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Modern Catholic Attempts at Presenting Christ to India

JOSEPH MATTAM, S.J.

If the earlier attempts to present Christ to India were through a reinterpretation of the Vedānta systems in the light of Thomism, the later attempts are characterised by a transcending of the systems and an emphasis on spirituality and the experience of the Divine. Prof. O. Lacombe, J-A Cuttat, Jules Monchanin, Abhishiktananda and K. Klostermaier are a few of the important proponents of a spiritual approach. None of these authors, except Klostermaier, attempts the formulation of an explicit Christology; they present rather attitudes and principles that should guide us in our approach to Hinduism. We shall not deal with all these authors, but mention two in passing and briefly expose the views of Monchanin, Abhishiktananda and Klostermaier.

Prof. Olivier Lacombe of Paris, a great indologist and a thomist, holds that the values of Hinduism should be assimilated not at the level of its systems, but at the level of its basic *élan*. We will be able to meet the Hindu by descending to the level of his spiritual experience, to the non-expressed, experienced spiritual *élan*, for there we can meet him at his 'meeting point with God', and thus we will be able to express our faith in Christ in a way the Hindu can understand. His experience of the Self can be an openness to grace, even though the expressions of such an experience may seem faulty to us. Prof. Lacombe's point of view is that when we discover the spiritual *élan* of Hinduism we shall see its bearing on Christianity and on humanity in general and find ways of presenting Christ to the Hindu.¹

Another proponent of the approach through spiritual experience is Dr Jacques Albert Cuttat, one time Swiss Ambassador to India. He holds that a Christian can meet a Hindu only at the summit of each other's spiritual experience, on the level of the Saint and the Yogi. When we meet a Hindu our primary question is not 'What shall I tell him about Christ', but rather 'What does Christ want to tell me about Himself through this Hindu brother?.' The answer could well be 'love him as yourself' and 'look at Me through his eyes'.²

¹ Professor Lacombe has written extensively on the theme of Hindu-Christian dialogue, but practically all his works are in French. A complete bibliography can be had in my unpublished thesis: *Catholic Approaches to Hinduism*, A Study of the works of the European Orientalists P. Johanns, O. Lacombe, J-A Cuttat, J. Monchanin and R-C Zaehner. Rome, 1972.

² cf. J-A Cuttat, *Expérience Chrétienne et Spiritualité Orientale*, Desclée, Paris, 1967; 'Dialogue Chrétien avec l'orient Spirituel', in *Choisir*, 2 (1961),

We must therefore listen to him in the totality of his otherness; accept him as other, as an image of God and try to enter into his spiritual experience and thus assume all the non-Christian and pre-Christian values. Then we will be able to see how God has been leading India to her fulfilment in Christ; it is in the depth of Hindu spirituality that we should become aware of the uniqueness of Christ. Having gone through such an 'inner dialogue' of assumption, a Christian will be able to present Christ to the Hindu.³

ABBÉ JULES MONCHANIN (1895-1957)

Among those who follow a spiritual approach to Hinduism, one who deserves our attention most is abbé Jules Monchanin who has been a source of inspiration to many, though in his lifetime here in India he was little known and appreciated. This great missionary of our times, 'a seeker of the Absolute',⁴ was an adorer of and witness to the Trinitarian mystery and an exceptional personality not only because of his natural qualities but also and primarily because he was a 'man of God'.⁵

Monchanin greatly desired the conversion of India. 'My only desire', he wrote, 'is that India be one day fully Christian: not to desire it would be unchristian'. Conversion, however, is understood as a Christianisation, an inner transformation not only of a person but of a whole culture, of all the values and riches existing in a particular civilisation. His meditation on the sacred Scriptures of Hinduism convinced him that there was something very precious in it, that would be of incomparable value to the Church, whose task

pp. 18-22; *The Encounter of Religions*, Desclée, New York, 1960 'The Religious Encounter of East and West', in *Thought* (Fordham), 33 (1958), n. 131, pp. 485-514; *Spiritual Dialogue between East and West*, Max Müller Bhavan, Delhi, 1961.

³ This attitude calls for a simultaneous requisite: a deeper understanding of our own faith in the light of the discovery of the presence and action of God in Hinduism. Dr Cuttat insists that unless we manifest in our life the inner transformation which Christ works in us, He will not be able to draw the Hindu to Himself.

