The Body of God in Word, World and Sacrament

A comparative study of A.J. Appasamy and his reading of Rāmānuja

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study that focuses on the writings of an Oxford-trained Indian Christian theologian, priest and Bishop named A.J. Appasamy (1891-1975), and his theological interaction with the texts and tradition of the Srivaiṣṇava reformer Rāmānuja (1017-1137). For my doctrinal focus I have chosen to explore Appasamy's four-fold Johannine application of the 'Body of God' analogy - the 'Universe', 'Incarnation', 'Eucharist' and 'Church' being his four divine embodiments. Post-Independence, Appasamy faced criticisms from expatriate theologians who described his theological project as 'bold heresies', a 'synthesis of Christianity and Vedanta' that has 'shifted the axis' from Christianity to 'Hindu religion'. By following the leads in Appasamy writings back to his devotional tradition, I argue that such charges are, in fact, baseless and that his application of the analogy is rooted, rather, in the sacramental theology of his own Anglican tradition. To do so I demonstrate how his views on divine embodiment closely reflect the theological developments that took place in the first half of the last century between the time of Charles Gore and William Temple. Methodologically, I am arguing for the need to understand theological discourse as being semiotically and traditionally situated, embedded in mythic narrative and embodied in ritual practice. In doing so, however, I further argue that just as Appasamy's detractors have failed to read him in the context of his devotional tradition, so, too, has Appasamy done with Rāmānuja. By reading Rāmānuja more as a Vedāntic philosophical theologian than as a sectarian practitioner, he has abstracted the Ācārya from his tradition - a tradition that is undoubtedly temple-based. On this basis I challenge Appasamy's use of Rāmānuja's terms and propose what I believe to be a better reading of John's Gospel for future comparative interaction with the Srivaiṣṇava tradition.

Abbreviations

“Mysticism”	"The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: considered especially with reference to the mysticism of the Fourth Gospel"
Bhakti Marga	*Christianity as Bhakti Marga: a study in the mysticism of the Johannine writings*
Moksa	*What is Moksa?* later published as *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: a study of Christian and Indian thought*
Indian Church	*Christ in the Indian Church: a primer of Christian faith and practice*
Gospel	*The Gospel and India’s Heritage*
Theology	*The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*
SB	*Śrībhāṣya*
GB	*Gītā Bhāṣya*
BrU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
TU	*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*
CU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
KU	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
VP	*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*

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"... and the moon is a sliver of silver, like a shaving that fell on the floor of a Carpenter's shop... every house must have its builder, and I awoke in the house of God"

Long Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study that examines the writings of a South Indian Christian theologian named Ayadurai Jesudason Appasamy (1891-1975) and his theological interaction with the texts and tradition of the 12th century Srivaiṣṇava reformer, Rāmānuja (1017-1137). Despite his relative obscurity today, the Harvard-, Oxford- and Marburg-trained Appasamy was one of the most important Christian theological voices in India during the first half of the last century. In the 1930's and 1940's he was involved with a group of Indian Christian intellectuals known as the Madras Rethinking Group whose goal it was to explore distinctly Indian approaches to Christian belief and practice. Over the course of his career Appasamy also served as an Anglican priest in his home diocese of Tinnevelly (now Tirunelveli), Tamil Nadu, seminary professor in Bishop's College, Calcutta and, post-Independence, as the first Indian Bishop of Coimbatore in the newly formed Church of South India. Although he finds mention in numerous outlines of Indian Christian theology, it is impossible, still to this day, to find a single volume that is dedicated to the exploration and analysis of his life and thought.

Beginning with his Oxford doctoral thesis in 1922 it was Appasamy's career-long premise that Christianity would best be understood and received in the Indian context not as a creedal or dogmatic theology but as a living *bhakti ('devotion')* tradition, and that this Christian *bhakti* should be rooted in the Gospel of John. He would further attempt to recast his Christian *bhakti* through interaction with the theological language and reasoning of Rāmānuja and his *viśiṣṭādvaitin* ('qualified non-dual') version of Vedānta. In his 1942 publication, *The Gospel and India's Heritage,* Appasamy proposed a four-fold Indian Christian application of Rāmānuja's 'Body of

God' analogy, in which the Universe, the Incarnation, the Eucharist and the Church can all in distinct, yet interconnected ways be understood as divine embodiment. Appasamy's four divine embodiments provide the doctrinal categories on which my critical engagement of his theology is structured.

The years following Independence saw the publication of three polemical responses to Appasamy's theological project, all from expatriate and missionary theologians. Their critiques of him can be grouped into two categories. The first of these found Appasamy to be more Hindu than Christian. As such his views on divine embodiment were summarily written off as nothing more than 'pantheism', 'Hindu religion adorned with some Christian ideas' and a compromised 'synthesis between Christianity and Vedānta'. He has, in their words, 'shifted the axis'. In the second of these critiques German theologian, Herwig Wagner, came to the conclusion that Appasamy was more 'occidental' (*'abendländische'*) than Indian, consistently finding in his theology an essentialist belief in a mystical 'common centre' (*'gemeinsame Mitte'*) that underlies the plurality of all 'religious experience' (*'religiöse Erfahrung'*). To Wagner, Appasamy's 'indwelling God' is none other than the Idealist *Geist.*

Although there is considerably more substance to the latter of these two critiques, I argue that both have misread him because they have failed to read him in the context of his tradition-specific devotional practice. By following his named influences back to the scholarship that has shaped him in the works of early twentieth century Anglican thinkers such as Charles Gore, B.H. Streeter, O.C. Quick and William Temple, I argue that Appasamy's Body of God doctrine is neither 'Hindu religion adorned with some Christian ideas' nor Hegelian Idealism, but in fact an attempt to transpose his post-Oxford Movement Anglican sacramental theology into *bhakti*

terminology. I demonstrate that, in light of this, and particularly in the context of contemporary comparative theology, his contribution ought now to be reconsidered.

My argument throughout is, at its heart, a methodological one. Older forms of comparative scholarship such as 'phenomenology of religion', 'comparative religion' or 'theology of religions' all have one very obvious construction in common. As has become increasingly evident over the past few decades, the concepts of 'religion' and 'religions' have become quite problematic. Too often they are categories of convenience that have allowed comparative scholars to construct their 'others' at will, and for their own ideological or apologetic purposes. The approach more recently called 'comparative theology' has improved on this situation greatly by insisting on particularity, and by undertaking comparative engagement with reference to specific texts, thinkers and traditions. 'Comparative theology', however, like most academic theological approaches, is primarily discursive in nature - theological argument and reasoning around an authoritative 'revelation' and sacred texts. The approach that I am developing here is a deliberate attempt to understand how theological discourse already comes semiotically situated within the particularity of sectarian traditions. The theological discourse itself already assumes sign systems, 'matrices of meaning'. It is both embedded in narrative and embodied in practice. The sort of comparative study that I am proposing here claims not only the right, but also the necessity to move more freely between the circumscribed domains of the 'theology' and 'religious studies' departments. It is an approach that I am calling 'comparative traditions'.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One begins with an introduction of my thesis. This is followed by a biographical outline of Appasamy with special emphasis on his early academic formation. In an effort to both document and understand the process by which

Appasamy was marginalized post-Independence, I apply aspects of the postcolonial theory of the literary critic, Homi Bhabha, to frame Appasamy's own postcolonial story. I examine the several roles in which Appasamy was cast, from 'mimic man,' to 'hybrid,' and finally, 'heretic,' the 'blasphemous dreamer' of the failed colonial enterprise. Following a survey of Appasamy's body of work, the first chapter then ends with a review of the secondary sources.

In Chapter Two I explore the above-mentioned methodological concerns, considering Appasamy's own method in light of three scholars in particular. Francis Clooney's proposal for a 'comparative theology' provides a current context and vocabulary by which to understand what Appasamy was attempting to do in his own time and place. Alasdair MacIntyre's *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* provides a wide-angle view of some of the paradigmatic shifts that have taken place in the last century of scholarship. MacIntyre's analysis also provides something of a conceptual bridge by which to span the distance between Appasamy's time and my own. And finally, with the help of Eric J. Lott's *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion and the Study of Religion*, I consider the possibilities for a more integrated approach between 'theology' as *fides quaerens intellectum* ('faith seeking understanding') and the multiple third-order discourses of 'religious studies', especially in the Indian context.

I have organized the body of my research chronologically, recognizing what I believe to be three distinct stages to Appasamy's writing. These three stages comprise the textual focus of the remaining three chapters of my thesis.

The earliest stage, comprised of his post-doctoral writings from 1922-1934, is the focus of Chapter Three. More specifically, the textual emphasis is on the first three of his publications: his Oxford doctoral thesis, and its expansion into two more

widespread publications for the Indian context, 1927's *Christianity as Bhakti Marga* and 1931's *What is Moksa?* Doctrinally, my concern is with his earliest emphasis on the first two of his four divine embodiments, the Universe and the Incarnation, exploring also how he makes his first tentative steps towards a Christian engagement with Rāmānuja. By identifying what I refer to as his early 'Logos Christology' I explore how his reading of an eclectic Johannine Logos in the Prologue leads him to propose a similar application of Rāmānuja's *Antaryāmīn* ('inner controller') as an analogous concept in his Indian context. Similarly, with regards to the Incarnation, I consider his appeal for an Indian Christian application of *avatāra* ('descent' but popularly 'incarnation') terminology with specific reference to Christ.

