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In the recent decade or two, there have appeared scores of theologies from new Indian thinkers which are a thorough mixture of all strands we have discussed so far. Many of them are theologically very creative and bold, even radical. Some are good thinkers but not writers. In this chapter we briefly note their contribution, without attempting to do a systematic analysis of their thought. Time, it appears, is not yet ripe for such an effort.

RUSSELL CHANDRAN (b. 1918)

Russell Chandran belongs to that generation of Indian Christians who stand between the colonial period and the emergence of indigenised Christianity. As such he and his contemporaries were compelled to take up the leadership from the outgoing foreigners in all the Christian institutions, and so were unfortunately bogged down in administrative and financial aspects of their organizations. This means that their creativity in those lines, and so their writings are neither definitive nor plenty. But they are important land marks on the way.

Background

Joshua Russell Chandran was born in Tamil Nadu in Kanyakumari district in a Christian family. After his early education he took to ministry at the young age of 20, as a probationer in the Kodankarai pastorate. This led him to theological studies at United Theological College, Bangalore, (BD). He then served as pastor in the Irenipuram Church for three years. He pursued higher studies at Mansfield College, Oxford (1947-49), Union Theological Seminary, New York (1949-50) and Chicago University Divinity School (1957-58). In between he was appointed as a lecturer at United Theological College, Bangalore in 1950, and became its principal in 1954. He was the principal of this prestigious

institution till his retirement in 1981. He was, needless to say, the first Indian principal of UTC. He also taught at other well-known international institutions: Union Theological College, New York (1964-65), Louisville Theological Seminary, Kentucky and the Episcopal Theological Seminary, Cambridge, Manchester (1972). He became the president of the Senate of Serampore College (1968-71) and contributed in this way a great deal to Indian theological education. He was the president also of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and its prime mover. Chandran has represented the Church of South India at various international ecclesial conferences, including being the delegate to the WCC from that church. He worked also as the vice-chairman of the CSIU's Executive Committee (1966-68). He was the convenor of union negotiations of the CSI before it was founded, and has decisively shaped the CSI constitution. He was also on the negotiations committee of the joint council of CSI, CNI and the Mar Thoma Church. He is also the founder-president of the Christian Union of India (see later). Chandran was honoured in 1978 on the occasion of his *shashtabdhi-poorthi* (60th anniversary) with a festschrift entitled *A Vision for Man*, a book containing several articles by his colleagues in India and abroad. In this work, he is described variously as "the theological teacher", "the theologian of the Church", "the fighter for peace with justice", "the ecumenical man" and as "the Asian Christian". In recent years he has played a decisive role in the politics of Fiji islands concerning the liberation of Indians there.

Chandran's Writings

As hinted already, Chandran has not done much of serious writing, commensurate with his ability. Most of his writings are in the form of articles (above 120 in English, Tamil and German). These are in theological periodicals such as the *Guardian*, *National Christian Council Review*, *International Review of Missions*, *Ecumenical Review*, *South India Churchman* and *North India Churchman*. In Tamil he has written one book on Christian ethics, and in English,

Following Jesus. His unpublished thesis "A Comparison of the Pagan Apologetics of Celsus against Christianity as Contained in Origen's *Contra Celsum* and the neo-Hindu Attitude to Christianity as Represented in the Work of Vivekananda" is considered a scholarly work.

A personal word here: Now that Indian Christian theology has come of age, what is desperately needed is a swarm of creative Indian theologians! Administration and financial expertise can be picked on the way, while theological specialization cannot, and so your and my generation must take up the challenge of writing. If you are called to do so, take it up by all means!