⁴ cf. Henri de Lubac, *Images de l'abbé Monchanin*, Aubier, 1967, p. 15.

⁵ Jules Monchanin was born in France in 1895. From his early days he felt a call to come to India, the 'Land of the Trinity', to be an adorer of the Trinity here. In 1939 he was received into the diocese of Tiruchirapolly. In 1950 he founded an ashram, (*Saccidānanda ashram*) at Kulitalai, along with Dom Henri Le Saux (Abhishiktananda). Because of illness Monchanin had to return to France and died in Paris on 10 Oct. 1957. As most of his works are in French and not easily accessible to the ordinary reader, I shall not give explicit references to the sources. His main work in English is: *A Benedictine Ashram*, (revised edition), Times Press, Douglas, 1964. (First published, *An Indian Benedictine Ashram*, Tiruchirapolly, 1951). *Indian Culture and Fulness of Christ*, Madras, 1956; A Memorial volume, *Swami Parama Arubi Anandam*, Tiruchirapolly, 1959, contains extracts of his speeches, letters and other writings.

it was to assume, purify and transfigure it; at the same time the Church herself would be perfected in her very being: for the pearl of exquisite beauty which India possesses namely, her thirst for the Absolute, for the spiritual, for the One without a second, and her readiness to sacrifice all for It, would be an excellent adornment for the Bride of Christ. Every nation and culture brings her its gifts, and she cannot be indifferent to any, for she should recognise in these various civilisations the presence and workings of Her Lord and of her animating Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. She is sent to harvest the fruits of the Spirit and to perfect whatever is incomplete, while at the same time enriching herself.

The re-interpretation of the Vedānta can be of interest and value to the Christian, but it will not mean much to a Hindu. Our social works and education cannot replace the essential mission of the Church, that of being the spiritual *guru*, spiritual teacher, which in fact she is. As yet the spiritually enlightened, deeply religious men of India cannot recognise her as a spiritual teacher; she is all activity, and does not allow her spiritual nature to shine forth to those who ask of her not works like education or nursing—necessary and important as these are—but for the lived experience of the Spirit, of Christ, of the Father. Hence the meeting with Hinduism is a challenge for the Church: perhaps the greatest challenge she ever had to face, for she has to be fully and really her true self. Nothing short of holiness, nothing less than the life of the Beatitudes can convince a Hindu of her spiritual nature. All exterior changes, reforms and 'adaptations' would leave him unmoved, but if the Church allows the Spirit of Christ to shine forth in her, the Hindu cannot be indifferent to her.

It is precisely in this challenge that we perceive how well India and the Church are meant for each other. India's spiritual quest for the Absolute has been realised and best expressed in her monks and *sannyāsīs*. The monk has been and still is held in esteem by the religious-minded Hindu, in spite of all the changes taking place in India. The *sannyāsīs* are known for their spirit of renunciation, solitary life and dedication to the quest of the Absolute. In Christianity too there is provision for men and women to realise in themselves in silent adoration and contemplation of the Trinity her essentially spiritual nature, her eschatological reality. Hence the Church has no better way of meeting a spiritual minded Hindu, except in and through her monks dedicated to the contemplation of the holy Trinity. Living a life of total renunciation and contemplation the Christian monks will assimilate the Hindu quest of the Absolute and Christianise it. They would meditate on the sacred Scriptures of Hinduism, find their 'fuller sense', and assimilate the workings of the Spirit in them and discover the 'seeds of the Word'. This would bring growth and maturity in them, making them the 'first fruits' and 'holocausts of adoration and praise' in the name of the Church and of India. The Christian monk will delve deep into the 'cave of the heart' like his Hindu brother and commune there with the Indwelling Guest, instead of shutting himself in upon the self in isolation. He will accept the death of the self in order to be 'born again' into the Absolute.

But only in proportion as he passes through this stage of interiority, total death to self, will he be able to assume and transfigure the Hindu quest of the Absolute, the soul of India.

The Christian monk will assume all the classical spiritual ways of India: work without self interest—*niskāmakarma*, the way of loving devotion, *bhakti* and finally the way of experiential knowledge, *jñāna marga*, by making a real synthesis of them all. A synthesis of the way of love and spiritual knowledge is possible only because of the Trinity: in the Trinity knowledge and love are One God, one cannot exist apart from the other.