Chapter Four then focuses on the second stage of Appasamy's theological development with a textual focus on his post-ordination writings from 1935-1950. Noting here a shift from his earlier emphasis on 'mysticism' and 'religious experience', I demonstrate that he has increasingly had to both rely on and appeal to his Anglican devotional tradition. The significant texts during this period are 1935's *Christ in the Indian Church* and 1942's *The Gospel and India's Heritage.* I demonstrate that there has also been a significant shift in his reading and understanding of John's Gospel, namely, a change in emphasis from the Logos of the Prologue to the ministry of the Holy Spirit as found in the 'farewell discourse' and the 'High Priestly prayer'. Following a consideration of both his pneumatology and doctrine of the Trinity, I then consider how his combined views on both the Logos and the Spirit as *Antaryāmīn* contribute to a new and more traditionally grounded 'Spirit Christology'. This leads, quite naturally, to an exploration of the last two of his divine embodiments, the Eucharist and the Church. Following his line of reasoning from the Incarnation to the Eucharist, and eventually, to a 'sacramental principle', I explore the dynamics by which

he can argue that the 'whole world is sacrament', a 'God-filled Universe'. In his treatment of the Church as 'Body of God', I then outline his ecclesiology, still from the Gospel of John, arguing theologically from the 'Church universal' to institutional particularity in the Indian context. I find that his sources, quite consistently throughout, have been Anglican and that Appasamy inhabits the theological space between the 'liberal orthodoxy' of Charles Gore and the 'modernism' of B.H. Streeter and William Temple.

The fifth chapter focuses on the third and final stage of Appasamy's theological development as found in his post-Episcopal writing, and more specifically in 1970's *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. I outline the development of how, over the course of his career, the Bishop has variously cast Rāmānuja, from the 'philosopher par excellence of *bhakti* mysticism' in the early writings to the 'philosopher' and 'theologian' in the middle period to now, more consistently, the 'theologian' of his later writings. I evaluate the Bishop's mature summary of Rāmānuja's system, and consider it in light of his Christian application of it. Where in the previous chapters I have defended Appasamy's position against the critiques of his expatriate detractors on the basis of tradition, in this fifth and final chapter I demonstrate that this must cut both ways. Just as his critics have not read him in his sectarian devotional context, so too, I have found that Appasamy's encounter with Rāmānuja has not gone far enough. He has read him as a Vedāntic 'philosopher' and, to a certain extent, as Srivaiṣṇava 'theologian', but he has yet to read him as the tradition-specific temple-based practitioner and Ācārya of Śrīrangam. With the help of recent scholarship from Srivaiṣṇavas themselves, I situate Rāmānuja within his sectarian practice and challenge Appasamy's appropriation of the Ācārya's language, especially with regards to *avatāra* terminology.

I conclude then with my findings on Appasamy's use of Body of God language, arguing that to Appasamy it is primarily an *analogia fidei* – a means by which to explain both Logos and sacramental Presence in the world. In Rāmānuja, however, 'qualified' though it may be, it is undoubtedly an ontology – a means by which to explain Brahman's modal relationship to the world. Both can only rightly be understood within the context of their sectarian traditions, not just as beliefs, but as the reasoning that is both formative of, and formed by sacramental and liturgical practice. Finally, I close with a proposal for further study.

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Chapter 1. An introduction to Appasamy

1.1 Introduction to the thesis

This thesis is a comparative study of a South Indian Anglican theologian named Ayadurai Jesudason Appasamy (1891-1975) and his theological interaction with the writings of the 12th century Śrīvaiṣṇava reformer, Rāmānuja (1017-1137).[1] Beginning with his Oxford doctoral thesis in 1922 it was Appasamy's career-long conviction that Christianity would best be understood and received in the Indian context not as a creedal or dogmatic theology, but as an experientialist devotional tradition not unlike what he finds in the living *bhakti* ('devotional') traditions of the Subcontinent. Even more controversially, however, he would attempt to recast it as such through his use of the language of Rāmānuja's 'Body of God' analogy. Pre-Independence, in 1942, Appasamy proposed and outlined a four-fold Christian application of the analogy. [2] This research project is a study of the Bishop's four categories of divine embodiment, 'Universe', 'Incarnation', 'Eucharist' and 'Church', and his comparative encounter with Rāmānuja in their development.

Despite his relative obscurity today, the Harvard-, Oxford- and Marburg-trained Appasamy was one of the most important Christian theological voices in India during the first part of the last century. In the late 1920's and early 1930's he was associated with a group of South Indian Christian intellectuals known as the 'Madras Rethinking Group' whose apologetic goal it was both to rethink and recast Christian theology and cultural identity in the soon-to-be independent Republic. Appasamy, however, was not

[1] According to Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiography Rāmānuja lived 120 years, and these are the traditionally accepted dates. More conservative historical data and epigraphs have suggested that these should more probably be 1077-1156. See Indira Parthasarathy, T. Śrīraman, and C. T. Indra, *Rāmānujar: The Life and Ideas of Rāmānuja* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008). xxxvi.

[2] A. J. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage* (London and Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1942). 204-208.

primarily an academic theologian by vocation, but rather, a churchman. Throughout the 1930's he served both as an Anglican priest in his home province of Tamil Nadu, as well as seminary professor in the latter half of the decade at Bishop's College, Calcutta. From 1929 to Independence in 1947 he served as one of the Anglican representatives on the Joint Committee on Church Union, an initiative begun by Bishop Azariah as far back as 1919 towards the establishment of an independent Church of South India (C.S.I.). In 1950, in the newly independent C.S.I., he was appointed as the first Indian Bishop of Coimbatore. Throughout this time he continued to write, producing over a dozen books, making the case over the course of his career for what he calls an 'indigenous' Indian Christian *bhakti* theology. For his textual authority he appeals consistently, and throughout his career, to the Gospel of John.

In September of 1960 the University of Marburg deemed Appasamy worthy of an honorary doctorate, the "*Doctor Honoris Causa Theologiae* in recognition of his scientific research ('*wissenschaftlichen Forschungen'*) and his contribution to the Church of South India".[3] Noted Indian Christian theologian M.M. Thomas has more recently eulogized the Bishop as being "perhaps the first systematically trained Indian theologian to have made a pioneering contribution to indigenous theology with professional competence".[4] And yet if all of this is the case, and Appasamy is as important a figure as these suggest, then it is strange indeed that his contribution is so little known both in India and beyond. Most of his books, having received the silent 'sentence of history', are now exiled to out-of-print obscurity. In addition to this, to my knowledge, it is impossible to find even a single scholarly book *dedicated* to the critical analysis of the 'pioneering contribution' of which Thomas speaks. In the scant

[3] Herwig Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963). 12.
[4] M. M. Thomas and P. T. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*, 2nd impr. ed. (Tiruvalla, India: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 1992). 188.

secondary sources available on him, the Bishop's work, with a few notable exceptions, usually receives little more than a superficial description, a footnote reference or an honorific mention in a compendium or introductory volume on Indian Christian theology. It is the hope that this present study will go some way towards redressing the paucity in Appasamy scholarship while, at the same time, to reintroduce him as a pioneer in comparative theological encounter today.

In what is probably his best-known work, 1927's *Christianity as Bhakti Marga*, Appasamy offers three reasons for his pursuit of a *bhakti* approach. His first stated reason, true to his early instruction in both Oxford and Marburg, is an experientialist one: *bhakti* is "nearest in affinity to real Christian experience".[5] By this he means that it is the 'warm and intimate' pursuit of the devotee's oneness with God. Second, on more of a theological level, Appasamy claims that both Hindu and Christian *bhakti* "agree in maintaining the separateness of the Divine and human personalities, however much they may be eager for union".[6] Finally, and most pragmatically, he posits its usefulness on the grounds of its more widespread appeal and accessibility to Indians of all castes and backgrounds - from the simplest of devotees to the most erudite of scholars.[7] Precisely because it is a movement that has been transmitted through the vernaculars in the form of hymnody and poetry, it has touched a wider range of people than the more scholastic traditions ever could. *Bhakti* will thus prove, he says, to be the perfect vehicle by which to see the "Christian Theology of India... become naturalized to the soil".[8]

The word itself, he feels, does not have a single English expression with which to accurately convey its meaning. Thus, Appasamy ranks in order of accuracy the

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[5]A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings* (London: Macmillan, 1927). 22.
[6]He elsewhere acknowledges the subtlety of Rāmānuja's understanding of the *jivātman* as *prakāra* ('mode') of Bráhman, and will be examined at length in subsequent sections.
[7]Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 22.
[8]A. J. Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature : Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel" (Thesis (D Phil), University of Oxford, 1922). 7.

English words with which it is most commonly rendered. *Bhakti* as 'faith' is his least preferred, and to him conjures up the notion of an "intellectual assent to certain facts… Such an understanding of Bhakti does not do justice to its rich and complex meaning".[9] Only marginally better is the boilerplate word 'devotion', which is still, in his opinion, "too cold and distant effectively to convey the warm and intimate character of Bhakti". He concludes in very Johannine terms that "[t]he only English word which can adequately render Bhakti is love". As his earliest definition would have it, *bhakti is* "the deep unselfish love for God, which passionately seeks union with Him".[10] With his Johannine version of *bhakti* thus defined, he has found sufficient analogue in both the language and conceptions of the Hindu *bhakti* poets and saints, the identification and adaptation of which, he believes, should quickly see the naturalization that he is seeking.

In a post-critical[11] mode of scholarship, the old convenient short hand on 'religion', quite simply, no longer works. As Rowan Williams says describing the 'religion' called 'Judaism' in the first centuries of the Common Era, such an 'ism' "is a construct of later ages, as much a fiction in the first century of the Christian era as 'Hinduism' is today". The 'fiction' Williams goes on to describe is that it is "a unified system of beliefs and rituals with its own frame of reference over against other forms of thinking and behaving".[12] Subsuming the diverse array of pan-Indian devotional and philosophical systems under lazily constructed and metonymic categories of convenience such as 'Hinduism' or 'Hindu religion' is, quite simply, no longer tenable.