Chandran's Vision

Samuel Amirtham, a colleague of Chandran and the editor of the festschrift in honour of Chandran, has beautifully summarized the theology of Chandran in his article entitled "A Vision for Man". The title excellently summarizes Chandran's thought. Even the eulogisations cited earlier show that Chandran is primarily concerned about man as man – not man as sinner. This sweeping statement will become clearer in the following but one preliminary comment on that title "A Vision for Man" is necessary here. It speaks of man in his individuality, as well as in his collectivity – a thoroughly anthropocentric approach. But it speaks also of man not as he is now but rather of man's utopian goals, of a further futuristic vision of man, what he would be finally. Again, this vision is only one among the many – "a vision" – and thus is very tolerant of other religious and ideological streams – no wonder that Chandran is called the "ecumenical man". The emphatic element in this vision is apparent in that it is a vision 'for man', and not 'of man'. It is not the self-determined goals of man and society but something which is given for man to grow beyond himself – namely from the perspective of the New Man, Jesus Christ.

This vision, the central thought of Chandran, has four elements.

A Vision of Human Community that is Inclusive

For Chandran, the Cross of Jesus Christ broke down all the barriers between man and man, and resurrection means that Jesus' "ministry continues through the people whom Christ indwells through the Holy Spirit".¹ The Church continues this ministry, and is thus "a foretaste of new humanity and therefore, an inclusive community".² Chandran repeatedly bewails that Baptism is sadly misunderstood as bringing man and woman from out of the world into the exclusive community of the church. For Chandran baptism represents "not separation from the world but commitment for the Lord".³ The 'corrupt communal interpretation' of baptism must be replaced by "an interpretation emphasizing commitment for the renewal of the world."⁴ The theological basis for this inclusive interpretation which Chandran suggests is from Christ's baptism. It was not a baptism of sinners, but Jesus' identification with sinners.

This inclusiveness of all mankind is based on the common humanity of man as man. This is the meaning of baptism: incorporation into the New Humanity of Jesus Christ, commitment to mission in the world, and identification with the world. And so Christian mission is interpreted by Chandran to mean the task of making man genuinely human, in other words, humanization. He exhorts Christians to discard the false understanding of the church as the realm of grace, while the world is the realm of law and judgment. He recommends that we should rather speak of the hidden and open operation of God in the world and the Church respectively. Thus Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of the final inclusive destiny.

A Vision of Renewed Community with a New Style of Living

Renewal of life is the second emphasis in Chandran's thinking, which he takes from the New Humanity of Christ. Everytime people have responded to the gospel there has been great transformation. This conversion, "from the old complex of law, commandment, reward, punishment, sin, guilt, judgment and death, to the new complex of grace, love, forgiveness and life",⁵ has no fixed conventional pattern of operation. Further, this renewal is not just personal; "the

renewal of the Church would imply taking societal concern".⁶ This means that "solidarity with the people of God, separation from evil, and being a community of love are some marks of this style".⁷ But it should be noted that for Chandran, people of God are not just Christians, but "all people". Externally, this life style means that we identify with our neighbours in even their religious activities like onam, pongal, deepavali, and other *pujas*. Initially it means living with a double focus, with the Word and the world, "the sacramental-real" and the "love-law" foci. Such an approach approves of secularization of life as well as 'man-for-others' ethics. So a selfless life is the key of this renewed life style, and love is the key of such renewal. Chandran's theology has as its goal "the new inclusive humanity where Christ gathers everybody into one family."

A Vision of a Community where there is Peace with Justice and Freedom with Dignity

These four concepts of peace, justice, freedom and dignity are referred to by Chandran in almost all his sermons, articles and talks, for him, since love means concrete action – "love has to be expressed in terms of justice, mercy and peace". And there is no justice without political change, and the people of God are always on the move changing. This means clearly that political involvement is a must for every Christian, for the Church. To restore every man to dignity and freedom – this is the meaning of biblical righteousness. It means that development is synonymous with freedom from *karma*, the consequences of my background. Since justice and peace inevitably go together, the biblical concept of peace (*shalom*) means "wholeness of life, harmony of humanity living together". And freedom involves an openness for all, respect for dissent and responsible criticism. So freedom cannot be separated from human rights and human dignity. It is in this connection that Chandran founded the unique organization called the Christian Union of India. The motto of this union was "to serve India in the name of Christ". And the following were its objectives:

1. to strengthen and promote secular democracy;
 2. to educate the Christian community in nation-building;
 3. to cooperate with other agencies towards a classless society; and
 4. to strive for international peace, justice and goodwill.
- As is obvious, humanization is the goal of this effort.