Given the Hindu search for the

'Unseen, unspeakable, ungraspable, unthinkable,
Unnameable, without distinctive marks, tranquil (*santa*)
Benign (*siva*), without a second (*a-dvaita*)',⁶

which is also called *Saccidananda*, Being-knowledge-bliss, and the simultaneous quest for the personal God with whom union is possible, we see how the Holy Trinity is the fulfilment of these aspirations. The Christian God solves the antinomy of the One and the Many: for He is absolutely One and simple, but He is not a closed unity, but a unity of multiplicity; He is fullness. The unity of this God is not a closed unity, but a unity of communion, of Gift, of mutual inhabitation; it is not destroyed by the 'othernesses' which are three subsistent relations within the unity. This unity is not one of absorption, nor of exclusion but a non-multiple *a-dvaita* (that is, not adding up nor multiplying) including a Triad which like the One (*Unum*) transcends all numerical categories. The irreducible monism and pluralism of India reconcile themselves by overstepping their boundaries in this unity of the Triad, in this triplicity of the One, this Absolute-One-Multiplicity, this communion of othernesses.

The Trinity is not infrapersonal like a thing or a law; it is not personal in the sense in which a person is identified with ego-centrism (*ahamkāra*) or with the 'circumscribed', limited individuality (*pudgala*). Being essentially 'other-oriented', the three transcend *ahamkāra* and thanks to the circumincession they transcend *pudgala*, all limitation. The Holy Spirit who in His manifestation is the least circumscribed and the least anthropomorphic, the most spiritual, is at the meeting point of the quest for the Personal God and the Impersonal Deity. Taking *co-esse*, or *esse-ad* (being-towards-another) as the constitutive element of personality, Monchanin shows that the Trinity answers the quest for the One without a second, for the Personal-Impersonal. The Spirit leads the Hindu brother to the glorified Lord and through Him to the man Jesus in suffering, in whom alone will India understand the meaning of man and creation. Given the highly spiritual nature of India's quest, Monchanin holds that in our presentation of Christ we must begin with the perfection of Love, the Spirit, the most uncircumscribed 'person', the 'completion' of the Trinity; from the Spirit to the Risen Lord in glory, from the Risen Lord to the Suffering Servant and

⁶ *Mandukya Up.* 7

finally the Incarnation, and thence to the Father, the Unknown and the Unknowable. 'Are we not entitled to expect', asks Monchanin, 'that through acknowledging in the "Indwelling God" the mystery of the universal and deifying presence of the Holy Ghost, India, in rising upwards to the "One without a second", *ekam eva advitīyam* (*Chand. Up.* 6.2.2) will find at length the mystery of the Father's love overflowing into the Plenitude of His Incarnate Son?'

We might also point out that Monchanin considered the Trinity as *Saccidānanda*, which is the highest and best expression of God outside the revelation of the Trinity. When a Christian meditates on the *Saccidānanda*, he gives these words a fuller meaning which has been communicated by the revelation of the Word and the Spirit. When thinking of the Father, the Origin without Origin, the Source and End of the 'expansion' and the 're-collection' of the divine life, he can say *SAT*, Being; in the same way he can say *CIT*, Thought when considering the Logos, the Intellectual consubstantial Image of the Existent; and *ĀNANDA*, Bliss, Joy when meditating on the Spirit, the Unifying of the Father and the Son. These words are not the attributes of God, but they express what He is : *sat, cit, ānanda*.

Since the whole of Monchanin's emphasis is on the Holy Trinity, especially on the Spirit as the fulfilment of Hinduism, he does not present an explicit Christology; according to him a whole life lived in contemplation of the Trinity is going to be the revelation of Christ to the Hindu. However in one place he makes a valuable observation about Christ. Commenting on Colossians 2:9, 'For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied', he says that Christ is the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna*, the manifest and the unmanifest in the One Person of the Word. 'Through Christ full man and full God—the Way—to the abyss of the fathomless Godhead, wrapped in its mystery and silence. Christ as man is the starting point. The same Christ as God is the final Goal. And at this ultimate stage, God is meditated upon as He is: in His essence, in His absolute Godhead'.⁸ *Godhead* and *God* are not contradictory but complementary aspects of the same Reality. God points to the divine essence inasmuch as man is related to it: to its aspect of immanence; *Godhead* points to the same essence, in its *essentiality*, to its aspect of transcendence, to its aspect of oneness and absoluteness. The view that Christ is both the *Nirguna* and the *Saguna* is significant, for the Hindu experience of God, the intuition of the Rishis of seeing God as the related and as the unrelated is in a unique manner realised in Christ.

