once said that Indian Christian theology proposed to make the resurrection the corner-stone of its structure. Yet it is a common experience to discover, in conversation with one's Hindu friends, that while the life, teaching and death of Christ are accepted as historical and important, the tradition of the resurrection is treated with scepticism or else ignored as a Christian aberration.¹ Before we proceed to look at what some Indian Christian theologians have said about the resurrection it may be helpful, therefore, to look briefly at the opinions of a few of those Hindu writers who have written on this subject.

Keshava Chandra Sen is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures in the story of India's attempts to interpret the meaning of Christ, and some of the ideas which he outlined have proved useful to Christian theologians.² Sen makes it clear that he accepts the resurrection of Christ, but there are indications that he has doubts about its basis in physical fact, though he accepts it as implying not only that Christ is alive today, but that his humanity still continues. He lives today as leaven in all Christian lives.³ Yet it is not merely in human lives that he lives, for while still retaining his humanity he lives also with God and is not, like a Hindu *avatara*, reabsorbed into the Deity. He writes:

'The doctrine of bodily resurrection . . . however untenable on scientific grounds, suggests . . . the continuity of Christ's humanity . . . He is still with his God as his human son.'⁴

Sen's disciple and biographer, P. C. Mozoomdar, however, makes it clear that the resurrection is to be thought of as a

¹ See for example the Gujarati play on the life of Christ, *Isu Jivandarsan*, by Freniben Desai and Linaben Mangaldas (Shreyas, Ahmedabad, 1959), which ends with the crucifixion.

² E.g. his exposition of the Trinity in relation to *Saccdananda*, which was taken up by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, and recently by Monchanin.

³ *Keshub Chunder Sen's Lectures in India* (London, 1904), Vol. II, pp. 384 f.

⁴ *Lectures*, II, p. 19.

spiritual rather than a physical event: 'The spirit of Christ hath risen, and reigneth.'⁵

We need not linger over the interpretation of *Sri Parananda* that the death and resurrection of Christ were purely illusory, and represented simply a descent into a state of suspended animation, followed by resuscitation, techniques supposed to have been learnt by Jesus from an Indian *guru*.⁶ A more recent follower of Vivekananda, *Swami Akhilananda*, makes it clear that for him also the message of Easter is simply that of the triumph of spirit over matter. 'Jesus tells us time and again', he writes, 'that the flesh must be crucified in order to ascend in spirit . . . It can only be overcome by spiritual processes.'⁷ We learn from Jesus at Easter that we can defy death only by realizing the truth.⁸

'The spirit of Easter proves that in spite of the mortality of physical nature there remains something in man which is abiding. This abiding element is what St. Paul calls the celestial and spiritual body.'⁹

These brief references tend to show that when the Christian faith is viewed from within Hinduism the resurrection is likely to be ignored, discounted, or thought of as demonstrating the fact that in the long run spiritual things are more important than bodily. 'Spirituality' is always an important category in Indian religious thought, and so the idea of a possible bodily resurrection tends to be rejected immediately in favour of a spiritual interpretation.

Many Indian Christian theologians have written about the resurrection, but I intend to speak only of three of them, and of only one of these, Chakkarai, at any length. We began with a remark of Chenchiah's, and perhaps we should turn first to him, though indeed for him the resurrection is more often assumed than discussed. It is clear, however, that his whole theology of 'The New Creation'—so similar to that of Teilhard de Chardin—depends on the resurrection, for it is only because of the resurrection that we can have that *pratyaksa*, that direct experience of 'the raw fact of Christ' which is so central in his writing.

Perhaps the most important point made by Chenchiah in connection with the resurrection is that Jesus' humanity is *permanent*; 'Incarnation is perfected human body receiving the full divinity of God into permanent integration', he writes.¹⁰

⁵ P. C. Mozoomdar, *The Oriental Christ* (Boston, 1898), p. 191.

⁶ Sri Parananda, *The Gospel of Jesus according to St. Matthew* (London, 1898), sections on Matt. 22:30 and 27:50.

⁷ Swami Akhilananda, *A Hindu View of Christ* (New York, 1949), p. 200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁰ *Guardian*, 6.2.47.