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[9]Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 22-23.
[10]Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 1.
[11] Following Peter Ochs, Hans Frei and others I will use this term throughout as a convention to denote scholarship undertaken 'after' and 'accounting for' the genealogical critique of Derrida, Foucault, Saïd and others, that Modernity and Empire largely imagined its 'orients' and its 'others' for the purpose of self-justification.
[12] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). 96.

Although, belonging to an era, Appasamy is in the habit of using such terms from time to time, he also seems to know that there is something artificial about such conventions. On a number of occasions he attempts to delineate something of the plurality of beliefs[13] and theologies[14] that were conveniently being filed under the 'Hinduism' category. In this sense he is perhaps also anticipating what others have persuasively argued in a later generation, that there really is no such thing as 'Hinduism', only Hinduisms. It is precisely because Appasamy knows this that he wants to distinguish a theistic *bhakti* approach from what he calls the monistic 'pantheism'[15] of Śaṅkara, the 'atheism' of Sāṃkhya and the 'polytheism' of more 'primitive' and/or popular worship.[16]

Along with Appasamy, and in agreement with proponents of comparative theology today,[17] I too am insisting on the particularity of my engagement.[18] Perhaps not in his terms, but from the outset I am insisting that this thesis is *not* a comparison between two 'world religions' conventionally called 'Christianity' and 'Hinduism'. It is, rather, the juxtaposition of two specific sectarian traditions, namely, Appasamy's uniquely South Indian (Tamil) version of post-Oxford Movement Anglicanism, and Rāmānuja's Śrīrangam Śrīvaiṣṇavism. In this line of thinking the word 'sectarian' is being deliberately reclaimed here, not as a pejorative label, but rather as a helpful line of demarcation identifying distinct cultures of devotion as lived and practiced. Only by

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[13] … as, for example, in his well thought out appendix outlining the diverse Hindu views on the doctrine of *mokṣa* in A. J. Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934). 236-246.
[14] … as, for example, in his outline of various Hindu theologies in Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 6-11.
[15] Ibid. 8.
[16] The 'more thoughtful' from among this latter group, he admits, "are inclined to say that all these many divinities worshipped in India are but the manifestations of one Supreme God". Ibid. 7.
[17] Francis Xavier Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). 14.
[18] "The more specific a comparison, the better; the more particular a Christian effort to understand a non-Christian text or practice, the better; the more we attend to learning about particular things and ideas that were previously 'other' to us, the better…"Francis Xavier Clooney, ed. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation* (London: T & T Clark International, 2010). xii.

understanding and reading traditions as such do we begin to get a sense of the depth and richness of what each is actually saying in their distinct doctrines of divine embodiment. To undertake this sort of study I am marking out 'comparative theology' as my starting place, and I am doing so in very deliberate contrast to older comparative approaches such as 'phenomenology of religion', 'comparative religion' or 'theology of religions'.[19] For now all I am claiming is an academic location: "[n]ot just something to think about, but somewhere to think about it".[20]

In his 2001 book, *Hindu God, Christian God*, Francis Clooney notes: "[T]he Vaiṣṇava emphasis on the soteriological value of embodiment – the protection of the good, the defeat of the evil, and the approach of humans to a nearby God – offers a plausible foundation for combining soteriological, incarnational, and sacramental values in a way that the Christian tradition should be able to borrow and use".[21] In Clooney's context he is suggesting in passing that this *would be* a fruitful avenue for future study; that is to say, someone should get around to doing this some day. What I am saying is that someone *has*, in fact, *already* attempted to do this, and in an Indian context no less. They happen to be the exact perennial and overarching themes of Appasamy's life-long interest in both *bhakti* and Rāmānuja. In agreement with Clooney's suggestion then, this study concurs that these are indeed very worthy pathways of theological reasoning to pursue between and across these traditions. Instead of 'reinventing the wheel' to do so, however, perhaps it is time to listen in on conversations that are already underway.

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[19] James Fredericks defines 'theology of religions' as: "the attempt to understand the theological meaning of the diversity of religions in keeping with the doctrinal requirements of a home tradition". Ibid. xiii-xiv.
[20] Francis Xavier Clooney, *Seeing through Texts : Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*, Suny Series, toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). xv.
[21] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*, 125.

The temptation to re-imagine Appasamy and Rāmānuja as being, basically, like western[22] academics must be resisted as being a distortion of what each was attempting to do. They do not primarily represent themselves as individual scholars or philosophers, as though publication and a personal portfolio were foremost in their thinking. Appasamy, as priest in the Anglican Church, and Rāmānuja, as Ācārya of the Śrīrangam Śrīvaiṣṇavas, are both writing primarily with the interests of their own worshipping communities in mind, first and foremost *for* their respective traditions. It is also important to take note of what both Appasamy and Rāmānuja were trying to do in their particular moment in history. Regardless of what sorts of theological parallels one might find between them, their chief apologetic aim seem quite similar - to establish a place for their own particular tradition to stand within a larger socio-political-religious context. Both are making a bid for the legitimacy of their own worshipping community to be considered within that larger milieu. In order to do so, however, they have had to work within the discursive confines of the larger traditions to which they appeal, necessarily obscuring, although never denying, their own sectarian commitments. It is simply a matter of good apologetic strategy to prioritize the more publicly coherent exoteric discourse over the communally observed and tradition-specific esoteric one.

Rāmānuja wants to secure a place for his *Śrīvaiṣṇava* tradition within the so-called *āstika* ('orthodox') schools of *Vedānta*.[23] As such he needs, within the disciplines of Vedāntic commentary, to make the case that his own theist and realist version of Vedānta should rightly be considered Upaniṣadic. In so doing he will also justify the Vedāntic claims of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition of his Śrīrangam community, an

[22] For the sake of convention and convenience I will use the word 'western' from time to time. This is done reflexively and self-consciously, however. In view of the past few decades of post-colonial critique, and in much agreement with it, I have made a sincere attempt at avoiding an Orientalist construction of 'the other' as a negative inversion of the European 'self.'

[23] M. Narasimhacharya, *Contribution of Yāmunācharya to Viśiṣṭādvaita* (Hyderabad: Śrī Jayalakshmi Publications, 1998). 3.

undertaking that was, by tradition, the dying wish of his predecessor Yāmunācārya.[24] Reliance on his own sectarian literature to do this, particularly the tantric *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, as opposed to the Vedāntic texts would have likely resulted in his opponents labelling him as nothing more than a '*bhāgavata'*, more *tāntrika* ('follower of tantra') than *vaidika* ('follower of the Vedas').[25] As V. Varadachari puts it:

> He had to meet the monistic theories of Śaṅkara on his own ground and so, confined himself to almost the same sources as the *Advaita* teacher… Naturally, he could not explicitly refer to the *Āgama* texts and still more to the composition of the Ashvars. This does not imply that they have had no influence on his philosophical works.[26]

Appasamy's purpose some 900 years later is to establish the 'Indian-ness' of his *bhakti* formulation of the Christian faith. Writing in the years immediately pre- and post-independence, he understandably wished to distance himself from the 'English-ness' of his own Anglican tradition. To come across as being too Anglican would be to continue to align himself with the imperial seat of power and thereby to open himself up to the charge of being anti-nationalist, an accusation that his countrymen made all too often towards Indian Christians in general.[27] To be too Indian, on the other hand, would be to open himself up to the charges, as a number of expatriate detractors did eventually make of him, that his Christian *bhakti* was simply too 'syncretist' or even

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[24] Parthasarathy, Śrīraman, and Indra, *Rāmānujar : The Life and Ideas of Rāmānuja*. Xvii

[25] Gavin D. Flood, *The Tantric Body : The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006). 8.

[26] Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, *Studies in Rāmānuja: Papers Presented at the First All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja and His Social Philosophy at Śrīperumbudur on 21st and 22nd July 1979*, 1st ed. (Madras: Śrī Rāmānuja Vedānta Centre, 1980). 121.

[27] Sugirtharajah has identified three Indian Christian responses to colonialism. Subaltern converts responded with 'gratitude and admiration' as the "recipients of the beneficent effects of missionary work. Those on the 'National Council of Churches', who left leadership still largely in the hands of foreign missionaries with "theological critique... low on its agenda". And finally, the 'high-caste, Western-educated converts' for whom British rule was seen as an opportunity to 'reconfront the culture'. Although not a 'convert', Appasamy seems to fit in the latter of these categories who, when faced with the criticism that Christianity was all about drinking liquor and eating beef and who 'hates the scriptures of India, "sought to project themselves as patriotic Indians... The way they went about this was to project Christianity not as an alien religion but as part of the Vedic tradition". R.S. Sugirtharajah, "Complacencies and Cul-De-Sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, ed. Michael Nausner Catherine Keller, Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2004). 27-31.

outright 'Hindu'[28] to be considered 'Christianity' any longer. There can be found, therefore, in both Rāmānuja's and Appasamy's writings, both the wider public discourse to which they appeal as well as the downplayed and even, at times, concealed sectarian liturgical and sacramental realities of their tradition.