In conclusion we must say that the approach of Monchanin does seem to us very significant, for the best in both Christianity and Hinduism are made to meet. In Truth alone can we truly encounter God who is Truth. Only when we become true to our nature as Christians will we become signs and messengers of Christ; until then we shall

⁷ Monchanin, *A Benedictine Ashram*, p. 37.

⁸ Monchanin, in 'In Quo Habitavit Omnis Plenitudo Divinitatis', in *Swami Parama Arubi Anandam*, Tiruchirappolly, 1959, p. 178.

be mere cymbals, making noise but no intelligible sound. It should however be remembered that Monchanin does not propose a 'one-and-only' method, and he does not expect all Christians to follow this method which is for a few, for those who are called to it. He accepts other interpretations of facts and other approaches; but we cannot deny that what he has proposed is a way which profoundly respects the essential nature of the Church and the characteristic note of Hinduism. As Bishop Raymond said, Monchanin has shaken us out of our self-complacency and has created in us a 'divine discontent'⁹, which compels us to re-examine and re-assess our methods and approaches, and the Indian Church ought to be grateful to him for his inspiring example and teaching.

SWAMI ABHISHIKTANANDA

In general the thought of Abhishiktananda is similar to that of Monchanin, he has however developed some of the insights of *An Indian Benedictine Ashram*¹⁰ in his own way. Christianity, he insists, is primarily a spiritual reality, a living experience in the Spirit. Its source is the experience Jesus had of His Father and in the Father and the Spirit of his communion with his fellow-men. Conversion, faith and life in Christ are the reality of the Church and not its structures. Hence the life of the Christian has to be lived at the level of the Spirit, in that 'cave of the heart' where the Spirit bears witness to our own spirit that we are sons of God.¹¹ Similarly, the true message of India is spiritual. It is to free man from the 'knots of the heart' (*Mundaka Up.* 2. 2. 8), from all false identification by which he mistakes for his true self one or other of the manifestations of his personality at the social or intellectual level. To show man the undefinable and profound mystery of his own being and the mystery of the Self, the 'one without a second' is the contribution of India to the world.¹²

Given the spiritual nature of both Christianity and Hinduism, the mission of the Christian in relation to the Hindu is to transmit to him the fulness of the experience of the Spirit given him in Jesus. The Apostles transmitted to us an experience of God they had in Christ. For our own communication of it to be real *kerygma*, 'the Christian message must first be a living force in the heart of the messenger, a

⁹ cf. Bishop L. Raymond, 'Abbé Jules Monchanin', in *Clergy Monthly Supplement*, VI (1962-1963), 286-291.

¹⁰ Published by Monchanin and Abhishiktananda in 1951. Abhishiktananda came to India in 1950 and founded *Saccidananda Ashram* on the banks of the Kavery, together with Monchanin. After the death of Monchanin, he led the life of a *sannyāsi* in North India. In recent years he wrote a great deal on Hindu-Christian dialogue. He died in 1973.

¹¹ cf. Abhishiktananda, *Towards the Renewal of the Indian Church*, Ernakulam, 1970, pp. 1-23; 'Communication in the Spirit', *Religion and Society*, 17 (1970) 3, pp. 33-39.

¹² cf. Abhishiktananda, *Gnānānanda*, Un maître spirituel du pays Tamoul, Chambéry, 1970, p. 17.

living spring welling up in the very centre of his being'.¹³ Abhishiktananda holds that no communication of Christ is possible except at the level of the Spirit, at the level of the depths of one to the depths of another. A Christian has to descend into that 'cave of the heart' where he utters his own 'I' and hears there the 'Thou' addressed to him by God and meet Him, and being thus established in the centre of his own heart, he will be able to communicate to others. For the real medium of communication can only be the Spirit who 'plumbs the depths of God' (1 Cor. 2:10) and so can reveal man's depth to himself and introduce him to the depths of his brother. When communication at the soul-to-soul level has been established, a verbal dialogue is possible. But to achieve this communication a Christian must have 'knowledge' of the ultimate depths of the self where the Mystery revealed itself to the Rishis, for unless the Hindu is convinced that the Christian interlocutor has spiritual depth and awareness of the interiority of which the Hindu teachers speak, he will not be interested in meeting a Christian. In other words, only at the highest level of the awareness of the Absolute can a Christian and a Hindu meet. Hence the message of Abhishiktananda is a call to the depths, to interiority.