He has no use for the type of Hindu *avatara* who, after completing his work on earth, is reabsorbed into the Godhead. For him, Christ is something totally *new*, the 'adi-purusa of the new creation',¹¹ a new step forward in evolution. He is the new man, the true man, and because any man in Christ is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) we are called to be united with him and so to take our own place in the process of evolution towards the Kingdom of God. The resurrection and ascension and Pentecost, then, are moments in the process whereby it has become possible for *all* men to be united with Christ, and to receive in him the power of the Spirit, the *sakti* of the new creation. Chenchiah's theology is full of the ideas of Christ as the new man, the *yoga* of the Spirit, the reality of the new creation, the power (*sakti*) released through the coming of Christ and of the Spirit. He points out that it is essential for his doctrine of the incarnation to hold that Jesus assumed body *permanently* as the consummation of creative human process, since the incarnation cannot be regarded as an adventure, an interlude in the eternal Son's life which leaves no permanent deposit on earth or in heaven.¹² For Chenchiah, Jesus is rather the 'unchanging core' of the Christian faith,¹³ who is permanently human, and because of the resurrection, always available to those who turn to him in faith.

It is clear, then, that for Chenchiah the resurrection is significant mainly in terms of power, and of ensuring the permanence of Jesus' humanity, so that men today can still be united with him and 'reproduce' him in their lives:

Christianity in essence is a life-process of being born in Christ through the Holy Spirit . . . Indian Christian theology is a science of spiritual genetics. It deals with the birth of a new type of man—the Christian—and his perpetuation on earth.¹⁴

The resurrection is the guarantee that Christ, the new man, remains permanently at work in the world through the Spirit.

For an example of a different approach to the resurrection by a modern Indian theologian we shall take the discussion in Dr. Surjit Singh's book, *Preface to Personality*.¹⁵ This book is a Christian critique of Radhakrishnan's views on the nature of personality, and the author finds the key to his own interpretation in the personality of Jesus, particularly in the light of the resurrection. Despite certain concessions to Western personalism, Radhakrishnan's view is basically the *advaita* one that the empirical self, personality or *jivatman* is of no ultimate significance, while the transcendental self or *atman* is alone of

¹¹ Quoted in *N.C.C. Review*, 1943, p. 363.

¹² *Guardian*, 6.2.47.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.2.47.

¹⁵ Surjit Singh, *Preface to Personality* (Madras, 1952).

permanent and ultimate significance, because it is ultimately identical with the supreme Spirit or *paramatman*. In Surjit Singh's words, Radhakrishnan 'does not see individuality in any other way except as a distortion . . . Man's finiteness, his individuality, is a prison-house for the universal ever-present *atman*'.¹⁶

Like Chenchiah, Surjit Singh finds the clue to his theology, and in particular to the question of personality, in the 'fact' of Christ, the intuitive, direct experience of him, rather than in any rational system of theology, and he finds the secret of the Person of Christ demonstrated most clearly in the resurrection. For it is here that we see, in the resurrection of the body, the demonstration that the body is a vital ingredient in the total personality. And it is not merely the incarnate, historic Jesus of Nazareth who has a body; the risen Christ is a psycho-somatic unity also. The resurrection, with its stress on particularity, gives absolute value to the body, and so also to time and history. Stressing the conception, which we have already noted in Chenchiah, of Christ's humanity being retained after the resurrection, Surjit Singh writes:

'Historical reality is not a shadow or phantom but is taken up into the consummation of things and is preserved in the essential structure of reality . . . Jesus Christ as the unity of God and man represents that the picture of ultimate reality is not only divine but divine-human . . . The God-Man is the norm of ultimate reality.'¹⁷

This conception of the positive relationship of God to the world of matter, of body, of humanity, is, we are well aware, a distinctive feature of the traditional Judaeo-Christian doctrine of man, but it is one which has been difficult for either Greeks or Hindus to accept. Surjit Singh points out how the early Fathers, in order to win over the Greeks, developed the doctrine of the Logos which 'bears witness to the reciprocal implication of God and the world'.¹⁸ In some similar way a doctrine needs to be worked out which for Hindus will indicate that sure 'link' between God and the world which is so fundamental in Christianity. The implication—which Surjit Singh does not clearly state—is that a firm understanding of the meaning of personality, as seen above all in Christ, may provide the needed link; for Hinduism today, as P. D. Devanandan has pointed out so clearly,¹⁹ is in search of deeper understanding of the ultimate value of personality, matter and time.

Surjit Singh's exposition of the resurrection is attractive, and fits in very well with what many today feel Indian theology

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁹ E.g. in *Preparation for Dialogue* (Bangalore, 1964), pp. 40 f.

ought to be saying. There is no doubt, however, that his outlook is very Western, and that his mentors are writers like Kierkegaard, Berdyaev and Buber rather than any leaders of Indian traditions.