A Vision of Humanity in Dialogue with Commitment

Since coexistence and survival of mankind are at stake and since religion is a most potent source of human strife in this world, a religious dialogue is a must. Religious pluralism thus has only one answer: dialogue in depth with all religions. Such a dialogue must include a positive respect for all religions, and Christians must be humble enough to admit their limitations. It is only dialogue which preserves the good in all religions. He asserts that it is a way of communicating Christ to others, but not a relativisation of the Christian gospel. In dialogue, there must be a give-and-take attitude in all participating religions. Chandran makes the following four assumptions concerning inter-religious dialogue:

1. Only those who are committed to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour can enter any meaningful dialogue between religions.
2. There must be willingness to reformulate our faith in the light of other faiths, listening is thus an essential element in dialogue.
3. Each religion must be understood from its own point of view.
4. Every participant must be open to the result of the dialogue.

With such an approach to religions it is natural that Chandran affirms that the polarization is between light and darkness, since these two are found in all religions. But it is not between religions. It is clear that even here, Chandran accepts only that religion as true which supports and aims

at humanization of man and society. This is truly a vision for man indeed.

Evaluation

Here, we have met a line of thinking which is bold and radically different from the conservative thinking, though typical of many contemporary Indian theologians. So we have already dealt with such theologians earlier, such as M.M. Thomas, so, here only comments on some dominant aspects should suffice.

First, it must be appreciated that Chandran is passionately concerned about the welfare (*shalom*) of man — this is no arm-chair theology, but has concrete implications all through. This is good. But what is sadly lacking is a biblical understanding of man as sinner and there is no proportionate emphasis on man's predicament, as the Bible gives. As such, this anthropocentricity is in danger of turning into anti-theological humanity.

For the same reason, Chandran's approach to the authority of the Bible as the inspired word of God is far from satisfactory, though his resort to human expertise, philosophies and religions is admirably expressed.

Secondly, his compassion for all mankind is praiseworthy, but to sacrifice biblical distinctives of the disciples of Christ (repentance and faith in Christ) against the rest of the world as 'unbelievers' is equally blameworthy. This bifurcation of humanity into believers and non-believers is hurting, no doubt, but that is a biblical bifurcation, and the New Testament authors have confirmed it. We cannot do less. In Chandran's understanding of dialogue, the Christian distinctives can be easily lost, in spite of his plea to the contrary. There is also, furthermore, an unwarranted inclusion of political involvement as an essential part of the church's mission, that is, there is really no biblically developed support for this aspect in Chandran's writings. No doubt a Christian as a citizen should be a patriot by all means and also partake of the political, cultural and economic life of the nation; but it is another thing to say that the

Church of Christ must participate in political actions – will not the Church lose her salt? She must be a worshipping fellowship, and a proclaiming servant – that is her nature and calling according to the New Testament. Let the Church be the Church was the cry of Christian leaders for the last half century.

Finally Chandran is fascinated with the great visions of the contemporary ideologies of futuristic outlook, and unconsciously, at least, Marxism seems to have molded his programme of action. Perhaps in this summary of his thinking by his friend it may not be clear, but in the statement of EATWOT, which Chandran drafted, it is unmistakably clear. This statement affirms the task of Indian Christian theology as follows:

We want Indian Christian theology to be a service to the Indian people in our common search for full humanity in an open fraternal fellowship. Indian theology seeks to discern, eliminate and support people's struggle for human wholeness in freedom and dignity. Its endeavour is to make a meaningful contribution to the march of our people toward human completion in a just society.

So it is only fair to judge that Chandran's theology has turned into ideology – and that too consciously!

