

# **MODERNISATION OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES AND THE STRUGGLE FOR NEW CULTURAL ETHOS**

by

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## **Introduction**

Our concern is limited to a field between the structures of society on the one hand, and the institutions and beliefs of religion on the other; that is, the sphere of cultural ethos, of the climate of thought, feeling and spirituality in which men see themselves and the world, and through which they shape their attitudes and behaviour. Ortega Y Gasset has defined culture as "the vital system of ideas of a period," the spiritual framework which mediates itself to men through myths, metaphysics, and ideology. It grasps their emotions through cultic rites and liturgies, artistic creation and the evolution of appealing symbols. In a cultural ethos the sense of the transcendent, of the human, and of the material are so closely intertwined that it is possible to speak of it as an integral spiritual vision, using the word spiritual in a broad sense.

There is a traditional ethos closely related to the social institutions and religions of traditional societies. And today as these traditional societies seek modernisation, they are also struggling for a new ethos, a new spiritual and cultural outlook which will correspond to the process of modernisation and provides a dynamic for it.

## **The idea of modernisation**

Is a new spiritual and cultural dynamic necessary for the modernisation of traditional societies? The answer will depend on the way in which we define modernisation. Mrs. Takeda Cho in the preparatory volume, *Man in Society*, speaks of the debate that is going on in Japan about the idea of modernisation. Professor John Hall and his group of American scholars define modernisation as the absorption by a society of the material and social technology necessary to increase economic

productivity. Modern Japanese scholars dispute this narrow definition of modernisation. They hold that it entails also the transformation of society and state by a new vision of human dignity, that it is produced by the interaction of a new technology *and* a new humanism. In fact, the struggle against poverty and for economic development today cannot be understood apart from the awakening of people to a new sense of human dignity. Therefore the struggle for a new cultural ethos can be seen as both a means for technological development and also as its end. It is significant that even the Japanese Marxists are opposed to the definition of modernisation solely in terms of technical development, and see it as the struggle for a new humanism.

I have dealt with the Japanese debate about modernisation at some length because the narrower definition of modernisation is very widespread. It is presented in its extreme form by Robert Theobald in *New Possibilities in Modern Technology*. He says that cybernetics makes the development of productive forces without any change in the ethos of the traditional societies not only possible but highly desirable. In fact he goes so far as to affirm that "many of the present values in the poor countries are highly suitable to a cybernated age" and should be introduced into "the countries already rich." There are many in Asia and Africa who believe that the new nations should strive to emulate pre-war Japan which built Western technology on the foundations of a traditional ethos. I do not think this is desirable, because it does not have any concern for the renewal of man and human values in traditional society; and I agree with the modern Japanese scholars who consider that transformation of the cultural ethos is an essential aspect of modernisation.

My thesis is that the spiritual dimensions of the contemporary awakening of the peoples of Asia and Africa, stimulated by the Western impact, and their search for a new humanism provide a starting point for the process of building indigenous cultural foundations for modernisation.

### **The cultural revolution in traditional societies**

Let us now look more closely at the nature of the change from a traditional ethos to the spirit of modernity inherent in the contemporary awakening of the peoples of the third world. Each of the many traditional societies and cultures has its own characteristics: some were moulded by the primal vision of the tribal religions, others by the metaphysical and mystical ethos of Hinduism and Buddhism, the more

pragmatic Confucian ethic, or the Islamic tradition. In fact the paper by Dr. Fals Borda in the preparatory volume *Man in Society*, makes clear that the Latin American cultures formed by Christianity are also illustrative of a traditional ethos and are involved in the struggle for a new ethos conducive to modernisation. While we must therefore speak in very general terms ; what we shall be studying is basically the cultural aspects of the transition from tradition to Modernity.

Let us now look at three aspects of this transition from a traditional ethos to a spirit of modernity :

(1) The first is a movement from an ethos with a vision of an undifferentiated unity to the contemporary cultural awakening which recognises differentiation leading to a heightened sense of individuality, and is searching for a new unity which acknowledges this enhanced individuality and the essential differences it creates. This may be illustrated from different levels of traditional cultures.

