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DHANJIBHAI FAKIRBHAI (1895-1967)

This theologian is a saint from Gujarat. Born in a devout Hindu Bhakti family of Baroda, he became a Christian as a young man. He became a teacher of Physics and retired as professor in a college. Only after retirement he devoted himself to the writing of Christian literature, presenting the Christian faith in a way relevant to the Hindu thinking. He wrote several books which are very widely read in both Gujarathi and English. These include *Christopanishad*, *The Philosophy of Love*, *Hriday Geeta*, *Prematatva Darshan*, *Praktya Adhyatma Darshana*, and *Shree Krist Geeta*.

Dhanjibhai's Focus: Love

As can be discerned from the list of his writings the principal divine attribute on which Dhanjibhai concentrates is that of love. In his own thinking this description of God as love is higher even than that of God as *Saccidananda*. Where intellect fails, love proceeds on; for love transcends all other categories. In this way Dhanjibhai relates all the doctrines of the Christian faith to love.

Creation is the work of God's love. The relationship between man and God is one of love. Sin is the rejection of God's love. And what is this love? He explains that it is the self-sacrificing suffering of God on behalf of the good of his creatures. As such, the proper response of man to God's love can only be repentance and humble acceptance in faith. Jesus Christ is love incarnation and new birth is the change of heart to love others and God.

He further maintains that more than the *karma marga*, *bhakti marga*, and *Jnana marga* there is one more *marga* which is the *prema yoga*, the way of love. This leads to nothing less than salvation or *moksha*. In addition to this *Prema yoga*, in another writing called *Shree Krist Geetha*,

Dhanjibhai expounds in poetical form several other *yogas* – of faith, of devotion, of action, of divine sacrifice, of self-surrender, of knowledge, of purification, of perfectness, of universal lordship of the many in the One, and of the supreme person.

Prof. Dhanjibhai has used the Indian forms extensively in bringing out the Christian message. His use of Indian forms such as *darshana*, *upanishad*, *geeta* and *bhashya* are all very welcome to Indian ears.

However, there are also certain departures in his thinking from the traditional ones. For example, he does not use the word *cit* for describing the second person of the Trinity, the *Logos*, but rather prefers the words *shabda Brahman* and *prajnana*. And what is this *prajnana*? He defines it as follows:

Prajnana – primeval intelligence – is the power which creates, maintains and inspires the world and human beings. *Prajnana* is power and wisdom, is the word of God. *Shabda Brahman* [Brahman in verbal form] is God himself – Brahman. This word of God, *prajnana*, took a body in the man of Jesus. As the heat of the sun's light, according to the *Brahmasutra*, is no different from the heat of disc of the sun itself, so this incarnate *prajnana*, the *avatara*, is fully God.¹

This is as orthodox as he can get.

Another change he makes from the usual tradition is in the use of the term *Kristadvaita*. Note that *Kristadvaita* is not derived from *khrista* + *dvaita* but rather, if you know the grammar of Indian languages (*lopasandhi*) it is a combination of *khrista* + *advaita*.

For Dhanjibhai the primary content of this *kristadvaita* is faith-union with Christ in a Johannine or Pauline sense. Though in this union Christ is the nucleus, Dhanjibhai differentiates six kinds of unity: (1) The unity of Son with the Father (2) Christ's unity with the created world (3) the faith union of the disciples with the Lord. (the main meaning of the word) (4) the mutual unity of the disciples with one another (5) the eschatological unity of all men and of all nations in Christ and (6) man's unity with nature, in the

sense that physically we are of the same stuff. The point to notice here is that in all these unions Christ is the one who sums up all things in himself.

This *Kristadvaita* is not just individual but corporate, as he explains: When individuals have really become one with the Lord Jesus their relation to one another is that of the members of a body. They all form a body for the Spirit of the Lord.²

As you probably know, Boyd, who also worked in Gujarat is very much excited about this use by Dhanjibhai of the term *Kristadvaita*. In fact, after Dhanjibhai's death Boyd himself used the word for a kind of systematic, contextual and commentary-like theology which he has written on the Book of Romans.

