PREFACE

Very few Indian Philosophers in this century have presented Christianity more elaborately and eloquently than Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. His extraordinary depth of philosophical reasoning, the unusual penetration of his religious insight, coupled with a charming and epigrammatic English have commanded the attention of a great many scholars from all over the world. This includes a large number of Christian thinkers, some of whom find Radhakrishnan's exposition of Christianity quite enlightening and enriching, and some others who find it quite distorting and disquieting.

The title of this thesis - Dr. S. RADHAKRISHNAN AND CHRISTIANITY - is chosen to convey on the one hand, how deeply Christianity, its missionaries and institutions have affected and shaped the life and thought of Radhakrishnan, and on the other, how Radhakrishnan perceived Christianity, and expounded its place and role in a pluralistic world. In sum, this thesis aims at evaluating how Radhakrishnan and a Christian, particularly an Indian Christian, look at each other, and what each could or could not learn from the other. Therefore this thesis broadly revolves around Radhakrishnan's treatment of Christianity, and does not so much deal with other areas of knowledge, to which he has richly contributed.
The author of this thesis is by no means a theologian. Yet a topic of theological interest is chosen primarily for two reasons:

1. The foundation for Radhakrishnan's religious thought was laid at the Madras Christian College, of which the present author is a part; and

2. Radhakrishnan's Vedantic interpretation of Christianity would spontaneously kindle the interest of Christians, especially the Indian Christians.

At the outset, it must be pointed out that Radhakrishnan has not explicitly addressed the Doctrines of Christianity as such in any one place of his writings. Nevertheless, almost all his works, whatever purpose they have been written for, are replete with references to Christ and Christianity. Therefore, a careful assortment of his random yet consistent thoughts of Christianity would soon reveal his mind. Thus, what is proposed in this thesis is to extract Radhakrishnan's views vis-a-vis Christianity, and to evaluate them from the stand point of a Christian, both the conservative and the liberal.

As one sifts through Radhakrishnan's views on Christianity, it is discernible that he relied more and more on the liberal Christian theologians, because they instantly appealed to his Vedantic consciousness. As a result, Radhakrishnan's exposition of Christianity would find the favour of those liberal-minded Christians, who are willing to give up the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. However, the Christians with a conservative outlook would find it unconvincing and even offending. Therefore one of the aims of the thesis is to show where Radhakrishnan's views are in consonance with the mainstream Christianity, and where they deviate.
The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter titled 'Dr.S.Radhakrishnan: The Man and his Thought' is introductory in nature. It however portrays the vital role played by the Madras Christian College in shaping Radhakrishnan's thought. The second chapter titled 'Historical influences on Christianity according to Radhakrishnan' surveys the various historical influences on Christianity such as Greek Philosophy, Essenism and Mithraism as presented by Radhakrishnan. It also intends to show that Radhakrishnan's general thesis of Christianity's spiritual indebtedness to the Eastern sources, especially the Indian, is based more on his personal convictions than on concrete historical evidence. The case of Essenism is cited in support. The third chapter - 'Radhakrishnan's Treatment of the Doctrines related to Jesus Christ and Christianity' forms the backbone of the thesis. It is an indepth study of Radhakrishnan's views on various doctrines of Christianity, and an assessment of them from the standpoint of the theologians, both the orthodox and the liberal. The fourth chapter - 'Radhakrishnan's views on the Dogma of the Church' attempts to present Radhakrishnan's views on the basic tenets of the ecclesiastical organization, and their strong and weak points. The fifth chapter - 'Religions and the Religion of the Spirit' - is not directly related to the main theme of the thesis, yet it is important because it enables a Christian to discover the meaning of true religion in a multi-religious context. The sixth and the last chapter critically estimates Radhakrishnan's views on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the doctrines of Christianity and the relation between religions. The thesis concludes with Radhakrishnan's positive contribution to Christianity.

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