Francis Clooney describes his own experience among the Śrīvaiṣṇava communities in South India. As welcoming and as forthcoming as they were with him, he found that at some point he, as a Jesuit, an outsider, had reached the community's limits. As much as he may have wanted to receive *darśana* ('vision') of the deity and observe the ritual process in the *sanctum sanctorum*, as he describes it:

> …[t]he temple doors were, at a certain point, closed, and temple vision forbidden; but by contrast, the texts were very accessible, very open, very available. Whatever I was going to see, I would see through texts. I had been given the secondary means and denied the primary; or was it the other way around?"[29]

Similarly here, with regards to the Bishop's and the Ācārya's sectarian practice, the only way we are going to receive *darśana* of what is most sacred to them is by learning how to 'see through' their texts. This will involve following the explicit strands of theological reasoning back to the authoritative sources of their respective confessions, confessions that assume a whole lot of 'givenness' in their *a priori* 'language games'.[30]

While today's comparative theology is probably the best academic location in which to begin such an engagement, as far as this study is concerned, this is only a starting place. For comparative theology, and indeed academic theology in general, is

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[28] Gurukul Theological Research Group of the Tamilnad Christian Council; Convener Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1956). 7.
[29] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts : Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 46-47.
[30] The reference here is to George Lindbeck's 'cultural-linguistic' model of theology in which he claims that religious traditions are "[like] a culture or language… a communal phenomenon that shapes the subjectivities of individuals rather than being primarily a manifestation of those subjectivities. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and nondiscursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed… just as a language (or "language game", to use Wittgenstein's phrase) is correlated with a form of life, and just as a culture has both cognitive and behavioral dimensions, so it is also in the case of a religious tradition". George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine : Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

focused primarily on 'logic, reasoning, and argument', that is to say, first and foremost on the discursive aspects of traditions. The theological process, as Clooney describes it, offers "a sturdy bridge for making our way forward in our encounters with faiths and religious ways other than our own".[31] As I am applying it, however, and as I shall argue in the second chapter, theological reasoning between and across traditions must always be considered against the backdrop of non-discursive aspects as well. This is the case with all living traditions, but perhaps all the more so in the Indian context, for the Indian traditions have never really allowed for their neat and tidy compartmentalisation as being either 'theology',[32] 'religion' or 'philosophy'. This is precisely why it is so difficult to find Sanskrit translations for any of these words. Nor, for that matter, and probably for good reason, does one readily find neatly demarcated 'theology' and 'religious studies' departments in Indian universities. Theological discourse, sacred narrative and ethical and ritual praxis – all of these are of a piece in the *sampradāyas,*[33] and I propose that they must be considered as such. I do not mean to say here that western academic terms are not still usefully employed in the Indian context. I simply want to recognise and take seriously from the start both their limitations as well connotations outside of a western liberal academic context.

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[31] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*., vi.

[32] In line with today's comparative theology I am here and throughout defining and describing 'theology' not as 'the study of a divine being called *theos'*, but rather as Anselm has famously described it, and in agreement with Clooney, MacIntyre, Kerr and others, *fides quaerens intellectum*, 'faith seeking understanding'. When defined in this sense, as more of a devoted discipline, reasoning *about* faith done both intra- and inter-traditionally by believers, is still a useful enough term in our context. As a mode of discourse and reasoning, it is usually done with both reference and deference to a revealed 'text' of some sort, whether written or oral, and normatively and most vitally done as an inter-generational conversation. It can take the form of both a tradition 'talking to itself', as Clooney describes it, as well as of a tradition talking to its 'others', in apologetic or polemic explanations and justifications of itself.

[33] Following Flood's definition "The term 'sect', 'order' or 'tradition' is a rough equivalent of the Sanskrit term *sampradāya,* which refers to a tradition focused on a deity, often regional in character, into which a disciple is initiated by a guru. Furthermore, each guru is seen to be within a line of gurus, a *santāna* or *paramparā*..." Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 134.

1.1.1 Doctrinal and textual parameters

As the title of my thesis makes clear, my doctrinal focus shall be limited to the development of Appasamy's 'Body of God' doctrine, the Bishop's views on how God both embodies within as well as is embodied by creation. Appasamy saw in Rāmānuja's carefully considered analogy a way to maintain both the 'transcendence' and 'immanence' of God, while at the same time emphasizing the latter. God or Brahman is to the Universe what the *ātman*, the 'self', is to the body. Just as the self indwells the body, and yet is more than (and in control of) the body, so too is God in the Universe. Rāmānuja means something rather more precise than this, as does Appasamy, but at least to start this is the analogy in its simplest form. In Appasamy's terminology, Rāmānuja's body analogy is the most 'immanent' yet still 'personalist' version of 'theism' that he can find in the Indian traditions. And so, he appropriates it as a redemptive analogy for his Christian *bhakti*, at first more generally in 1931's *What is Mokṣa?*,[34] but then more specifically in 1942's *The Gospel and India's Heritage*[35] where he makes his more mature and systematically considered four-fold proposal, the 'Body of God' as a "Christological analogy".[36]

My second stated parameter, as the subtitle of this work makes clear, is that my focus here is not on Rāmānuja, but on Appasamy and *his reading* of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja's texts and thought have been widely researched in western academic theology of the last century. Following George Thibaut's English translation of the *Śrībhāṣya* in 1904, Rudolf Otto produced a translation of excerpts from the same into German in 1923. Otto was in fact working on his own German translation of the *Śrībhāṣya* when he took Appasamy on as his private student in 1921. By the middle of

[34] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 168-169. Note, *What is Mokṣa?* was later published in the U.K. as 1934's *Johannine Doctrine…*
[35] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 204-208.
[36] Robin H. S. Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology" (Thesis/dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1966). 298.

the last century Dutch Indologist, J.A.B. Van Buitenen, extended Rāmānuja scholarship further with the translation of some of the Ācārya's other texts, such as the *Gītābhāṣya* and Rāmānuja's earlier more concise explanation of his Vedānta in the *Vedārthasaṃgraha*. As a result of these translations, all of which are still in standard usage today, and with the resultant broader introduction of Rāmānuja to western scholarship, the last three decades have seen valuable contributions made by J. B. Carman,[37] Eric Lott,[38] Julius Lipner,[39] and most recently, Chris Bartley.[40] It would seem, therefore, as though at least *some* of Rāmānuja's thought, namely his Vedāntic discourse, has already been quite well documented in recent scholarship. No doubt there is more yet to be done in further interaction with the Ācārya's thinking, both in terms of translation as well as analysis. But that is not what this study is about.

Following Kenneth Pike's distinction and Russell McCutcheon's application of it in the study of religion,[41] a study of this nature would prefer its primary dialogue to be with the texts and proponents of the traditions themselves, and so with the 'emic' as opposed to the 'etic' voice.[42] This, of course, is not to the exclusion or diminishment of the etic voice, for indeed the latter can often see with 'fresh eyes' and provide an important critique in ways that an insider cannot. But if comparative theology is to be true to its claims in attempting to enter into dialogical relationship with peers and

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[37] John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*, Yale Publications in Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
[38] His fullest treatment is in Eric J. Lott, *Vedāntic Approaches to God* (London: Macmillan, 1980). But I have also consulted his paper Eric J. Lott, "God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja: A Study in His Use of the Self-Body Analogy," in *Studies in Rāmānuja* (Sriperumbudur: Rāmānuja Research Society, 1976). 21-26.
[39] Julius Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*, Library of Philosophy and Religion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986).
[40] C. J. Bartley, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: Realism and Religion* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).
[41] See especially, Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*, Controversies in the Study of Religion (London: Cassell, 1999). 15-22.
[42] Flood identifies these as being two kinds of narratives, "the narrative of the tradition and the narrative construction of scholarship…" Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology : Rethinking the Study of Religion*. 139.

counterparts in other traditions,[43] then it must pay special attention to the tradition's self-understanding, its internal discourse(s). If this study were focusing particularly on Rāmānuja it would also ideally be 'reading up'[44] from Rāmānuja, reading the Ācārya alongside of the historical Śrīvaiṣṇava commentarial tradition such as is found in the subsequent writings of Vedānta Desika, Sudarśana Sūri and Ranga Rāmānuja. But this, again, is not where our focus lies. I have opted, rather, to make use of some of the more contemporary 'insider' Rāmānuja scholarship, such as in Bhashyacharya, Varadachari, Rangachar and others to gain an understanding not just of how Rāmānuja's texts have been read in historical context, but also where they fit within communal practice.

By subtitling my thesis 'a comparative study of A.J. Appasamy *and his reading of Rāmānuja*' I am interested, primarily, in exploring how Appasamy reads and understands his own Christian text alongside of and *in light of* what he is reading in Rāmānuja. How has his reading of Rāmānuja shaped his reading of John's Gospel? What has he learned from Rāmānuja? What has he rejected? With which Rāmānuja texts and doctrines has he interacted? What has he very deliberately ignored? And finally, what has he missed out on entirely? This is the neighbourhood of our questions. As we explore these we will also be noting any significant changes that are evident in his understanding of Rāmānuja's system of thought, comparing his earlier thinking with his more mature attempts, and considering how these changes might also reflect the broader methodological shifts that have taken place throughout.

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[43] Francis Xavier Clooney, *Comparative Theology : Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). 83.

[44] "… we read 'up' through his thought through a luxuriant commentarial elaboration that grew over generations". Clooney, *Theology after Vedānta : An Experiment in Comparative Theology*, Suny Series, toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). 23.