Of all Indian Christian theologians, it is perhaps *Chakkarai*²⁰ who deals most fully and originally with the resurrection, and for the rest of this paper we shall consider his views. He was a contemporary, and indeed was the brother-in-law of Chenchiah, and so in point of time represents a generation earlier than Surjit Singh. His two books, *Jesus the Avatar* (1932) and *The Cross in Indian Thought* (1932), were both written while liberalism was still at its zenith, and though Chakkarai is deeply influenced by his own Hindu background, and consciously endeavours to make his theology thoroughly Indian, the influence of the Western theology of his day cannot be ignored.

Chakkarai's mother, who greatly influenced him, was a devotee of the Vaisnava *bhakti* tradition, and after he became a Christian in his student days in Madras Chakkarai continued to feel that a living experience of God is central to a living faith. For him, as for Chenchiah, direct experience of the living Christ through the power of the Spirit was essential, but much more than Chenchiah his mysticism of faith-union is a mysticism of the Cross, and he is very critical of any tendency which seeks to avoid its terrible particularity. In language drawn from Shelly's *Adonais* he writes:

'The aspiration towards absolute being, the unconditioned *nirguna Brahman*, trembles like the white light of the sun on the extremest edge, but is stained, even at the very centre, like time, by the many-coloured dome of the Cross.'²¹

The Christian experience is, for him, that of union with the crucified Christ, a union which involves our sharing of his suffering. On the Cross something 'causal' happened, as a result of which our redemption is effected; in a way which we cannot understand, by some 'mystic alchemy', Christ's sufferings are transformed into the radiant *sakti* of his redemptive sacrifice, and so become the active energy or *kriya sakti* of a new world-order.²²

In order that we may appropriate this *sakti* which is released by the death of Christ it is necessary that we should experience the power of the Spirit, for—and here we have one of the characteristic marks of Chakkarai's theology—the Spirit is in fact none other than Christ himself at work in the human personality. He writes:

²⁰ Vengal Chakkarai Chetty, 1880–1958.

²¹ *The Cross in Indian Thought*, p. 230. Cp. Shelly, *Adonais*, lii.

²² *Cross*, p. 87.

'The Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ Himself, taking His abode within us . . . The starting point in the consciousness of the Christian disciple is that the Holy Spirit is Jesus Himself.'²³

The Jesus who suffered on the Cross, however, was a historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth, while the Christ who comes to dwell in us by the Spirit is universal and no longer limited by time and space. What is the connection between the two, between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith? In order to answer this question Chakkarai turns to the resurrection, and we must attempt to follow what he has to say.

First of all, Chakkarai makes it quite clear that he accepts the truly physical resurrection of Christ,²⁴ though he does not attempt to explain the resurrection appearances in detail. He writes:

'The body of the Lord, after the resurrection, was the same and yet not the same . . . The explanation of this should be sought for in the spiritual body of the Pauline theology and the *sukma* or subtle body of Indian philosophy.'²⁵

What then is the significance of this true, physical resurrection in which, through the power of the Spirit, the body of Jesus was raised from the dead? Chakkarai sees it as 'the connecting link between the cosmic and human, between the outer and inner',²⁶ and proceeds to show that the resurrection demonstrates four distinct though interconnected truths:

- (i) The God of power and might, the One by whose will and power the world came into existence, is also the God of love, the personal God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (ii) The 'outer' is joined to the 'inner'. The *paramatman*, the supreme Spirit, the power of God, is joined to the *atman* of Christ, and so—through union with Him—our human *atman* becomes linked with the *paramatman*.
- (iii) The *avatara* of Christ is demonstrated with power, for here in the resurrection the *sakti* of the Spirit, the life-giving divine energy, is joined to the *bhakti* of Jesus, his human, self-giving love.
- (iv) Light is cast also on the mysterious process by which the Jesus of history becomes the ever-present Christ of faith.

We shall briefly consider each of these in turn, for this 'meeting of *bhakti* and *sakti*' (the title which Chakkarai gives

²³ *Jesus the Avatar*, p. 117.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

to Chapter X of *Jesus the Avatar*) is one of the key-thoughts in Chakkarai's theology.