Evaluation

This summary of Dhanjibhai's work is very fragmentary and brief. Perhaps in future some other elements can be produced. But by way of evaluation we can definitely say at least this: An over-emphasis on the attribute of love is of course not new, but in church history it has always tended to an under-emphasis of the other part, i.e. the holiness or the justice of God. One can never be put higher than the other. Neither is love higher than the holiness of God nor is holiness higher than his love. The Cross is the connecting link between the love and the holiness of God. In the Bible God is love, but the way that love is given to man is holy. So God is not just love but holy love. This is how justice and mercy meet. On the Cross the wrath of God was appeased by the love of God. Unless we keep this tension we are definitely tending towards a lopsided understanding of the doctrine of God and hence of Christology and hence also of man and salvation.

Other than that, perhaps there is a slight hint of being too sympathetic towards Hindu scriptures, for in following some of the cosmic Christ ideas he seems to find revelation about Christ, or at least some gleanings of them in the Hindu scriptures. Other than these one can admit that Dhanjibhai's writings are very conservative.

SURJIT SINGH

Surjit Singh has written his doctoral dissertation on the question of Christology. Being driven to the study of Christ's divinity through his own personal experience of meaninglessness, he comes to the conclusion in the book through a direct experience of the presence of Christ. *Preface to Personality* (1952) is rather an expression of his existential situation.

He starts with an examination of the New Testament evidence of the divinity of Christ and comes to two conclusions, that it manifests a two-fold deity of Christ's metaphysical as well as historical aspects. As far as the metaphysical aspect is concerned, it comes out clearly. The New Testament Christ is the very creator of the universe as well as its sustainer. He is also immanent and the source of man's light and knowledge. He has full communion with the Father. As such Christ is of the same nature as God — a clear New Testament doctrine.

The historical deity is manifested in the Hebrew view that one who does the will of God is the Son of God. The Hebrew concept of the son is different from the physical or even metaphysical concept of the Greeks. The Hebrew concept is based on a moral relationship of responsibility, care and obedience. There is growth in this filial relationship.

He pursues a similar study also in the other books of the New Testament where different authors also amply express their understanding of Jesus Christ as fully man. Based on these double findings, Surjit Singh attempts to combine them into one New Testament christology.

His own christology starts with the Resurrection. From this he deduces that the divine-human relationship (incarnation) is a fact from the very birth of Jesus. In this relationship neither the divine nor the human is passive or inert. Always they both are active. The resurrection is also a point of perfect identification and unity between the divine and the human in Christ. It is a point of perfect relation and communion. But this unity is not one of essence, rather it is one of relation.

He takes the analogy of the relation of God with the world (that of God as *sat* and world as *asat*, or that of deism, or that of dynamic relationship, by which he means one affects the other). From this he brings out the inner meaning of the relationship of Godhead and manhood in Jesus Christ. Thus he defines that the relationship consists in a mutual involution (one is involved in the other), mutual interaction and mutual interpenetration. All this leads to a unitary person. Such a relation is to be found nowhere else. It is *sui generis* (unique), found only in Jesus Christ.

Following this line of thought, Surjit Singh criticizes Radhakrishnan's Vedantic ideas: that God is ultimately impersonal Brahman; that man, though he may seem to have individuality, in reality he has no personality; and that personality is of no ultimate significance, since ultimately *atman* and *paramatman* are identical. In fact, according to Radhakrishnan, the personal is a limitation and distortion and a bondage to the eternal self. He points out that besides reinterpreting several of the basic Hindu doctrines, what is lacking in Radhakrishnan's understanding of man is that there is no room for discussion of the freedom of man.

And so, in order to find the inner meaning of personality, Surjit Singh turns again to the fact of Christ. He finds, as already indicated, that personality manifests itself best in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because only in his resurrection the body becomes an essential ingredient of the total personality. It is not a cloak to be thrown away but it shows that man is a psycho-somatic unity and so also Christ. To quote Surjit Singh: "The idea behind the resurrection is that soul-body is the complete or whole man. The body in general, representing historical individuality, is not discarded."³

This is an adequate antidote both to the idea that spirit is good and matter is evil, as well as to the advaitic understanding of *maya*, that God alone is true and the world is untrue. In the doctrine of resurrection there is a positive relationship of God to the world and man. Surjit Singh's connection is that when we really grasp the content of personality, especially as it is found in Christ, and of course

both in God as well as in man. Only then can we find a proper understanding of God-world relationship, which is the central problem of Hindu theology. Here Surjit Singh is really saying that Christ is the 'paradigm' or model of personality.

This book is Surjit Singh's only work. But it can become germinal for beyond the question of essence of spirit and matter, of God and man, he comes to this conclusion: that the real unifying factor in our understanding of God, world, man, and Christ is relationship which is involved; which is part of personality.