Appasamy confines his reading of Rāmānuja to two texts in particular; namely, the *Śrībhāṣya,*[45] Rāmānuja's Vedāntic commentary also known as the *Vedānta Sūtras,* and his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* known as the *Gītābhāṣya.*[46] Only very rarely does Appasamy cite, in supplement to these, from the *Vedārthasaṃgraha,* but where he does this too shall be noted and examined. Being the best known of Rāmānuja's writings and certainly, in Appasamy's day, also the most accessible in translation, it should come as no surprise that these are the texts with which he is most familiar. Although he read and even translated text from Sanskrit,[47] even in the original language, and even in India, Rāmānuja's remaining texts might well have been extremely hard to come by, especially to an outsider. Whatever is the reason for his neglect of them it is also and perhaps *almost as* important to note which of Rāmānuja's texts he does *not* read. It is not insignificant, for example, that of the *nava rathanga* ('nine gems'), the nine traditionally attested texts[48] ascribed to Rāmānuja,[49] the Bishop only chooses to interact with three of the most 'Vedāntic' of the corpus. The ones he neglects, as it turns out, mark out the decidedly more sectarian terrain of the Ācārya's Śrīvaiṣṇava practice.[50]

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[45] Where Appasamy has cited passages from this I have left it in his wording. For my own consultation, however, I have relied on three translations in particular, George Thibaut's, *The Vedānta Sūtras with the Commentary by Rāmānuja*, ed. F. Max Müller, trans. Georges Thibaut, vol. 48, The Sacred Books of the East (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 1989)... Swami Vireswarananda; Swami Adidevananda, *Brahma-Sutras According to Sri Rāmānuja* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008)... and M. Rangacharya and Rāmānuja, *The Vedāntasūtras with the Śrībhāṣya*, trans. M. Rangacharya and M.B. Varadaraja Aiyangar, vol. III (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1991).

[46] As above, but for my own consultation I have relied on Rāmānuja, *Śrī Rāmānuja Gītā Bhāṣya*, trans. Svamī Adidevānanda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, No year given).

[47] A. J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*, Indian Theological Library, (Madras: Published for the Senate of Serampore College, by the Christian Literature Society, 1970). 4.

[48] Question 45 of Bhashyacharya's catechism identifies seven works, but this is due to the fact that the *gadyatraya* is comprised of three texts although named as one volume. N. Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya* (Madras: The Theosophical Society, 1887). Q. 45.

[49] John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*, Yale Publications in Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). 49.

[50] See Varadarcari's comments on the *Gadyatraya* in Śrī, *Studies in Rāmānuja: Papers Presented at the First All India Seminar on Śrī Rāmānuja and His Social Philosophy at Śrīperumbudur on 21st and 22nd July 1979*. 126.

1.2 Biography

1.2.1 Academic formation

Ayadurai Jesudason Appasamy[51] was born and raised in the college town of Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu. Although fully Tamil on both sides, his was a culturally divided household, with his parents' domestic fault lines neatly mirroring the broader liberal and conservative Indian Christian divides of the day. On the one hand was his father, Dewan Bahadur A.S. Appasamy, originally of the Vellala caste of Tamil Nadu,[52] a lawyer who had converted as an adult[53] from a Saiva[54] devotional background to Christianity. Not wanting to unnecessarily distance himself from his family's Hindu heritage, his decision neither to change his family name nor to cut off the tuft of hair called the *kudumi* was a controversial one in its day. As the senior Appasamy himself describes in his autobiography, "in those days there was a regular crusade against the *kudumi* in Christian circles, as it was regarded as a proof and emblem of caste pride, and thought to be a connecting link kept up with Hinduism".[55] The junior Appasamy credits his father with having first impressed upon him the need for a truly Indian Christianity to emerge and recalls that his early education included an immersion in classical Hindu literature, such as the Shakuntala story, and the well-loved epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata. The senior Appasamy's interests, in fact, would prove to be incipient to his son's own theological project – an emphasis on John's Gospel, an appeal for the Indian Christian theological use of the Hindu *pramāṇas* ('evidences',

[51] 'Appaswamy' is sometimes given as an alternate spelling of his family name, and sometimes the Indian Christian secondary literature uses this. I have opted rather to spell it the way Appasamy himself does.
[52] Identified as Śaiva and 'high caste' in Thomas and Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*. 65-68 and 187-188.
[53] …at the age of 24 through the influence of H.A. Krishna Pillai. Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 283.
[54] According to M.M. Thomas, the pre-Christian family deity was 'Veeramanohari Amman'. See, M. M. Thomas and P. T. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*, 2nd impr. ed. (Tiruvalla, India: Christava Sahitya Samithi, 1992). 65.
[55] Richard L. Hivner, "The Christian Society for the Study of Hinduism, 1940-1956: Interreligious Engagement in Mid-Twentieth Century India" (University of South Africa, 2011). 127.

'authorities' or 'validities'), and interaction throughout with the national heritage.[56]

Where his father, in the junior Appasamy's words, was "always willing to listen to 'the other side'", his mother, on the other hand, was "quite orthodox, and believed implicitly that all those who were not of the Protestant faith… were heading directly for hell".[57] Originally hailing from the Pillai families of Tamil Nadu "whose job it was to sing hymns in the Hindu temples" his mother, by contrast, had become as her son somewhat humorously describes her "an extreme Protestant".[58] A household such as his representing the Indian Christian tensions in microcosm would prepare Appasamy for his own life's work, precariously inhabiting the interstitial spaces between 'liberal' and 'conservative' polarities.

After his preparatory education in St. John's College, Palaymkottai, and upon sensing his own vocational call to Christian ministry, Appasamy began his theological education at the Madras Christian College. From there he earned himself a scholarship to continue his training in the United States, first in Hartford Theological Seminary in Connecticut, and eventually on to Harvard for his Masters in what he calls the 'history of religion' where he was supervised by G.F. Moore, for whom "every word, every sentence had to be proved on the authority of some ancient book or document". As he describes it, it was at Harvard that he first became 'deeply impressed' by the apologetic efforts of some of the early Patristic sources such as Aristides, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Julius Africanus, Origen, Cyprian, and Lactantius, and considered the possibilities of engaging his own culture similarly.[59]

Upon receipt of another substantial scholarship his doctoral studies were undertaken at Oxford. Dr. J.N. Farquhar, then celebrated author of *Crown of Hinduism*,

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[56] A. J. Appasamy, *My Theological Quest* (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1964). 1, 4, and 8.
[57] Ibid. 2.
[58] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 4.
[59] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 21 and 23-24.

had made recommendations for Appasamy's admission to Queen's College, where he read theology under the supervision of Canon B.H. Streeter. Appasamy describes his supervisor as being:

> ...foremost among the younger theologians in England at the time… deeply concerned about missionary work and had visited India… He was particularly gifted in gathering together scholars representing different points of view… He was keen to expound Christian Doctrine so as to appeal to the modern mind trained in Science.[60]

The 'deep concern for India' of which Appasamy speaks is first made evident in 1921 when Streeter co-wrote a book on Sādhu Sundar Singh with his student entitled *The Message of Sādhu Sundar Singh: A Study in Mysticism and Practical Religion*. He would follow this up in 1932 with *The Buddha and the Christ*. The language in the latter of these is much the same as in the former, an experientialist frame of 'mysticism' and 'practical religion', all of which can also be found throughout Appasamy's early writing. Here was also his likeliest introduction both to Schweitzer and von Hügel as well as some of the other 'Modernist' Anglican voices such as Dean W.R. Inge and William Sanday,[61] all of whom find mention at some point in Appasamy's writings.

Appasamy received his introduction to 'realised eschatology' from C.H. Dodd,[62] then a New Testament scholar at Oxford, who would later be recognised as precursor to the so-called 'new perspective on Paul' established in more recent times by E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn and N.T. Wright. Dodd's emphasis on the Kingdom of God as being fulfilled in present and emerging socio-political and economic realities would understandably take on increasing importance in Appasamy's thought closer to Indian Independence in 1947. Unfortunately, Appasamy did not keep up with Dodd's later scholarship on John's Gospel, an understanding of the background, authorship and

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[60] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 22.
[61] There is also a possible, although unnamed, reference to Loisy, another one of Streeter's influences. Arthur Michael Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple : The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939* (London: Longmans, 1960). 63.
[62] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 26.

redaction of John that would have transformed Appasamy's *bhakti* thesis. Dodd's early emphasis and influence on Appasamy was strengthened further by the theology of William Temple, then Bishop of Manchester, whose work impressed upon Appasamy that Gospel proclamation must also (and even primarily) come in real terms of economic and social justice. Temple's Anglican theology, in fact, brought to Dodd's Congregationalist views an added sacramental dimension, which Appasamy would later combine in new and interesting ways for his proposal of an Indian church actively engaged as a prophetic voice in the nascent Republic.[63]

Noting that after World War I the Continent had become a significantly less expensive place to live than England, he elsewhere describes having spent during the course of his doctoral studies "six … vacations in France, Switzerland, Italy and Germany, living for weeks at a time with friends in their homes". This, as he describes it, "opened many doors… and I found free access to such distinguished theologians as Baron Von Hügel … Mrs. Herman, Prof. Rudolf Otto, Prof. Heiler and others". He describes frequent visits to Baron von Hügel's home in the centre of London as well, noting there "an atmosphere of great peace. His impressive study, lined from ceiling to floor with books, many of them well-thumbed, became a kind of shrine for me…He not only read widely, but read deeply". [64]

It was the Baron who encouraged Appasamy to spend some time in Marburg specifically to seek further tuition from both Rudolf Otto and Friedrich Heiler. Here was his fullest and first-hand introduction to that early, and very current, Ottovian[65] brand of phenomenology of religion. Although he admits failing to understand his lectures, which of course were delivered in German, Appasamy states that Otto took

[63] Ibid. For both of these, see page 26.
[64] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 24-25.
[65] The term is used here to distinguish this particular brand of phenomenology from the contemporary but later more fully developed Dutch phenomenologists who used a more thoroughgoing Husserlian framework.

him on for a time as a private student.[66] It was here as well that Appasamy's interest in Rāmānuja began to crystallise. In Appasamy's words:

> In his earlier years Prof. Otto devoted much study to the theistic literature of India. He was greatly attracted by Rāmānuja whom he regarded as coming nearest to St John in the intensity of his faith, in the depth of his thought and in the restraint of his emotions.[67]

Appasamy would later repeat Otto's claimed parallel between Rāmānuja and John almost verbatim in *Bhakti Marga,*[68] and according to Boyd, the chapter on "The Sense of Awe" in *Bhakti Marga* also clearly "reflects the author's friendship with Rudolf Otto".[69]