It is not the advaitic experience, but its formulation that is perhaps a stumbling block to Christianity; advaita is a challenge not to Christianity, but to the laziness and pride of the Christian who refuses to accept Christ's words: any one who tries to preserve his life will lose it; anyone who loses it will keep it safe. For advaita means 'neither God alone, nor the creatures alone, nor God plus the creature, but an undefinable non-duality which transcends at once all separation and all confusion'.¹⁴ No need of a synthesis between Christianity and advaita, for 'advaita lies at the very root of Christian experience'. It is simply the mystery that God and the world are not two. Hence we could speak of an advaita dimension of Christianity.

One who has not experienced non-duality of being, one who thinks of God as 'another' has not comprehended anything of God nor of himself. The apostles realised that the 'I' uttered by Jesus was the 'I' of the Unique and in that oneness, they too were one with Jesus and with each other.¹⁵ The gospel of John, especially chapter seventeen, appears as the crown of the Upanishads. Here in a language different from that of the Upanishads John seems to make us realise the truth of the upanishadic experiences. All that Jesus has received from His Father He communicates to those who are his own by grace. As the Father and Son are ONE, so He and His own are one in and with Him. Just as the Indian sage hears in the depth of his inner silence, the murmur of *sat-cid-ānanda*, being-awareness of being-infinite joy, so in the depths of the silence of the Spirit, springing up from the Word dwelling in him, the Christian too hears within his

¹³ Abhishiktananda, *Communication*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Abhishiktananda, *Hindu-Christian Meeting Point*, Bombay, 1969, p. 107.

¹⁵ cf. *ibid.*, 102.

own soul the echo of the same *sat-cid-ānanda*, but which has uttered all its secrets:¹⁶

Thou art one with me
as I am One with the Father
in the infinite Glory of Being,
the supreme revelation of *SAT*, Being, undivided,
having received from me
the very knowledge
that I have of Him,
the revelation of *CID*, the awareness of Being, God's own awareness that He IS,
loved by Him, loving Him,
as He and I love one another,
in the very fullness of our Bliss,

the supreme revelation of *Ananda*, the Bliss of Being, this is the Christian *Saccidānanda*, which is no longer a closing in upon itself but an awareness, no longer monad but communion'. The Christian *Saccidānanda* is the mystery of the Spirit, the communion of the *One* with the *Other*, the 'recollection' of the Father and the Son in each other. The Spirit reveals in all things the mystery of the *ekatvam*, unity, non-duality. When the mystery of the Trinity will have been opened to the vedantin *jñāmi*, he will hear in the secret place of his heart, the substantial Word by which the Father begets him also in the mystery of his adoptive sonship, and recover his incommunicable personality in the 'Thou' by which God calls him into existence in the unity of the Spirit of Love.

The passage from the vedānta to the Gospel calls for a death¹⁷, but unless those who invite the advaitin to undergo this death, do not themselves descend into the depths of the self and undergo this death, they cannot invite the Hindu to do it. The Christian must experience in himself the anguish of the Hindu who has heard the call of Christ but cannot see how the present day institutional Christianity is compatible with the profound spiritual experience either he himself had or about which he has heard from the gurus. However, no one can enter into the path of the advaita without much preparation and a call; yet through greater attentiveness to the interior dimension of the Christian tradition, a Christian can come close to it. He does not 'superimpose' an advaita over his faith experience; he must rather with the help of the advaitic experience discover and set free the fulness of the treasures contained in the Christian faith experience. He must rejoice also that the vedantin's experience of being and of the Self culminates, by transcending himself, in the Trinitarian experience of the *Saccidānanda*. This however cannot be proved, but faith assures us that it has to be so.

The contribution of Abhishiktananda, over and above the ideas he shares with Monchanin, is perhaps the emphasis on the place of

¹⁶ cf. *ibid.*, 96 f.