Evaluation

To me the whole presentation looks very exciting and I do not find any major weaknesses. Perhaps, having little acquaintance with the Hindu philosophies and terminologies, he tends to resort more to the European-American philosophers and theologians. This may not be really relevant to the Indian mind. Boyd's suggestion that similar exposition of the Hindu concept of *purusha* can be only partly rewarding, for the content of *purusha* is different from the content of the person as Surjit Singh has attempted to develop.

DAVID G. MOSES (1902-1978)

David Moses is a man of our time having lived till the last decade. Born in Namakkal (Tamilnadu), he was like the most of the brilliant Christian youth of the time educated in the Madras Christian College (B.A.) and obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. degree from Columbia University, U.S.A. (1933-49). Being a good administrator, he soon took up such posts as the president of the World Council of Churches (as the first Indian), and the principal of Hislop College, Nagpur. There is not much known about his commitment to Christ. He seems to have accepted the message of the gospel because of Christian background, but seems to have grappled with the real issues only in his theological studies concerning the philosophy of Radhakrishnan.

Moses has written numerous articles: "God and Personality"; "The Nature of Religious Truth"; "The Need for Christian Thinking in India Today"; "Mission, Unity and Evangelism"; "Church Union"; "Religious Truth and the Relation between Religions", which is, a response to Radhakrishnan's philosophy of religion.

Moses and Radhakrishnan

Naturally Moses' primary interest was also in the area of religions. You remember our earlier comment that the last generation of Indian Christian leaders were compelled into administration and finance and so were least creative by way of theological writing or clarity – Moses also belongs to them.

Radhakrishnan's understanding of religion is summarized by Moses as follows: All religions are more or less equal; but theological (conceptual) truths which are in religion are relative, and therefore their validity as the basis of religion is questionable. There is formless truth of which all religions are different expressions; this also means that there is no final religion. Moses replies: concepts (theology, truth) have value for religions as their basis and instruments. Though man can know the absolute truth only in its relative forms, truth cannot divide but rather unite. Thus truth elements are necessary to religion.

In other words, Moses is reacting to Radhakrishnan's ridicule that Christianity as a religion of dogmas and rules fails to do full justice to religious experience as Hinduism, and so is inferior to it. Moses counters that precisely because of Christianity is based on (revealed) truth is more effective in life and experience.

Radhakrishnan understands Hinduism as seed, the ancient (hence the absolute) religion. He asserts that the search for the universal religion, for example, by the Parliament of Religions, cannot but end in Hinduism. Since Brahman is inexpressible all religions are expressions of the same Brahman though Hinduism comes nearest to the truth.

In reply to this, Moses says that though the different forms of religions are necessary, they are by no means all equal; otherwise such an approach will lead us into agnosticism. We need to discern between essential and non-essential elements of religion. Finally, in reply to Radhakrishnan's affirmation that faith is "herd infection", thus is sociological (by birth, like the Hindu), Moses counters that faith is purely a personal affair, a doctrine, which means the conversion, from one faith to another faith and so change of religion, is valid and inevitable.

A brief explanation is needed here to understand the relevance and even the content of the above. Moses lived in a time when the debate of discovering one true religion in all the religions was at its height. Religion with capital R refers to a faith relationship with 'God', while religions with lower case refer to the systems containing doctrines, myths, ethics, rituals, experiences and social institutions. And Moses' time was rife also with the question of missionary work and conversion as proselytisation, and Gandhi and Radhakrishnan were involved in it fully.

Thus Moses is attempting here a Christian apologetics, both against Christianity as a religion as well as defending conversion as religious rather than sociological, political or ecumenical phenomenon.

Towards the end Moses changed (like Karl Barth!) his position several times, and his final stance seems to be quite conservative, rejecting the teaching that all religions are equally as dangerous. He ended up in saying that Christianity has the final revelation, opposite to Radhakrishnan's claim that Hinduism is the final religion, because it is the most ancient religion.

Evaluation

Our comments are brief here also. We should appreciate that Moses wrote in response to the burning issues of the day, and hence was most relevant. But he seems to be using the methods and weapons of the enemy, by taking up rational and philosophical argumentation, a common and

almost inevitable temptation for all of us! In any case, Moses' writings lack the depth which warms one upto the cross and sensitizes one to the working of the Holy Spirit.

NOTES

1. Boyd, p. 332f.
2. Boyd, p. 334.
3. Surjit Singh, *Preface to Personality*, CLS, Madras: 1952, p. 112.