VINAY KUMAR SAMUEL

Vinay Kumar Samuel, an ordained clergyman of the Church of South India in Bangalore, is a energetic thinker and activist, whose primary interest is something like Samartha's question: what does it mean to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in India today? That means that he emphasizes more on Christian ethics rather than Christian theology.

His definitive thinking on ethics seems to have materialized in his Bishop Joshi Memorial Lectures (1980) with the theme "The Meaning and Cost of Christian Discipleship". He starts with the assumption that Jesus called his disciples not into a vacuum but into a political-social-economic community with definite justice concerns. And

Jesus showed an example in this in himself by taking the initiative and announcing that the kingdom of God had arrived in him. He was the embodiment of the kingdom. This kingdom was expressed in the community of disciples which he called to express the life and power of the kingdom. Forgiveness to enemies, welcoming the marginal, renouncing violence and giving an example of servanthood, those were the marks of this nucleus community. Samuel studies this question of Christian discipleship in five aspects, namely, its understanding and its implications in the political, economic, social and religious context.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political context of the time of Jesus was one of foreign rule under Rome. There was resentment against taxation, and military imperialism. Economic exploitation, and oppressive religious and cultural traditions were enforced by the political domination over the Jewish nation. But Jesus refused to accept the way of achieving and maintaining power adopted by the Romans and collaborators. Roman power was based on the maxim, 'strong are the rulers' but he rode a donkey into Jerusalem in direct contrast to the Roman commanders who entered with horses and chariots. Instead he identified himself with the victims of such power and he himself died as a result of it. Thus, instead of a separate existence of Caesar's and God's cities, Jesus really brought the city of God and its structure to man.

THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Since land ownership was the main source of wealth then agriculture was the mainstay of the economy. Jesus strictly warned against the evils of possessing great material wealth. This news was good news to the poor but woe to the rich. In any case, it is amply clear, says Samuel, that in Jesus' attitude towards the economic sphere was a fundamental bias for the poor and the basis was.

God is the God of Justice and poverty is an expression of injustice; it is the world that is biased against the poor, God is biased towards justice. So the invitation to repentance and the kingdom means a putting down of the mighty and an

exaltation of the poor. His bias is to bring us all back to wholeness.

In order to demonstrate his bias for the poor Jesus sent his community of disciples to serve the poor, to heal the sick, bring the dead back to life and to treat all kinds of diseases and exorcise demons.

The reverse side of this coin of bias for the poor was the bias against the rich. Jesus vigorously attacked the rich and said the rich could not enter the kingdom of God. He cried woes to the rich. According to him riches were definitely not a sign of God's blessing. That is why when many rich young men wanted to join him he asked them to sell all what they had, distribute among the poor and follow him.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

Vinay Samuel says that there is no fundamental distinction between the social and the economic, but yet we can make a case for the social outcast. In Palestine woman and children were socially disadvantaged but Jesus honoured them both and gave them special attention. He fellowshipped with Samaritans, with sinners and tax collectors and also with lepers, the sick and the demon possessed.

THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Jesus did not follow the religion of the Pharisees and the Scribes, but in fact was in conflict with them since, in order to keep the traditions of men, they disobeyed the commandments of God. He attacked the Sabbath on the grounds that it prevented men from doing good to the sick and the needy. In opposition to the traditions of washing, he affirms that not what goes inside a man but what comes out of him is what makes him unclean. He said for the sake of religious *korban* it was not right to take away the natural support for the parents. Thus Jesus was against all the de-humanization of the law. Against all this he affirmed that he himself was the fulfillment of the law. He fulfilled the law in two ways, in giving it true meaning in his own life and in providing the power to obey it.

In the light of this Vinay Samuel says that the whole understanding of Christian mission also must be transformed. It was not just the winning of souls but meeting the needs in these contexts. Just as Jesus was incarnated in his context, the missionaries must incarnate themselves in these context and alleviate suffering. Mission is a struggle against power and principalities. Therefore in the coming decade the emphasis will be not so much on dogmatics but on the study of sociology and social change. He predicts that the major areas of study will be salvation, church and Christ.