The Swiss Psychiatrist, Dr. Erna M. Hoch, who has spent several years working in a psychiatric clinic in India and is now a consultant to the Indian Government, has written in our preparatory volume and elsewhere on the psychic climate as the joint-family pattern breaks up to form the smaller Western-type families. In the West, she says, the family and other social groups are built like a roof "on top of the primary pillars of individuals who are conceived as separate entities," but in India the joint family is "the primary *root* organisation of humanity" which unites all its members in a kind of "primary oneness, a kind of symbiotic atmosphere." This climate cannot "promote the formation of robust ego-boundaries." And Dr. Hoch calls the new cultural awakening symbolised by the movement from a joint-family to small-unit family pattern, a transition from a "primary symbiotic-emphatic union" to the dynamism of responsible selfhood and interpersonal relations. The traditional family is "a basic primary unit, a kind of emotional continuum." In the new type of small family, "each member has to entertain relationships with the outside world on his own merit and in his own sphere of interest," thus forcing him to become conscious of an individual existence and responsibility. The contemporary awakening, in other words, means the break up of an undifferentiated emotional continuum into a differentiated individualism. K. M. Panikker maintains that this individualism is the essential cultural requirement of a new idea of community which transcends the narrow family, tribal castes and other communal groupings which were incapable of arriving at a sense of social

wholeness. In fact the transition from traditional communality to modern community is founded on this new psychological spiritual awakening of radical individuality.

I presume that the extended family is characteristic of most traditional societies, and that therefore what Dr. Hoch and K. M. Panikker have said about India is also relevant to other traditional cultures.

John Taylor in his sensitive and penetrating study of African religion, *The Primal Vision* sees the vision of "a total unbroken unity" of the cosmos as characteristic of African spirituality. There is the sense of a spiritual continuum within which the dead and the living, natural objects, spirits and gods, the individual, the clan and the tribe, animals, plants, minerals and man, form an unbroken hierarchical unity of spiritual forces. The self of man is not an individual self but an extended universal self present and actively participating in all the parts of the totality. Today the new spiritual awakening is tending to break this vision of totality and to produce individuals and groups conscious of their separate individual selfhood and its rights. The dynamism of an emerging selfhood is characteristic of the forward-looking cultural ferment in Africa and a necessary stage in the struggle for a new ethos of responsibility.

Many recent studies of Eastern religions and cultures have shown that undifferentiated cosmic monism is their common basic characteristic and that the break-up of this monism is the fundamental feature of modern cultural change. Van Leeuwen in his *Christianity in World History* has characterised the Eastern cultures as "ontocratic" as including all-reality — nature, men and gods — within an ontological or metaphysical unity of being. The Philosopher F. S. C. Northrop, who has a very much more positive evaluation of the spirituality and ethos of Eastern cultures, and considers them as complementary to the Western, calls it the "immediately apprehended, undifferentiated aesthetic continuum." In this continuum "all things whether they be nonhuman or human natural objects" share a "boundless indeterminate aesthetic factor" so that the determination of radical monotheism or its opposite, radical atheism, or the determination of radical human personality, is impossible.

In the contemporary social and cultural awakening in China, Japan or India, we can see a different spiritual outlook emerging. There is a new emphasis on differentiation; on the essential otherness of man from subhuman nature, making possible a scientific attitude of conquest

and exploitation of nature by man ; on the individual with fundamental rights to self-determination and non-conformity with the group ; on the otherness of the world and society from God, making possible the autonomy of secular life from religion.

(2) A second aspect of the movement from tradition to modernity in the cultural ethos is the movement from the concept of world-as-nature to that of world-as-history. Karl Marx in his writings on India has described the spiritual ethos of traditional Asian societies as based on a belief in "a never changing natural destiny" coupled with "a brutalising worship of nature." For him the Asian village was a combination of a stagnant economy, vegetative social existence, and nature-worship. It was incapable of pushing Asia forward out of a stagnation patterned after the natural cycle into the dynamism of a historical consciousness. For this reason, he said, the Asian village could look on historical events like the ruin of Empires as though they were natural events. Of course, Marxism in its later developments did precisely what Marx criticised Asian traditional village cultures as doing, namely interpreting history, in terms of natural necessity. But he was in large measure right in noting that Asian cultural ethos never came to distinguish radically between natural necessity and historical destiny ; and popular religion in all traditional village societies and cultures, accepted the cycle of the seasons and of agriculture as the pattern for the life of man and the cosmos. Arnold Toynbee has protested vehemently against the description of all cultures and religions of Asia as involved in nature-worship. He is right with regard to the higher religions of Asia, but even in the higher philosophical, ethical or mystic reaches of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, the tension between spirit and nature is absent. They are either too naturalistic or too mystical to develop the idea of man's historical freedom and destiny