Otto's interest in Rāmānuja would eventually culminate in 1930's *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*. It is perhaps important to note that this was several years after his student, Appasamy, first published many consonant ideas in his 1922 DPhil thesis and 1927 follow up volume. All that I am suggesting in saying this is that while Otto's influence on Appasamy is evident from his earliest writing, what is less obvious, or at least as yet unacknowledged, is the possible influence Appasamy may have had on his Marburg mentor. In Otto's case, an early interest in both Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara is evident in the fact of his having attempted some German translations of excerpts of their *Vedānta Sūtras* around the same time as the publication of his *magnum opus, Das Heilige.* It is an enticing circumstantial possibility, however, albeit an inconclusive one, that Appasamy's scholarship had

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[66] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 28.
[67] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 28-29.
[68] A. Frank Thompson identifies Christian interaction with the *bhakti* traditions as developing within four stages. First, " a protracted period when an often uncomfortable awareness of similarities to Christianity in Indian theism raised questions for Christians." Second, "a stage in which Christian scholars developed a more-or-less self-assured critique of Hinduism in general and *bhakti* religion in particular. Third, "an attempted theological recognition of an engagement with distinctive doctrines of Indian *bhakti* religion, particularly on the part of Rudolf Otto." And fourth, "a closer encounter of Christians with Hindu *bhakti* in the writings of A.J. Appasamy and C.F. Andrews; their writings reflect a sense of mutuality between the traditions". Harold G. Coward, ed., *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1989). 176.
[69] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 325.

perhaps a focusing effect on Otto. Throughout the 1920's Appasamy quite clearly considered the *bhakti* traditions and Rāmānuja in particular, as being India's 'religion of grace'. Exploring the distinction between the "Tenkalai School of the Vaishnavas [which] speaks of 'kitten' salvation as opposed to 'monkey' salvation of the Vadakalai school", Appasamy considered these to bear a striking resemblance to the Christian antinomy between 'God's grace and man's effort'.[70] Within a few short years of the publication of his thesis, Otto would say something similar in two successive publications, 1930's *India's Religion of Grace* and 1932's *Mysticism East and West: a comparative analysis of the nature of mysticism*. Without any direct acknowledgment of Appasamy in Otto, however, this can only remain a circumstantial possibility.

Concurrent with his Harvard, Oxford and Marburg training Appasamy was also growing in his own self-identification as a *bhakta*. The young Appasamy had already received an early introduction to some of the Hindu devotional streams, particularly that of his own family's Śaiva heritage. In addition to this, during his college days in Madras, the senior Appasamy had also arranged for his son to learn classical Tamil by a certain Swami Vedachalam, who in turn introduced his student to some of the seminal Śaiva Siddhānta texts.[71] It was not until Appasamy went to the United States, however, as so often happens to 'non-resident Indians' that he began more fully to own his Indian heritage. He mentions in his memoirs a particularly formative trip to New York City to attend a poetry reading by Rabindranath Tagore, who read excerpts from his *Gītānjali* and *Kabuliwalla*. As he describes it: "I learnt to appreciate in a new way the culture and heritage of India".[72] Through the preparation of his paper at Harvard he recalls that it was "revealed to me once again the importance of a knowledge of Indian culture and

[70] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature : Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 38.
[71] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 19.
[72] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 18.

the assimilation of it in conformity with the standards of the Christian religion", and that "if the Christians in India are to make any impact upon national life they must be well-educated men who are quite familiar with the literature of the country though they may not follow the Hindu religion".[73]

It was not until he met Sādhu Sundar Singh in Oxford, however, that he was able to envision this as an embodied reality. The Sādhu had come to Oxford in 1920 to stay in the Community House of the Cowley Fathers for a time.[74] Through that meeting Appasamy struck up a friendship that would last until the Sādhu's disappearance and presumed death in 1929. He would refer frequently and throughout his writing career to the example of the Sādhu as being that of a model *bhakta*, as well as something of a spiritual mentor and *guru* to him, for he saw in the Sādhu's exemplary life the possibilities and potential for a truly 'indigenous' form of Christian *bhakti* to emerge.[75]

As a student of the *bhakti* traditions himself, it is evident throughout his corpus that he has read from a wide variety of the sectarian texts,[76] as well as from their seminal origins in the most authoritative Hindu *Śāstras*. Of the *śrúti* texts, he quotes sparingly from the *Vedas* and primarily among these from the *Rg Veda*, but liberally from the *Upaniṣads*. Most frequently he will draw from the more *bhakti* oriented *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads*, as representing Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva *bhakti* respectively. To a lesser degree, and often in counterpoint to these, he refers to the *Chāndogya, Taittiriya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads*. From among the *Smṛti* texts, his obvious touchstone is the *Bhagavad Gītā,* which although *bhakti,* he says, can be traced prototypically back to Vedic times is undoubtedly the *locus classicus* in the

[73] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 24.
[74] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 23.
[75] The Sādhu was also, by little known point of detail, an Anglican by Baptism.
[76] The following is a representative description of his use of the Hindu texts, not an exhaustive one, and it is drawn primarily from his most mature work on the subject in A.J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*, (Bangalore: Christian Literature Society Press, 1970).

development of '*bhakti* theology'. He also draws frequently from his childhood stories, the epic *Itihāsas*, Tulsidas' and Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*[77] of Vyasa. Of the Puranic literature he cites mainly from the *Bhāgavata* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇas*, but primarily to the latter of these for reasons that shall be examined in Chapter 5. In supplement to these he will often turn to the sectarian vernacular writings of the *bhakti sants* and poets. In his own Tamil mother tongue his favourites are undoubtedly the Śaiva ones of his own ancestral tradition, specifically Appar and Manikkavacakar. From among the Vaiṣṇava Ālvārs, he most frequently cites Nammālvār, the author of the *Tiruvayamoli*.[78] Of the other vernaculars his short list includes Tukaram, Caitanya, and Kabir of the Marathi, Bengali, and Hindi *bhaktas* respectively. Among the myriad sages and *sādhus* that India has produced, of course, none is more important to Appasamy than Rāmānuja, the universally acknowledged 'father' of the medieval and modern *bhakti* movement. He is, to the Bishop, the high water mark of all the Indian traditions. Upon returning to India after his graduate studies, and on the advice of Rudolf Otto, Appasamy studied Sanskrit and the Rāmānujan texts for a number of years from pundits in Palayamkottai[79] - texts he would interact with for the rest of his career.

1.2.2 Appasamy's bid for theological independence

Throughout this time and in the years leading up to Independence Appasamy, along with other notable Christian thinkers and laymen colleagues, Vengal Chakkarai and Pandipeddi Chenchiah,[80] published a wealth of articles and books offering a 'naturalized' 'indigenous' theology – most of which are today, again, quite unjustifiably out of print. Concurrent then with the growing Independence Movement throughout the

[77] …although technically speaking, the *Gītā* is, of course, situated within this.
[78] His own translation of much of this Tamil *bhakti* literature ended up in his 1931 compendium entitled *Temple Bells: Readings from Hindu Religious Literature*, devoted entirely to the publication of these for wider public consumption.
[79] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 28.
[80] These three are sometimes known as the 'Madras Trio'.

Subcontinent, the Rethinking Group was declaring their own independence of sorts – the freedom to work out their Christianity in India without also having to buy into Greek and Latin philosophical assumptions. Appasamy and his Rethinking colleagues saw what they were doing as actually being deeply rooted in the Christian tradition itself:

> … the time had come for the Indian Church to do its own thinking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This was what happened in the early Church when it had to encounter Greek Philosophy. Church Fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Irenaeus and Augustine were familiar with the problems of the Greek philosophers and began to expound the Christian religion so as to meet their difficulties. That was how Christian Theology grew.[81]

And yet, to be sure, this does not mean that Appasamy is discarding the intellectual heritage of more European forms of Christianity. He describes, in fact, as the 'loser' any "Christian in India who decides to abandon the contribution from Greek philosophy with a view to allowing Indian philosophy to determine his Christian conceptions". In saying this he wants to continue to honour the historical planting of Christian theology within the fertile soil of Hellenistic thought, while asking only for the opportunity to do the same within the *equally* fecund soil of the Subcontinent.[82] Appasamy's Harvard training in the 'history of religions' has taught him enough to know that early Christian doctrines did not come unmediated by pristine divine revelation to the early Christians. Following what he believes to be the lead of the Fourth Evangelist, the earliest Christian apologists of the second century had made use of a whole complex of ideas to construct their pre-Nicene Logos Christology.[83] Why could not the Rāmānujan and

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[81] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 43.

[82] But note what he is juxtaposing here. The rough parity he is setting up is between Greek and Hindu 'philosophy'. This is a culturally and historically inaccurate comparison, for as I shall argue in the next chapter, a Greek *philosophia* plays a significantly different role than does a Hindu *darśana*. As I will argue in the final chapter, Rāmānuja's primary designation should *not* be that of a 'philosopher', but rather as a 'theologian' and 'devotee'. Christian interaction with Rāmānuja will have to take a decidedly different course than, for example, Justin Martyr's use of Socrates and Heraclitus in his second apology.

[83] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. For his discussion on this see 34-36.

Upaniṣadic notion of Brahman as *Antaryāmīn*, the 'Inner Controller' of the universe, also be used in a similar manner in twentieth century India?