(i) *God of Power, God of Love*

The tendency to separate the God of creation from the personal God who reveals himself to man is often seen in the West, as it was seen in Gnosticism, and in the conflict between natural and revealed theology. In India *Brahman* has not been thought of as an active Creator, and yet it is from *Brahman*, through *maya*, that 'all this proceeds',²⁷ and the connection between the impersonal *Brahman* and the personal *Isvara* has often been ambiguous or obscure. In the death and resurrection of Christ, Chakkarai believes, we see that God's power and his love are inseparably united. He writes:

[Christ] loved humanity so that He gave His life, and He still offers Himself as a perpetual oblation to men, bearing their sins and regenerating them with His love and exalted purity. Granted all this, how dare we say that this Lord of *bhakti* and love is the Lord of the incessant and infinite energy that rolls in the ocean? . . . By what concatenation of proofs, by what arguments of natural theology, can this identification be effected? . . . How can we bring together night and day, the infinite energy of God and the supreme love of Jesus? The tremendous equation was effected by the Christian consciousness, but how? As the present writer scans the luminous and dark pages of the New Testament and looks into the light of *bhakti* glowing²⁸ like a furnace, rising ever higher into the very mysteries of God, he can find the formula and fact of the equation in the resurrection of our Lord . . . Says the Apostle Paul, *Jesus Christ was declared as the Son of God with power (or sakti), according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*²⁹—the *sakti* that could raise the dead, that could create the oceans and the clouds, the Himalayas and the Alps, and roll the endless constellations through space, was the Spirit of holiness and love and purity of Jesus which accomplishes the regeneration of men in the realm of God.³⁰

In this passage Chakkarai is in effect expounding a Christian doctrine of creation, which leaves no room for *maya* or for any type of monism which denies the reality of the created world. He is saying that the God whom we approach through *bhakti*, the God who loves us, the same God who created the world, and that it is in Christ, and above all in his resurrection,

²⁷ *Brahma Sutra*, I. 1.2.

²⁸ The text reads 'growing'—probably a misprint.

²⁹ Rom. 1:4.

³⁰ *Avatar*, pp. 148 f.

that we see the meeting of love and power. It is the resurrection which proclaims, through the power of the Spirit, that the Jesus of Nazareth who loved his disciples to the uttermost is none other than the Son of God whose power was at work in creation and is still at work today.

(ii) *Atman and Paramatman*

Secondly, Chakkarai sees the resurrection as the clue to the solution of the problem of the relation of the *atman* and the *paramatman*, our individual soul and the supreme Spirit. Because of the resurrection, the risen Christ can dwell in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and so our *atman* can be united with his *atman*. After Christ's visible departure, he writes: 'The Christian *bhaktas* and *rishis* had the experience . . . of the energizing of the Spirit of Jesus in their own souls',³¹ and so those who live in union with Christ are conformed to his image;³² their union with him and their similarity to him becomes ever closer:

'We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him' (1 John 3:2). This upward aspiration to be sons of God is the reality of the *jivatman* and is its response to the *paramatman*.³³

Such true *bhakti*, centred, as it must be, on the crucified and risen Lord, cannot be explained in philosophical or even theological terms, but, in Chakkarai's typical paraphrase of Paul's language, 'it is the *atman* within us that bears testimony to the *atman* without'.³⁴

We see here that Chakkarai, like A. J. Appasamy, does not posit a 'metaphysical' identity between the *atman* and the *paramatman*, such as is found in *advaita* (even in the modern version of Radhakrishnan); what he says is rather that in true *bhakti*, in the life of faith-union with Christ, our soul is united, dynamically and spiritually, with the Spirit who is Christ at work in us. There is no automatic, metaphysical identity between the *atman* and the *paramatman*, no *tattvamasi*. And yet, in Christ, this great and dynamic possibility (*sambhava*) is set before us, the possibility that through the power of the Spirit we may become one with Him:

The *mahavakya* '*tattvamasi*' is a tremendous assertion of a possibility. In Christian *anubhava* it is not a mere metaphysical postulate to start with or end in. It is an achievement, a *sambhava*. This *advaita* has been wrought on the anvil of the life of Jesus.³⁵

³¹ *Avatar*, p. 145.

³² Rom. 8:29.

³³ *Avatar*, p. 205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157. Cp. Rom. 8:16.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 220 f.

Union with God, with the *paramatman*, is possible for us *only* in Christ, and only when we, with him, are beaten on the anvil of his suffering and death. And it is possible only because, through the resurrection, the one who suffered and died is now alive and glorious in power.