The traditional idea of history as cyclical puts a premium on harmony and therefore tends to consider the creativity and enterprise of freedom as evil. But in the awakening cultures of many lands the idea is growing that the creativity and enterprise of freedom are good in themselves, even if they involve a large measure of destructiveness and disharmony. Moreover, the traditional ethos recognises no ultimate contradiction and believes in co-existence without radical encounter or dialogue. Japanese scholars have interpreted the existence side by side of contradictory values and structures as the expression of Asia's cultural stagnation. No idea fights another idea to the finish. The bullock cart and

the motor car and the spirituality which they represent continue to co-exist without conflict. In Hinduism many religions and gods co-exist. Everything new is assimilated ; nothing is ever rejected. But today when every historical event is fraught with significance and with a sense of movement towards a goal, ideological struggles demand decision, commitment and a fight to the finish.

And one of the most important aspects of the spiritual awakening of contemporary Asia and Africa is this new sense of history, of historical dynamism and historical mission. When Dr. Radhakrishnan was Vice-President of India he told an All-India drama seminar, that in the past India never produced tragic plays. Where there is no sense of a purposive movement towards a goal, there can be no sense of having missed it. Even the Poet Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* which might have been a profound tragedy merely depicts the play of fate, which after a time works itself out to a happy ending. Today, however, Indian playwrights are writing tragedies in all the regional languages, dealing not only with social but also spiritual tragedy. The sense of purposive even tragic history to which Asia and Africa are today waking up, is an essential aspect of the movement from the spirit of traditionalism to the spirit of modernity.

(3) A third aspect of the movement from tradition to modernity is the movement from a sacred to a secular ethos. Traditional cultures have been religious cultures in which nature itself was considered sacred, and society and state were institutionally and spiritually integrated with religion. Religion provided the authoritative principle of integration and upheld the idea of a fixed, eternal spiritual and moral order to which everything had to conform. The traditional Hindu dharma supporting a caste-system, the traditional Confucian ethic reinforcing a hierarchical paternalistic order, the tribal order under the authority of the chief — all required conformity to the sacred order expressed in sacred tradition. There were no doubt plenty of protests against the sacred order and ethos in the history of these cultures, but these could never assume the character of public philosophy. But it is precisely characteristic of the contemporary awakening in Asia and Africa that a new public philosophy which protests radically against the sacred ethos is being formed. There are three features of this protest : (1) the desacralisation of nature which prepared the way for science and technology and the idea of a nature devoid of spirits ; (2) a break-up of the traditional institutional integration of religion, society and state, and increasing emphasis on the freedom

of politics and society from the control of institutional religious authority ; this process of secularisation is hastened by the necessity for common action for national development by adherents of many religions and of no religion ; (3) as a counterpart of this secularisation of state and society an affirmation of the autonomy of the secular areas of life, the abandonment of the idea of an eternally fixed order sanctioned by religion, and an increasing emphasis on personal freedom and social justice, on the one hand, and empirical scientific or technological rationality as the criteria for ordering secular affairs on the other.

Thus the modern cultural awakening of Asia and Africa involves radical changes in the traditional ethos, bringing in their wake, a new awareness of responsible selfhood and interpersonal relations, a new sense of history, historical mission and human creativity, and a new emphasis on empirical science and its secular rationality as paths to truth. Together these may be seen as symbolic of the awakening of traditional cultures to a new dimension of human existence, which may be termed personal, i.e. man as freedom in responsibility. It is in promoting these changes that traditional societies can develop a new cultural ethos conducive to modernisation. No doubt these have been stimulated by the Western technical, cultural and religious impact and that impact continues. But independent nationhood and the tasks of nation-building have led to the development of indigenous religious and secular movements which are speeding up this process of cultural change.

### **Two false reactions**

I want to say a few words here about two false reactions to the cultural revolution taking place in traditional societies.