¹⁷ cf. *Hindu-Christian meeting point*, p. 131.

the advaitic experience in the life of the Christian. He has shown in a personal way the real impact the advaita should have on Christianity and also shows that if the Church does not heed the call of advaita, she is failing to respond to the 'hour', to her 'hour'. A Christian must give himself to the experience of the 'advaita of God', the mystery of the procession of the Son and the Spirit in non-duality, advaita of nature and communion of persons; he must experience the silence of the Father from which proceeds the Son and in Him all of us; and the advaita of the Spirit who is one in the Father and the Son, and one in God as in man, the undivided *Saccidānanda*¹⁸. Just as in the case of Monchanin, the intuitions of Abhishiktananda are valuable, though what he envisages can be achieved only by a very small minority of Christians, for today it is too unrealistic to expect many persons to give themselves to contemplation and to a Christian advaitic experience of God demanding nothing short of death to self.

KLAUS KLOSTERMAIER (1933-)

'In the encounter with Hinduism, I have begun to understand how Christ meets the Hindu—not from outside, but from within his own thought and faith'.¹⁹ This conviction seems to guide and direct Klostermaier's approach to Hinduism and all his efforts to 'render audible the "call" of Christ within the words and structures of Indian thought'.²⁰ His idea of a *Kristvidya*, Christology, may be expressed thus: it belongs to sphere of *Brahmavidya* and hence the stipulations set down by Indian theologians for the latter is the first step towards the former. Christ must be shown to belong to the sphere of Brahman, and hence only through the 'realisation' of the 'inner life' can He be known and expressed.

Klostermaier begins his *Kristvidya* by showing the inadequacy of the existing Hindi translations of, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God' (Matt. 16:16). For in Hindi one reads: *Ap Khrisṭ hain jīvit Ishvar ke putr*.²¹ The term 'Khrisṭ' does not mean anything to a Hindu, whereas names like *Rama* (pleasing), *Krishna* (black), *Śiva* (auspicious) do mean something to him. '*Ishvar ke putr*' is a common expression in the Epics and the *Purānas*.²² *jīvit Ishvar* is meaningless since there cannot be a dead Ishvar. All literal translations can be misleading, for a religious concept carries with it the whole living history of the religion concerned.

¹⁸ cf. Abhishiktananda, 'Yoga and Christian prayer', in *Clergy Monthly*, 35 (1971), p. 476.

¹⁹ K. Klostermaier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban*, SCM Press, London, 1969, pp. 117-118. Klostermaier was born in Munich in 1933 and from 1961 he was in India doing research on Indian philosophy, and worked for some time in Bombay at the Institute for Indian culture. At present he is in Canada.

²⁰ *Hindu and Christian* . . . p. 110.

²¹ K. Klostermaier, *Kristvidya*, a sketch of an Indian Christology, Bangalore, 1967, p. 8. (Translation of the Hindi text, P. Sah, Allahabad, 1965.)

²² cf. *Kristvidya*, p. 9. *Mahābhārata*, has many 'sons of God': e.g. Karna is the son of the sun-god. *Purānas* too have many sons of God.

Sketch of a Kristvidya: *Kristvidya*, an 'introduction into the mystery of Christ as the New Testament presents it'²³ has to be on the same level as *Brahmavidya* which is the highest aim of a Hindu theologian. According to Śaṅkara, the prerequisites for *Brahmavidya* are distinction between reality and illusion, renunciation of all worldly pleasures, self-discipline and the desire for ultimate freedom. Or briefly, pure and exclusive desire for the Absolute: *vairagya* and *mumuksha* which are complementary.²⁴ Rāmānuja requires *prapatti*, the total and unconditional surrender to God; Mādhava demands resignation to the Lord Vishnu; Nimbarka teaches that we must have an ardent desire for *sākshātkāra* (bodily vision of God) and faith in the guru. According to all the acharyas one of the indispensable condition for *Brahmavidya* is *viveka*: discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, real and unreal, Brahman and non-Brahman.

In the New Testament, Christ makes a basic distinction between His Father and the world, and the truly Christian attitude is found in the Sermon on the Mount: 'first of all seek the kingdom of God and His Justice'. What is demanded is an unconditional commitment to Christ in answer to his personal call which goes to the very core of man's personality. This call-answer is absolutely new and unique: the exact counterpart of the vedantic 'realisation'.