(iii) *Resurrection and Incarnation*

When Chakkarai speaks of Jesus as the *avatara* he draws a firm line of distinction from the Hindu meaning of the word. The Hindu *avatars*—as expressed classically in the *Gita* IV, 7, 8—are temporary; they come to solve a particular problem, and are then reabsorbed into the Godhead. The incarnation of Jesus, however, was not a static product which admitted of no growth. It advanced from stage to stage, 'from the historical to the spiritual, from the external to the internal, from time to eternity'.³⁶ Like Chenchiah, Chakkarai sees the incarnation as no mere theophany but a permanent, mediating union of God and man in Christ, a union which besides being permanent is also dynamic, working powerfully and continuously in the world today:

The Incarnation, as we call the historic Jesus, is not confined to those years of his earthly pilgrimage but is enacted and extended, and its consummation is still waiting when God will be all-in-all, when all things will be reconciled in Jesus, forming the One God apart from whom there will exist nothing.³⁷

This whole conception of the *avatara*, which is so essential to Chakkarai's theology, hinges on the resurrection, which alone makes possible the real continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ who indwells us by his Spirit:

The physical resurrection is a logical and psychological necessity *in the process of the Incarnation*. Without the resurrection there would be a hiatus in the continued life of the incarnate Lord that would be fatal.³⁸

But because the first Easter has joined together energy and love, the divine *sakti* is united to the loving human Jesus in a permanent *avatara* which gives vastly greater possibilities than did the historic Incarnation in Palestine. The 'advancing *avatara*' is rooted in the resurrection.

(iv) *The Jesus of History and the Christ of Experience*

One of the theological problems which most exercises Chakkarai's mind is that of the 'transition of the historical Jesus to the Christ of primitive Christianity':³⁹

³⁶ *Avatar*, p. 112.

³⁷ *Guardian*, 6.4.44.

³⁸ *Avatar*, p. 150.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

We deal in our experience with a Jesus alive for evermore; and what is the logical, if not theological, nexus between the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience? ⁴⁰

His own point of view relies heavily on experience—so much so that a recent German commentator, Herwig Wagner, has characterized his theology as *Erfahrungs-theologie*.⁴¹ He is always conscious of the living Christ indwelling his heart and yet he knows that in some way there must be a valid connection with the Jesus of whom we read in the synoptic gospels. The solution to the problem cannot lie, he feels, in overstressing either the historical or the spiritual and experiential. Rather there must be some 'nexus' between the two, some point perhaps where the historical Jesus passes over into the Christ of experience. We are brought back to the heart of Christology: how can the *man* of Nazareth be the Christ whom I know in my personal spiritual life? As Chakkarai outlines his approach to the problem we can catch overtones of the controversy which Leontius of Byzantium tried to solve in terms of *Anhypostasia* and *Enhypostasia*, the question of whether the incarnate Christ had a true personality, and how the divine and human were related in him:

Jesus Christ is worshipped as God; and we cannot meet the difficulty that we are worshipping the creature instead of the Creator unless the Christ is not a human individuality any longer. The historic Jesus was a man with an ego . . . When Jesus rose from the dead and entered the inner essence of God, then he ceased to be a human being, but became the universal spirit, though with the experience of his human history. Unique is such a state—to have the experience of human (sic) without the possession of an ego—which alone can give to us the Christ who while in the Being of God, the ineffable and absolute, is also an indweller—*antaratman*, of those who are united with him.⁴²

Until the moment of the death on the Cross Jesus was a man with an ego, an individuality. Since the resurrection, however, though he retains his human experience in the 'extended Incarnation', he is no longer 'a man'. The risen Christ who, in the words of the Scottish Paraphrase,

still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies and cries,⁴³

⁴⁰ *Guardian*, 30.3.44.

⁴¹ Herwig Wagner, *Erstgestalten einer Einheitlichen Theologie in Südtindien* (München, 1963).

⁴² *Guardian*, 6.4.44.

⁴³ Scottish Paraphrases, 1781. From Heb. 4:15.

is yet 'in the Being of God' and is the *antaryamin* who indwells our hearts.