First, some advocates of the traditional cultures and the religions militantly defend the traditional cultural ethos against the new spirit of modernity. Of course, they are prepared to use the new nationalist ideology, the power of the new state, and modern technology to suppress the new spirit and to promote the resurgence of the traditional religious cultures and their value systems. This revivalism is strengthened by several factors in Asia and Africa : the deep-rooted traditionalism of the awakening masses newly invested with political power ; the fear among the intelligentsia of demoralisation resulting from the break-up of an integrated religious culture, and the anxiety caused by the terrifying burden of personal responsibility among people emancipated by the

spirit of modernity. I think it was the theologian Nels Ferré who after his visit to Asia contrasted the inner spiritual security of men, women and children in the traditional Japanese families with the emotional insecurity of members of Western families in Japan. Many prefer the freedom from anxiety of a girl in India who knows her marriage will be arranged at the proper time by her parents to the fear of the Western girls that she will not have a date for the dance. Families and societies which have suffered spiritually from the rebelliousness of adolescents may envy a culture in which adolescence does not produce such crises. In fact, what has been called "the sickness of the West" makes the traditional climate of nature-worship, undifferentiated mystic unity, perennial philosophy and the concept of fate very appealing to many Western thinkers who feel that rational individuality and historical dynamism have produced unbearable existential *angst*. Missionary leaders like John Taylor share the feeling of many that "the sickness of the West which reveals itself in the divorce of the sacred from the secular, of the cerebral from the instinctive and the loneliness and homelessness of individualism may be healed through a recovery of the wisdom which Africa has not yet thrown away." I am quite sure that the West has its sickness and that Asia and Africa have spiritual wisdom to share with the West, but I do not believe they will impart it by keeping intact the vision of the undifferentiated unbroken unity of traditional spirituality and society. Only if it is broken up through modernisation can the responsible self emerge which alone can produce that cultural creativity so necessary to bring Asian and African cultural treasures to the ecumene. P. N. Mathur says: "If the motivation of (Western) materialism is 'self,' that of (Eastern) spiritualism is 'selflessness,' not even 'unselfishness.'" Unselfishness presupposes the existence of the self, while selflessness implies its total denial." This distinction between the selflessness of the traditional ethos and the unselfishness (along with selfishness of course) made possible by the spirit of modernity is often overlooked. For example John Taylor in his otherwise splendid study the *Primal Vision*, seems to confuse the total unbroken unity of society with the community of inter-personal relations. At one point, he quotes Oldham's words about I-Thou relations as the path towards true human selfhood, and comments ' "On the face of it, that seems more congenial to Africa than to Europe." This is evidently an error. The mystique of the participation of all in the primal vision has to be broken up before the vision of community based on the dynamic of living intercourse of



the self with other selves can emerge. Traditional societies are now awakening from "selflessness" to selfhood. This may lead to selfishness or unselfishness, to irresponsibility or responsibility, but it is a necessity — both inescapable and desirable — for men's coming of age. It is for this reason that I cannot agree with Taylor that the cultural mission of the Church is "to discover a new synthesis between a saving gospel and a total, unbroken unity of society." No. The Church's mission is rather to provide the framework within which the ferment of the gospel can break the primal unity and enable self-awareness to emerge and pass into the new integration of inter-personal relations of unselfishness, forgiveness and love.

(2) A reaction at the other extreme is to equate modernisation with radical Westernisation, that is with a total displacement of traditional cultures by Western culture. The impact of a dynamic Western culture, through Western education, Western technology and Western politics has undoubtedly shaken the foundations of traditional cultures; and when Western education was introduced into Asian-African countries, many hoped that Western culture would replace traditional culture in a generation or two. But this hope was belied. Arthur Mayhew, the British educationalist, has analysed the reason for this. He claims that the policy of imposing Western culture led people to lead two parallel mutually exclusive lives, a modern public one and a traditional private one. The two co-existed without a real encounter — often in the same person. As Takeda Cho has said, the Japanese lived in a house of two stories, the upper fully furnished in Western style and the lower in fully Japanese style, with no staircase between them. The externals of modernity were accepted, but its spirit was not absorbed into the core of man's being, which remained traditional. And with the coming of nationalism, the traditional ethos from underground took its fanatic revenge against Westernisation. This happened in India at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th in the emergence of militant Hindu nationalism under Tilak's leadership. It happened in the militant revival of Mau Mau tribalism later in this century. In Ceylon the Buddhist-cum-Sinhala traditionalism came to prominence after independence under the leadership of teachers of the indigenous language, practitioners of indigenous medicine and the monks of the Buddhist Sangh, all of whom had been ignored in the period of Westernisation. As Arthur Mayhew has said, the policy of displacement of traditional culture by the Western is a mistake; Western Culture can

serve modernity in non-Western lands only by stimulating an inner renewal of traditional cultures.