In 1932, as a newly ordained Anglican priest,[84] Appasamy took up a teaching position at Bishop's College in Calcutta. It was there in his lectures that he began to point to Augustine as the precedent for what he and his Rethinking Group colleagues were attempting to do: "St Augustine is particularly important for the way in which he has woven into the texture of his thought the nobler elements of Neo-Platonism". And yet, according to Appasamy, although the Bishop of Hippo "owed a heavy debt to Neo-platonism" he was also "emphatic and clear in recognizing its full inadequacy".[85] Hargreaves has pointed out that in previous generations of scholarship "Augustine was great *in spite of* his Neo-Platonism, which cause him, they say, to go astray". In a newer scholarship however:

> ...in line with Bishop Appasamy's... so far from neutralizing Christianity with Platonism, Augustine appropriated such elements of this and other existing philosophies as suited his purpose, in order to build them into the system which bears his name.[86]

As Appasamy would reason it, had the early Christian theologians stayed away from interacting with the many analogous concepts they were seeing around them, there would quite simply be no prologue to John's Gospel, let alone an Augustine or Aquinas. "The time has come", says Appasamy, for Indian Christians to do their own theology, and in doing so, make their own unique contribution towards the independence of modern India.[87]

At this time and in the context of the increasing socio-political momentum of the 'Quit India' movement, Appasamy began also to call more urgently for

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[84] …initially in the Anglican diocese of Tinnevelly. Ibid. 288.
[85] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 71.
[86] Cecil Hargreaves, *Asian Christian Thinking: Studies in a Metaphor and Its Message*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: ISPCK, 1979). 76.
[87] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 43.

independence *within* (not 'from') his own Anglican denomination.[88] From 1929-1947 he served as one of the Anglican representatives on the Joint Committee on Church Union, an initiative begun by Bishop Azariah as far back as 1919. For much of the 1930's the committee was mired in discussions with governing European authorities over ecclesiological questions of polity and governance, and more practically, on the sacraments, intercommunication with non-episcopal churches and apostolic succession. Appasamy cites the obviously frustrated Azariah as saying in 1936: "Our European friends are not going to help us. These subtle points of doctrine and practice which they raise have little or no meaning for us. We must force the pace".[89]

1.2.3 'Indian' and 'Christian': Appasamy's 'double heritage'.

In starkest outline Independence cleaved Appasamy's career in two. A celebrated and promising young theologian before 1947, post-Independence he would be summarily dismissed as a 'bold heretic', guilty of having 'shifted the axis' of his Christian theology to what his detractors called 'Hindu religion'.[90] His theological marginalization would happen, ironically, just as he was being appointed as first Indian Bishop of Coimbatore in the newly Independent C.S.I. Whether by exclusion or by institutionalisation, there is more than one way, it seems, to silence a troublesome voice. The story of Appasamy's marginalization seems, to me, to be a classic postcolonial story if ever there was one, both in the literal and discursive sense of the term.

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[88] In his own proposal for 'Church Union' outlined in a pamphlet of the same name, he comes across as both rethinking as well as working within his tradition. His outline of the essential and non-negotiable beliefs and values of the Committee in South India would sit quite comfortably within his Anglicanism: Christ as Incarnation, Redeemer of mankind within a Trinitarian framework; the Scriptures of Old and New Testament containing all that is necessary for salvation and the standard of faith; the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds a "sufficient statement thereof for a basis of Union"; the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as 'means of grace'; and Ministry as vocation. A. J. Appasamy, *Church Union: An Indian View* (Madras: Printed for the author at the Christian Literature Society's Press, 1930). 6.
[89] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 78.
[90] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*., ix and 28.

Borrowing the term from V.S. Naipaul, Homi Bhabha[91] identifies a colonially authorized and endorsed 'other' that he calls the 'mimic man'. In 1835 Lord Macaulay famously described the Crown's desire for "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern … Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect".[92] No doubt to some the young Appasamy had been groomed precisely for such a role. Appasamy for his part, however, from the very start understood his role not as being that of mimicry, but rather of translation, the transposition of Christian doctrines into *bhakti* terminology. But negotiations such as these begin to disrupt the colonial discourse, and so, as Bhabha describes it, before long the mimic man becomes a menace. "The *menace* of mimicry", says Bhabha, "is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority". The very ones who ought to have been the appropriate and authorised versions of otherness have become "inappropriate … the figures of a doubling".[93] As long as the mimic man remains nothing more than the passive recipient of the colonial script then all is well. As soon as he begins to answer back, his hybridity becomes readily, inconveniently and subversively apparent, and Macaulay's dream is exposed for what it is - a construction of narcissistic colonial desire.

As Appasamy distanced himself from such a role, he began, more problematically, to own his hybridity by invoking what he called his 'double heritage' - his claim to being both 'Indian' and 'Christian'.[94] This double heritage, however, would also mean for Appasamy a double marginalization, as he would face considerable opposition on both sides of his claimed identity. On the Indian face of his identity, in

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[91] To outline the dynamics of his marginalization my analysis and structure here is drawn from Bhabha's notions of the 'Mimic Man', the 'menace', the 'heretic', and the 'blasphemous dreamer' as found in his book *The Location of Culture*.

[92] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004). 124-5.

[93] Ibid. 126.

[94] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 203. He first uses the term back in 1930's proposal for a United Church of South India in a pamphlet called *Church Union.*

spite of what he describes as the almost 'universal conviction' among Indian Christians that "in Independent India we should identify ourselves completely with our nation",[95] Indian Christians would continue to bear, as an increasingly vulnerable minority, the stigma and prejudice of their fellow countrymen. A notable example of this can be found in fellow Oxford scholar and soon-to-be president of the new republic, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Radhakrishnan is actually a good example of the very essentializing nationalist narrative that Appasamy was trying so hard to dismantle among his countrymen. The Bishop quotes Radhakrishnan as saying that an Indian convert to Christianity is, rather, like "an illegitimate child without any heritage".[96] So much for Appasamy's 'double heritage'; according to his fellow countryman, the Indian Christian, in fact has none! He is inappropriate on both sides of the colonial equation.

On the other side of his double heritage Appasamy faced a different set of challenges. Among the crudest and yet most virulent of colonial rationalisations is the notion of the *terra nulla* where, as Bhabha puts it, the colonial territory is "the empty or wasted land whose history has to be begun… whose future progress must be secured in modernity".[97] In *What is Moksa* Appasamy cites a certain Prof. J.S. Hoyland who is found lamenting what he believes to be a total absence of any sort of *preparatio evangelica* in India. Unlike the 'heaven-sent' Platonism of the ancient Greek world, "it is emphatically to be insisted that there has been no Oriental Plato". Thus Hoyland continues: "… the representative of Christianity [to the Hindu mind] has frequently to

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[95] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 59.
[96] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 17. Some of this has come from a fuller response Appasamy made to Radhakrishnan's book *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* in an article entitled "The Message of Hinduism" originally published in *Young Men of India* (YMI) July 1939, Volume LI. "As a means of creative religion the native cult has an absolute advantage over any imported religion, for a convert to a new religion feels an utter stranger to himself. He feels like an illegitimate child with no heritage, no link with the men who preceded him…" pp. 174-175. Appasamy responds concisely: "I do not then agree with the author…"But I heartily agree with the author in thinking that everyone must continually seek to rise to higher and clearer perceptions by contacts with followers of other religions and by appreciation and assimilation of their noblest thoughts and experience". 175-176.
[97] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 352.

attempt to do the work … of Plato as well as St. Paul. He has to lay foundations which were already there in the ancient Greek world, but which are not … in the modern Hindu world".[98] Appasamy's response to Hoyland is that perhaps the Professor ought rather to be more agnostic towards matters that are 'open questions'. More than this, says Appasamy, the Christian traditions can and indeed *ought* to allow the Hindu traditions to challenge their very foundations.[99]

But here is the problem when a South Indian Christian is trained as a mimic man of the received tradition of western theology. It becomes quickly apparent that *all* theological systems, no matter how enshrined, entrenched and atavistically (Bhabha's word) re-told, are, in the final analysis, still only cultural negotiations. The real threat that hybridity poses to colonial discourse, then, is in its introduction of aporia where once there had been unchallenged axiom. Who is this 'self' to whom said truths are 'self'-evident? Once this question is on the table, a whole host of aporic questions come thick and fast. Why indeed must Plato be the philosophical template with which to express Christian theology? What if Augustine's 'Plato' had been Śaṅkara or Aquinas' 'Aristotle' Rāmānuja? Why have we 'baptized' Plato and not Rāmānuja? Why could not the Rāmānujan doctrine of the *Antaryāmīn* be used in a similar manner in India to the *Logos* of earliest Christian devotion? If 'the time had come' as he says of his colonial moment, "for the Indian Church to do its own thinking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit",[100] then there is considerable and difficult theological work to be done, none of which the 'mimic man' was trained for.

As jarring as Hoyland's *terra nulla* may sound to modern sensibilities, they were at the very least an honest summation of what many (if not most) western

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[98] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 19.
[99] This shall be considered more fully in the following chapter on method, so more will not be said on this at present. Ibid. 20.
[100] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 43.