Chakkarai attempts to press his investigation even further, using, perhaps not very successfully, the terms of Hegelian dialectic. 'In the beginning was the Word' is the thesis. 'The Word became flesh' is the antithesis. Then, at the resurrection, the thesis and antithesis, that is, the Logos and the historic Jesus, rose to a higher synthesis—the Christ of experience.⁴⁴ In the death and resurrection of Jesus a definite change takes place, and the historic Jesus is 'subsumed under a higher being'.⁴⁵ To some extent we can trace the record of this change in the fourth gospel, where in a strange way the historic Jesus is combined with the 'spiritual':

St. John combines the two, but I do not know how the process is achieved. We are not in our experience in contact with the historical Jesus—laid in the tomb, and in the synoptic gospels we have no experience of the Christ, the hope of glory—and our life hidden in God with Christ. There must be a connection not merely logical but spiritual that has combined the two. St. John describes the combination but not the process.⁴⁶

Still Chakkarai tries to penetrate deeper, to identify the precise moment at which the historical Jesus passed over into the Christ of the Resurrection and of experience. And he finds what he is seeking in the cry of dereliction on the Cross, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'—that terrible cry which had first brought him as a young man to Christ.⁴⁷ As Jesus went to the Cross he was stripped of everything that distinguishes a man. Only one thing remained to him on Calvary, one plank on which to sail out over the dark waves of the Cross, and that was his fundamental belief in God as his Father and himself as the beloved Son. Jesus lived in God, as no one else ever did, but now, at the moment of that dreadful cry, 'the only plank beneath him was carried away, and he plunged into the Nirvana or Suniam where God is not'.⁴⁸ Here was the uttermost depth of *kenosis*, the depth than which nothing could be deeper, as Jesus sank into the depths of non-being.

But that non-being was not the zero, the nothingness of popular imagination. It was more like the mathematical zero which is the actual beginning of all co-ordinates, or like the Vedantic *asat* which Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya expounded, which is the matrix of being. And so in fact the depth of the process of humiliation becomes the start of glorification, and

⁴⁴ *Guardian*, 6.4.44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.4.44.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

from the utter *kenosis* of the Jesus of history the Christ of faith arises. Chakkarai explains his argument:

My meaning is that this was the final phase of the *kenosis*, the self-emptying in Philippians, and after this it was that the glorification of Jesus took place; then he became the divine human indwelling Christ. It is out of this nothingness that remained of the Jesus of history that the Christ arose. Else, he could not dwell in every soul that has united with him in faith and obedience and love. As the mere human Jesus he could not do it, and as belonging to the Being of God, he could only act as before the earthly life . . . Between the historical and the spiritual life of Christ in man is an unbridgeable gulf that He alone could have spanned and He spanned it in His death.⁴⁹

This sheds light on what Chakkarai means when he speaks of Jesus as the permanent or 'advancing' *avatara*. It is different from Chenchiah's idea of the 'permanent humanity' of Jesus. For Chakkarai the Christ whom we know by faith is neither the pre-existent Son nor the Jesus of history but something new and different. He writes:

'The Jesus plus Christ combination is a new thing in the relations between God and man; not an ego-centric relation but indwelling in God and man . . . and emergence into a more positive being than even the historical.'⁵⁰

When we speak of the Incarnation—of Jesus the *avatara*—we do not refer merely to his life on earth but to a long process which includes that life but also his death, resurrection, ascension and *parousia*. And the Jesus whom we know by experience in *bhakti* is *this* Jesus, Jesus the *avatara*, Jesus whom by the Spirit we know as immanent, as the *antaratman* or *antaryamin*. Because of the resurrection and the work of the Spirit we men of this age can know Christ in this way, for 'the present is the dispensation of the Spirit and the immanent Christ'.⁵¹

* * *

Many of us would agree that some of the most important theological issues to be faced by the Christian Church in the context of Indian religion and culture are those touched on by Surjit Singh such as the meaning of the body and of matter, of personality, history and community. Much valuable work along these lines has been done by the late P. D. Devanandan—especially in his use of the term *purusa* in connection with personality—and by his successor Mr. M. M. Thomas. These,

⁴⁹ *Guardian*, 20.4.44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

we believe, represent true and permanent insights of the Judaeo-Christian tradition at points where the Hindu view stresses the universal, timeless and cyclic rather than the particular, the purposive and the linear.

Yet what we have seen of Chakkarai's writing reminds us that 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 *cruces* 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.

EDITORIAL NOTES

The articles on the Resurrection in this issue were papers read at the recent Western Regional Conference of the Indian Christian Theological Association in Poona.

* * *

Dr. A. F. Thompson of Bishop's College, Calcutta, takes over as Literary Editor of this *Journal* with this issue, and any communications should be addressed to him at Bishop's College, 224 Acharyya Jagadish Bose Road, Calcutta 17.

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The Editorial Board wishes to thank Mr. Clifford Hindley for his distinguished services to this *Journal* during his all too short period as Editor.

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