No people can forget their cultural past. What they can do is reinterpret the past and select and bring out those aspects of it which are in line with the demands of the present and the future, thus giving new meaning to the past. Therefore struggle for a new culture in non-Western lands means grappling with and reinterpreting the inner being and values of the traditional culture from within the light of their relevance to modernisation. Jawaharlal Nehru was never tired of emphasising that the struggle for a new ethos required not cultural imitation but cultural creativity. For him, this meant a journey to discover India in a new way, a search in the Indian tradition for the germs of a humanism on which he could build a new cultural ethos embodying the spirit of modernity. Even the communists in China and India have undertaken such journeys into the past in an effort to affirm that communism fulfils the more dynamic stirrings of indigenous cultures. The only alternative to Westernisation and militant traditionalism are a creative renewal of indigenous cultures based on a spiritual encounter and interaction between the traditional and Western cultures, leading to a new cultural synthesis, conducive to modernisation. In this sense, the cultural task is closely related to the reform of traditional religions, metaphysics and ethics, and the renaissance of indigenous arts, language and literature in the light of the demands of modern technical and social development.

It is this note that I miss in Van Leuven's *Christianity and World History*: in an otherwise epoch-making book, the author does not see within the Eastern cultures the tradition of continuous struggles against ontocracy, with which the new spirit of renewal can establish continuity; he also writes off without proper discrimination all resurgence of traditional religions and cultures merely as reaffirmations of the traditional ontocratic spirit, and is blind to the creative indigenous movements towards a modern cultural ethos. In reverse, he seems blind to the seriousness of the dehumanising trends at the heart of western culture, which erupted only the other day in a modern revival of pagan demons and gods in Nazism and still finds expression in Western ethos.

In fact, Van Leeuwen with his new radical messianism of Western secularism, and his sense of radical discontinuity between West and East leaves the impression that he equates modernisation with Westernisation and is purely negative towards the Eastern religions and cultures.

This may have revived the drooping spirits of those in charge of Western cultural and religious missions in Asia and Africa, but there is a touch of unreality in it. I would grant that Western culture can stimulate the creative process of indigenisation of the spirit of modernity, and also that technology carries with it the idea of secular rationality and the cultural ferment to which the gospel of Christ gave birth. But those who hope that the growth of industrialisation and urbanisation with their accompanying secularisation will in the near future create a new ethos which will displace the religious and metaphysical *Weltanschauung* of traditional societies are likely to be disappointed. Radical Westernisation of culture may be possible for isolated individuals living in a non-Western culture or for some very backward cultures, but it is not practical for a whole traditional advanced culture. Nor do I think it would be a healthy pattern. I cannot believe that secularism and technology will remain human and enhance humanity unless they are accompanied by a sense of the transcendent and the mystery of the self-transcendence of the human person; and unless they have some religious or ontological basis for affirming that the essence of man is personal. The functional must be placed within the context of the personal. There is no doubt, great need to criticise and reject much of traditional myth, religion, and metaphysics. But we may need the contribution of some myth, religion and metaphysics to develop a framework of meaning and power within which persons with the modern spirit of individuality, historical dynamism and secularism can find their human fulfilment.

The future of the struggle for a modern ethos in non-Western lands lies ultimately with the indigenous movements which are seeking to transform traditional cultures from within; and I believe also that the struggle for a common ethos for the world community requires a common consciousness of the spiritual crisis in the cultures of all six continents and a common effort to meet it with the resources of all cultures which are in a process of creative renewal.

### **Christianity as a humble but significant partner**

The struggle for a new humanism and a common culture which will be informed by it and will motivate the remaking of traditional societies is being waged by three types of modern movements. In Asia and Africa these have an indigenous character today, in that they are closely allied with the *cultural* dynamic of nationalism and nation-building.