Vinay Kumar Samuel has also edited several books and booklets along with Christopher Sugden. These include *Christian Mission in the 80's*, *Current Trends in Theology* and *Sharing Jesus in the Two-Thirds World*.

VISHAL MANGALWADI (b.1952)

Vishal Mangalwadi, from Chhatarpur, M.P. is another of those young theologians who would like the shift from reflection to accelerate. He and his family have suffered, both for the sake of the gospel as well as under the exploitation of the rich zamindars, and so along with the others founded ACRA, an institution to bring justice to the poor farmers against the rich shopkeepers, the zamindars, the police and the political forces. He has written several articles and books, including *The World of Gurus* and *The Truth and Social Reform*. The following is taken from the latter book.

As he himself confesses, being an untrained theologian he does not resort to exegesis, but his theology is the outcome of confrontation in courts and prisons and with the powers and principalities. He begins by saying that compassion for suffering was a prime element in Jesus' ministry. This was a prophetic compassion. In meeting with human misery Jesus went to the root of it. In our context this means that our service takes the form of radically stirring the stagnant pool of a selfish society and a judgment of its blindness. But Christians must not stop at that, they also

must go on to social create an alternate power for social change. Then from compassion to social reform is but a stop.

He analyzes social reform to mean (a) a critical awareness in a society that their values and institutions are fundamentally wrong, (b) a hope that change is possible, (c) a hope that better alternative is in fact available, (d) a leadership that is able to organize and mobilize the masses against the status quo. He observes that as a rule the privileged, the rich class in society, is not interested in reform since it attacks their own security and luxury. This also means that the reformers cannot play the game by the rules of the establishment since the establishment is corrupted by the elite in the society. This is exactly what Christ does, affirms Mangalwadi. Even John the Baptist called, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". Unless our message comes not only as a good news to the poor but also a threat to the rich we are neither relevant nor the salt of this earth. With strained exegesis Mangalwadi attempts to show that Paul was a social reformer but had rather spiritualised the issues.

Starting from this necessity to reform the society, Mangalwadi comes to the church as the necessary agent for such a social reform. Mangalwadi does see the church as an essential element in the message of Christ and even as an antidote to social evils such as poverty. Though he does not deal with the role of the church essentially, from here on Mangalwadi goes to the role of the Holy Spirit in social reform. The promise that "ye for shall receive power" has the implication that this power is the power for cross-bearing and to judge and to protest against evil structures. Another form of power, says Mangalwadi, is prayer.

After the above theological basis, Mangalwadi goes on to outline a practical proposal as to how farmers' economic reform movements can be established and gives the details of this proposal. His main contention is that poverty is created and so must be rooted out. Exploitation is the true cause of poverty in India, he says, specially in that part of

India where he lives. The cause of the political economic problem really boils down to religious tensions.

My own comments on Mangalwadi's theology is that all his interpretation of the church's inability and inaction against injustice, as well as the exploitative situation in the society, are fully valid. But by the same token, it will be necessary not to reform the society (social church renewal).

As we have seen, more of the younger generations are really concerned as to how the church can actually participate in the present time in the processes of nation building and in developing a just and equitable society for all. The next theologian study is, unlike them, more interested in the philosophical explication of the gospel content.

PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS (b. 1921)

Paulos Mar Gregorios is a veteran of Indian ecumenism. He has also participated in several of the WCC meetings at the highest levels and has written and lectured profusely. Formerly Paul Varghese, he is known as Mar Gregorios as the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Syrian Church. He is also at present the Principal of the Orthodox Seminary at Kottayam. His books include: *The Gospel of the Kingdom, Be Still and Know, Freedom and Authority*. The following are excerpts from the last mentioned book.