The attitudes, therefore, both in the New Testament and in Hinduism are similar. Christ's call and man's answer from his innermost depths is better expressed by *moksha* and *prapatti* than *svarga*. The aims of these attitudes is to enable man to be 'in' or 'with' God; but being 'in Brahman' or 'with Krishna' is different from being 'with Christ', the difference however is something that cannot be explained, but has to be experienced.²⁵

Constructive elements of Kristvidya: In Hinduism we speak of three different *mārga*, but Christ is the *Mārga*, the only way. Hence we must try to express *Kristvidya* in all the different systems.

Karmamārga: Technically speaking, Karma is the vedic *yajna-mantra* complex. Since 'deva' is usually translated by God, we may be tempted to use Deva for Christ, but that is not admissible, for their functions are different, and besides, only those mentioned in the Vedas can be devas. There is another category in the *karmamārga* literature that applies to Christ. *Sabda:* In the *Karmamārga*, *sabda* is a vedic *mantra*; Mimamsakas found that its meaningfulness comes from the connection of a word with *akriti*, the Uncreated Idea, which as such is incomprehensible and is never exhausted by an individual word. *Sabda* is ever present and is eternal, and is imperishable. The Upanishads speak of *Sabdabrahman*, Brahman in the form of Word.²⁶ Hence the concept *sabda-brahman* and *Akriti* render much better the meaning of the Logos and Son of God than *Ishvar ke putr*.²⁷

²³ *Kristvidya*, p. 11.

²⁴ Śaṅkara: *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya*, I, 1. 1; *Kristvidya*, pp. 13-14.

²⁵ *Kristvidya*, p. 15.

²⁶ cf. *Mundaka up.* 2. 2. 4; *Mandūkya up.* 1. 1f.

²⁷ cf. *Kristvidya*, 22-23.

The vedic sacrifice, *Yajna*, is the fulfiller of all wishes and is the foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ. The matter sacrificed is transformed into a higher reality; so too from Christ's sacrifice is born the whole of Christian life. In the Rigveda hymn, *Puruṣasukta*²⁸, the primeval being is made a matter for sacrifice. So we can say of Christ that he is the *Sabda Brahman* become *Puruṣa* of the great sacrifice from which all graces and merits flow. Through the theology of the *Sabda-yajna* we can gain great insights into the mystery of Christ.

Bhaktimārga: The *Bhaktimārga* is to a certain extent a 'History of salvation', for the *purāṇas* are considered sacred history—*Itihāsa*. Its centre is the *avatār*. It is rewarding to apply the *rasa* and *bhakti* doctrines to the Gospel of love. As there are various grades of *bhakti*, so too in the Bible one can discover different types of love, starting with the love of Abel and Abraham we move to that of Mary Magdalene, and finally the love of Jesus, who did not tell us what love is, but 'Love as I have loved you'. That alone can be the measure of christian *bhakti*. Without changing words, the inner meaning of the *bhaktimārga* is changed when Christ is made present to it through our love. There can be no genuine *Kristvidya* without genuine *Kristbhakti*, love, and no *Kristbhakti* without love of the neighbour.

If we use the *bhaktimārga*, we have to know its theology well. There *Īśvara* is Brahman, the supreme Being, and there is an important theory of the five different forms of manifestations of *Īśvara*. 'He abides in a fivefold form as *Para*, *Vyuha*, *Vibhava*, *Antarayamin*, and *Archavatara*'²⁹ *Para* is the Parabrahman; *Vyuha* is the highest Brahman himself abiding in fourfold form for the purposes of mediation and for creation; *Vibhava* is the descent as *avatāras*; *Antarayamin* is that form which abides in the heart; *Archavatara* accepts for its body any substance offered by the devotee and descends into it with a non-material body. Following this system, a *Kristvidya* would be like this:

Para is the procession of the Son from the Father, *Vyuha* is the proceeding of the Spirit . . . *Vibhava* is the divine mission of the Word into the world, *Antarayamin* is the real presence of God in man through faith and sacrament, *Archavatara* is the Eucharistic presence.³⁰

Finally, the *Japa* tradition of the *bhaktimārga* is parallel to the Jesus Prayer.