First, there are the movements inspired by ideas of secular humanism with either a scientific, liberal or socialist emphasis. Second, are the movements oriented to the reform and renewal of traditional religion, metaphysics and systems of ethics ; these emphasize the dynamic aspects of traditional humanism and seek to give indigenous cultural roots to modern humanism by forming a synthesis of the two. Third, is Christianity which expresses Christian humanism in evangelistic and service enterprises, and in the development of congregations which are more than mere traditional ethnic groups. I am speaking particularly of those forms of Western Christianity which are more closely related to cultural modernity than to traditionalism, and of the Churches which continue this tradition. I am looking at these movements as cultural movements of modern humanism, though they are more than that : they are also faiths, and as such, each has its own apprehension of ultimate reality which shapes its idea of man and his destiny. At this point, they are different from each other and mutually exclusive. But together they are involved in a common struggle to modernise traditional social structures and also to develop a common culture which expresses the idea of a social humanism and provides motive and dynamic for the new structures. Obviously a culture built by men of many religions and secular faiths cannot be integrated as a whole with any one of them. In this sense, faith and culture find integration in persons and not in common institutions. It is this that makes the new culture pluralistic and secular, and open. It is united by the common social task and common loyalty to a community of values expressing common basic insights and assumptions about man and society, with of course differences in emphasis arising from ultimate differences of faith. The community of values and insights which form the common cultural ethos is nourished by a continuing dialogue between persons who have different commitments of faith. We therefore work not for a Christian culture but for an open secular pluralistic culture informed by, and open to, the insights of many faiths, including the Christian faith. Many questions can be raised here. Can such a culture have stability ? Can it acquire the dynamic to defend itself against a fanatic religious faith or secular ideology which seeks to destroy the plurality and to dominate the culture ? The answer depends on the strength of the common commitment to the spirit of modernity and the dynamic of faith men repeatedly bring to reinforce that commitment. Christians have a special role to play at this point.

In the non-Western World, and especially in Asia, the movements of secular humanism and the reform movements of traditional non-Christian religions and cultures generally speaking have a more massive influence on nation-building and show greater cultural creativity than does Christianity. However, this cannot be the total measure of the cultural significance of Christianity in these lands, for in the final analysis the Christian message (though not Christianity itself) has historically been a basic determining element in the spiritual ferment which has produced the movement of modernisation, and which requires the gospel for its spiritual fulfilment. Christianity can accept the number three place in the cultural awakening in traditional societies because it knows full well that the Christian ferment is greater than Christianity and that it has often existed in the West in radical protest against, and even rejection of, Christianity and that in non-Christian lands it must be discerned in the total modern cultural awakening of peoples, including the renaissance of other religions and secular movements and ideologies. In fact, whatever the fundamental core of faith affirmed and reaffirmed by non-Christian religions and secular movements, insofar as they are actively involved in the social tasks and cultural awakening of modern humanism which has the ferment of the gospel at its core, they are in some sense at least within the Christian theological circle. The presence of the gospel and dialogue with the gospel are already present at their centre. This is what gives Christianity its significance in a secular pluralist culture and defines its mission to the total culture : to make the pressure of the gospel and the dialogue with it more real in all modernising movements thus enabling a further transformation of their humanism and their "theology" (if I may call it that) in the light of God's purpose for man as revealed in the divine humanity of Jesus Christ. Dr. Paul Devanandan never tired of emphasising this function of Christianity in Asian lands : it is the theme of his book *Christian Concern in Hinduism*. And similarly Bishop K. H. Ting in his *Christian Theism* has shown that it is possible to penetrate to the centre of Marxism with a view to lifting the debate between idealism and materialism within it to a new debate about the dimensions of spiritual self-transcendence of a genuine humanism.

All this should not be understood as building a syncretistic religion or faith. In fact, the unique Christian contribution to the inter-faith dialogue and the partnership in struggle for a common ethos depends on Christians continuing to proclaim the Christian Kerygma of the Per-

son of the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ as the ultimate revelation and redeeming act of God in human history. It is the ferment of this unique faith which has brought about men's awakening to personality and history, to technology and social justice, and other aspects of the spirit of modernity, and that faith remains their ground. Religious syncretism is to be avoided not only for the sake of the purity of the gospel but also for the sake of the integrity of the human in a new culture. But religious syncretism should not be confused with the cultural syncretism which cannot be avoided in our contemporary struggle for a new cultural ethos conducive to modernisation. Dr. Visser 't Hooft once told me that I should use the phrase "cultural synthesis" rather than "cultural syncretism" to avoid confusion. He may be right, but for me synthesis implies a neat cultural integration which is not possible in this time of transition. Christians, like others, must live with fragments from many cultures which are not easily integrated, in the hope that a new cultural synthesis will eventually emerge around a new spiritual mission.

Here, I have already landed in the territory of theologians. So I must stop.

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