In the present discussion of the whole question of liberation in Jesus and the liberation theologies, Paul Mar Gregorios asks the fundamental questions of what do authority and freedom mean in Christian perspective. The relevance of the question is clearly seen as authority is breaking down everywhere. This crisis of authority is touching not only the Christian church but the whole of human society at its very foundation.

The question is, if man is created to do good, and he is created free in the image of God, to love God and his fellow men, how is it that both freedom and authority are now crumbling? He begins by establishing the cause for this crumbling of authority in the present cultures, both eastern

and western, that this is partly because of the Church's image; it has been too authoritative and has often failed to foster freedom. Then, analyzing the philosophical aspects of freedom and authority, Gregorios bases his convictions on St. Gregory of Nyassa, whom he thinks is a corrective to many of Augustine's deviations. From there on he gives the Christian conclusion which he summarizes as follows:

All historical human existence is under some pressure to interiorize what is good in certain patterns of authorities, to discard the authority structure with all its freedom-hampering element and to move on to a greater degree of freedom by developing new structures of authority which foster human freedom.

Coming to his christology, more can be said specifically about his conviction. Taking the ultimate unity of mankind as his basis, Gregorios affirms that man cannot be truly man if he does not identify with the whole of mankind. Jesus is the one who showed this can be done. This is the new humanity which God created in Christ. So Gregorios believes "Jesus Christ effects salvation for all men whether they believe in him or not." Because the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit are at work in the church, the church becomes essential in his confession. Yet he is sure that "God's saving power is at work also outside the church" (it is revolutionary for an orthodox to say such a statement).

This emphasis on cosmic christology, on the universality as well as the historicity of Jesus, the essential unity of mankind with Jesus, all these elements are to be seen also in other ecumenical theologians, such as M.M. Thomas.

SAPHIR ATHYAL

Saphir Athyal was the erstwhile principal of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune. He is involved in the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelisation as its director for Misson and Evangelism. He is also one of the founders of what was earlier known as the Theological Assistance Programme which later developed into the Asia Theological Association.

Unfortunately, he has not written much though he is a thinker in his own right. The main thrust of his articles and papers seems to be his concern for indigenisation of theology.

In answering the question, what should characterize an Asian Christian theology, he gives several answers.

a) The Christian faith has a historical basis and character and so the Bible is the only written witness to this specific history of God's salvation deeds. This means that in some way the basis for indigenised theology must be the Bible.

(b) Since the context and the background in which God's word came to man in the Bible are similar to the life situations in Asia today, our theologies cannot be much different from the biblical categories.

(c) In the Bible itself there are examples of indigenising the message to particular forms of thought.

If that is what contextualisation is, Saphir Athyal contends that in Asia there also must be a systematization but not as in the west. While in the west systematization was more rational, Asian systematization must be around the particular issues in Asia. This means, Asian Christians need to study in depth and sympathetically the cultures and religions of Asia – after all Asia is the birthplace of religions and cultures. This means: "Inter-religious dialogues can be quite valuable in several aspects". It can create openness and friendship between peoples and help the participants understand the basic essentials of one another's faith. It also highlights the dissimilarities. Since in Asia culture and religion are closely linked together, all our lifestyle and thoughts have religious overtones. Athyal contrasts this with the western theologies which are primarily based on Aristotle and ancient Greek philosophies.

In contrast to the western theologies Asian theologies cannot afford to be purely academic and philosophical. Asian Christians have suffered for their faith and this means that one of the distinctive characteristics of Asian

theology must be its mission-orientedness, and willingness to suffer. Thus in developing an Asian confession of faith in the total life of the church, Asian theology needs to be more issue-oriented rather than academic.

These extracts are taken from his article "Towards an Asian Theology" published in 1975.

NOTES

1. *A Vision for Man*, 1978, p. 31.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
3. *Ibid.*
4. "CSI Synod Theological Commission" in *South India Churchman*, April 1969, p. 13.
5. *A Vision for Man*, p. 34.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*