Jñānamārga: A 'combination' and comparison of Aquinas and Śāṅkara are not enough for a true *Kristvidya*. Śāṅkara cannot be taken as a true representative of Hinduism as he leaves out of consideration so much of the popular Hinduism. Yet, more than any other, his system insists on the radical distinction between Brahman

²⁸ *Rigveda*, X, 90. cfr. Brahmabandhav's commentary on the Hymn 'KA', in *Sophia*, Feb. 1896, pp. 2-4.

²⁹ *Kristvidya*, p. 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

and non-Brahman. The words *karma* and *adhyatma* describe the distinction between the two spheres. *Karma* is the normal world, where there is nothing eternal, nor new. But the *adhyatma* is the world of the Self, Spirit, Reality proper. Now, the Gospels in spite of their simplicity reveal an *Adhyatma* Christ, for they too insist on going beyond what is seen and sensed. The miracles are signs; Christ says, 'I am in the Father and the Father in me . . .'; Paul insists that the Lord is a Spirit. The centre of the Christian message therefore is spiritual, and the unspiritual cannot understand it.⁸¹ The detachment required in the gospels is as radical as in the advaita. Only the Logos can bring true God-Knowledge and that is possible only through a *kenosis*: 'emptiness alone can keep him'.⁸²

Kristvidya, as we have mentioned earlier, is the revelation of the hidden *Brahmavidya*. Christ is unique even as Brahman is unique—not a uniqueness among many 'sons of God'. The 'uniqueness of Christ consists in his being the subsisting relatedness *within* the Absolute: he does not "teach" a way to God, but he *is* himself the "way towards God"'.⁸³ Hence *Kristvidya* demands as much interiorisation as *Brahmavidya*. Only through the realisation of the 'inner life' can Christ be known, for the existential reality of Christ cannot be reached through concepts, but only through an existential experience. Given a deep Christ experience, the whole of *Brahmavidya* vocabulary can be used for *Kristvidya*. Meditation on the Upanishads and the Bible shows us the similarity and the differences between the two. An Indian Christology will not culminate in a dogma, but it will be a *mārgā*, a 'systematic liberation of man from all wrong attitudes and concepts to make him "free" for the *One*, the ultimate experience'.⁸⁴ An Indian *Kristvidya* will have a *karmamārga*, *bhaktimārga* and *jñānamārga*.

In conclusion we must say that Klostermaier is eloquent and effective when he criticises; less so when he constructs. Just take a small example: he himself uses the word *Krist* (without H), though he had criticised the use of the term *Khrist* saying that it meant nothing to the Hindu; besides, he is not free of the method of comparison which he criticises. The emphasis on *Kristvidya* being of the nature of *Brahmavidya* leaves out of consideration the fact that Christ is not only in the sphere of the Brahman but is also in the sphere of the temporal, earthly: became flesh.

The modern approaches we discussed try to go beyond Thomism and other systems of thought. Monchanin and Abhishiktananda emphasise an aspect which was neglected in the earlier, doctrinal approaches. Klostermaier, while leaving aside the Catholic systems becomes a prey to the Hindu systems. However, until a genuinely Indian expression of Christ is found through the assimilation of the Indian religious wisdom and the kernel of the Christian message, as

⁸¹ cf. above, p. 211 where Abhishiktananda defends the spiritual nature of the Church.

⁸² *Kristvidya*, p. 37.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

mentioned in our earlier paper³⁵ the Hindu systems may be found useful. A systematised Indian Christology must also come from a living liturgy and a Christian life lived according to the genius and character of the Indian people. Popular and modern Hinduism have been completely neglected both by the Calcutta School and in the modern attempts we have discussed. The Hindu of the post-independence India with all the changes he is subjected to must also be taken seriously. The paper of Fr Samuel Rayan in this issue fulfils this latter need. The authors we have studied make us aware of the necessity of a variety of expressions of Christ for the different peoples of India: we cannot speak the same language to the Hindu and the Muslim, to the Sikh and the Parsee, and among Hindus themselves to the advaitin and the bhakta. The attempts which lay stress on the inner transformation of the Christian are more demanding but also more rewarding in our efforts to present Christ to India. In spite of the laudable attempts made in the past to interpret Christ, one is forced to admit that this is a work that is still in its initial stages, calling for generations of dedicated Christians, for great giants of the Spirit, who can abandon themselves to the call of the Spirit and allow themselves to be led where the Spirit leads them.