Christian theological voices were saying at the time. And yet, as we have seen in microcosm in the theological distance between Appasamy's father and mother, so too, can we see in the macrocosm of the churches and missionary endeavours of the South Indian context. Rajappan Immanuel, writing in 1950, three years after independence, gives this first hand account. Appasamy's mentors, J. N. Farquhar[101] and Rudolf Otto,[102] had been recent proponents of the so-called 'fulfilment' approach, initiating a line of thought that ran through to progressive missionary figures such as C.F. Andrews and E. Stanley Jones. The antithesis to 'fulfilment theology' came in the form of Nicol Macnicol's more conservative missionary response, which preferred rather to emphasize the uniqueness of Christ in contrast to Indian religion. This is why, as Immanuel describes it, "The followers of Macnicol were nicknamed 'uniquers'. These contended that Jesus had something unique even in those things He had in Common with the other religions".[103] And so, it was a church divided along very familiar sounding lines:

> Prior to the dawn of this century, most of the Indian Christian writers were fundamentalists. But an ever-increasing number of liberals began to enter the scene. About the time of the start of the First World War there were so many liberals in South India that the average Indian Christian began to ask whether a certain person was a 'liberal' or otherwise. Then came the bomb from Germany. Albert Schweitzer introduced the word 'eschatology' into Indian Christian theology. The Indian vernacular journals criticized Schweitzer, but the Indian Christian was really puzzled. Many elderly pastors thought that the end of the

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[101] Frank Thompson notes that Farquhar explored *bhakti* "first within the *Śvetāśvataṛa Upaniṣad* and then in the *Gītā*, in the poems of devotees within the 'Great Sects' and in the teachings of Śrī Rāmānuja", but in the end "pointed to the inadequacy of bhakti in terms of historical grounding and morality". His criticism of the *bhakti* traditions is in what he sees as their 'ungoverned eroticism'. Coward, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*. 178-179.

[102] Thompson has also helpfully summarized that "Otto's thought clearly belongs to an earlier, pre-Barthian strain of Christian theology in the tradition of Schleiermacher. It affords ground for the interesting suggestion on Otto's part that such disclosures of sacred reality inaugurate distinct darśanas. Otto makes the further suggestion that the fundamental difference between Christianity and Hinduism is that the former represents 'another *darśanam*, another *vision*, another *eye*.' He adds, 'If a change is to come, another eye must first be opened'." To which Thompson adds: "Does one feel the opening of the eyes in the writings of A.J. Appasamy". Ibid. 182.

[103] Rajappan D. Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians* (Jabalpur: Leonard Theological College, 1950)., 133.

> world had come, and the heresies of 'liberalism' and 'eschatologism' were its sure indications.[104]

All of this is simply to set the scene, however, for the real crisis was still to come with the arrival of yet another German speaking 'bomb' – this time from Switzerland. It was the theology of Karl Barth (as interpreted by Hendrik Kraemer)[105] that, with its stark binary choice between 'religion' and 'revelation', would truly radicalize Appasamy's colleagues, all but enforcing Hoyland's *terra nulla*. Some might wish to distance Barth from such a view, claiming rather that Hendrik Kraemer's translation and commentary was a misrepresentation of the original. Certainly volumes have been written on this very subject, and such an excursus will not be attempted here. It must not be forgotten, however, that Barth himself was not silent on the subject of *bhakti*. In his commentary on the epistle to the Romans, undoubtedly in response to Otto's book, Barth would dismiss out of hand the 'religion' of *bhakti* as being "the realm of romantic direct communion [where] – in India for example – these divinities are thrown up in the most extravagant numbers".[106] In *Church Dogmatics* I.2 he could be found, more to the point, writing off the entire premise to which Appasamy had so completely committed himself. In response to Otto's treatment of Śrīvaiṣṇavism as India's 'religion of grace', Barth evidently has some knowledge of (but certainly no use for) the finer points of theological distinction among the Śrīvaiṣṇava schools and their 'monkey' and 'cat' soteriologies. His terse dismissal of any attempts at finding Christian parallels to these, however, would also serve as a terse dismissal of Appasamy's entire theological project: "It would be a very degenerate form of

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[104] Ibid., 132.
[105] Lott notes that although Kraemer did indeed take "systematic study of religions as a serious part of the missionary task of the Christian Church" in his commitment to the Barthian dialectic he was 'deeply ambiguous', even 'explicitly negative' about their '*revelatory* and *salvific* value'. Eric Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*, Religion and Reason (Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin, 1988). 8.
[106] Karl Barth and Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford University Press: London, 1968)., 50.

Evangelical Christianity which felt that the *Bhakti* religions could claim kinship with it".[107] Further, Barth clarifies that the Christian's response to the revelation of God in Christ must include with it the "inkling of what it means really to abandon the world of Greek or Indian gods".[108] With these being the stakes, to some of Appasamy's more conservative detractors the case was summarily closed. He was quite simply on the wrong side of Barth, and not much more could or even needed be said. The subcontinent was, on the authority of Barth himself, nothing more the *terra nulla* of the colonial and missionary enterprise.

At the World Missionary Conference held in Tambaran, Tamil Nadu in 1938, theologians from around the world convened to discuss and/or respond to the Barthian 'crisis theology'. The immediate result was the publication of *Rethinking Christianity in India*, an important yet, again, now out of print volume written largely by Appasamy's Madras Rethinking Group colleagues, Chenchiah and Chakkarai. The further-reaching result, however, was to be the deeper entrenchment of the groups that the previous summary from Immanuel defined as 'liberal' or 'fundamentalist'. Many influential thinkers, Immanuel notes, "both missionary and indigenous… stoutly defended" Barth's heavily drawn line in the sand. Equally as many, including Immanuel himself, responded in sharp opposition, saying: "… the very bent of the Indian genius is against Barth. If Śaṅkara and Yajnavalkya represent the best of the traditions of the country, Barthian theology as such will not be accepted in India as easily as it seems to be in the West".[109] The always-polemic Chenchiah would pour considerably more fuel on that fire. Writing satirically under the pseudonym of 'Piriyashisya' meaning 'beloved disciple', and with not a little irony considering Barth's involvement with the

[107] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*., 137.
[108] Karl Barth, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Helmut Gollwitzer, *Church Dogmatics : A Selection with Introduction* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961)., 53.
[109] Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians*., 134.

Confessing Church and the Barmen Declaration, Chenchiah writes in characteristic hyperbole:

> Hitler was a mild fascist when compared to the terror which Barth spread among the theologians. Against Hitler, you could at least appeal to democratic countries like England and America. But against Barth there was no appeal at all. Both Americans and British applauded Barth while he heated his irons and ordered the rhinoceros hide for thongs of chastisement.[110]

Considering the stridency of this sort of response in the Indian scene towards Barth it was Appasamy, as one of the leading theologians of his day, who perhaps spoke loudest of all by simply remaining silent on the subject. Notably, he did not contribute to the *Rethinking Christianity in India* volume. With the preface of *Rethinking* defining its primary concern as being that "… the Indian Church should think and act for itself, and make Christianity an indigenous movement",[111] Appasamy's very *causa causans*, his silence was indeed conspicuous. Perhaps even more significantly there is, throughout his writings, hardly a mention to be found of Barth, let alone any attempt at trying to engage him. Mention is made in a 1955 article entitled "Messengers of Christ To-Day" where he notes that the contributions of German writers such as his Marburg mentors, Rudolf Otto and Friedrich Heiler, had been unceremoniously "swept out of existence by the flood of Barthian theology". So too, concerning the once celebrated Sādhu Sundar Singh, and perhaps to a certain extent even autobiographically himself, he laments that Barthian theology simply "has no use for mystics".[112] Barth and Otto had come to represent something of a polarity in

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[110] Ibid., 134. I would argue that Chenchiah seems to have misunderstood an important aspect of Barth's critique of 'religion'. It is no small detail, and actually may be in many ways a keystone, that Barth includes 'Christian' religion as one species within its genus. Chenchiah's relentless critique and leveling of the institutional church, far from arguing against Barth's thesis, thus ends up being very much on the same side as Barth's indictment of it. Much of his invective against the structures of Christian religion in India can therefore, ironically, be justly described as being quite accidentally *de facto* Barthian.

[111] Eddy; Chakkarai Asirvatham, V.; Chenchiah P.; Devasahayam, D.M.; Jesudason, S.; Job, G.V.; Sudarisanam, A.N., *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras: Hogarth Press, 1938)., iii.

[112] T. Dayanandan Francis, ed., *The Good News of Jesus Christ in the Indian Setting* (Chennai: The Christian Literature Society, 2000)., 64.

Appasamy's thinking.[113] This is evident in his fullest reference to Barth found in his final publication, 1971's *What Shall We Believe?: a Study in the Christian Pramāṇas,* in which he says retrospectively:

> …the Christian theology of Dr. Karl Barth, Dr. Kraemer and their followers has exerted considerable influence in Europe and America. Many thoughtful Indian Christians have been under its spell… It teaches that God is 'wholly other'. He has disclosed himself in the Word of God. Man's effort or striving has nothing to do with the revelation of God as it is found in the Bible. The first and most essential source of Christian theology is the Word of God. The religions of the world are the result of man's effort to understand God. They cannot do anything to clarify or illumine Christian teaching. There is an unbridgeable gulf between the Word of God, which is of divine origin, and all the scriptures of the world, which depend on the exercise of the human intellect.[114]

The Barthian critique would thenceforth pursue him and equip his detractors with the sharpened terminology and concepts with which to denounce him. Their opposition towards Appasamy's conception of the 'Inner Ruler', the *Antaryāmīn,* would come straight out of the pages of *Church Dogmatics* with its devastating indictment of any sort of 'natural theology' or 'religion', and any corollary conceptions such as Justin's Martyr's classical appeal to the *logos spermatikos*. The more conservative impulses of the 'uniquers' and the replacement theologians would employ to full advantage the Barthian notion of religion as 'unbelief',[115] as foil and antithesis to 'Revelation'. Appasamy's beloved *bhakti* traditions were now cast as the "last human possibility".[116]

1.2.4 'Splitting the axis': Appasamy as 'bold heretic'.

Returning, once again, to *Location of Culture,* Bhabha describes how the 'insignia of colonial authority' that is introduced to the *terra nulla's* 'wordless wastes'

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[113] In favour of his Marburg mentor the Bishop notes that even "in spite of the popularity of Barthian Theology" and even with Barth "expounding a doctrine of Revelation quite different from that of Otto" there remains a perennial appeal to Otto's *Idea of the Holy,* accounting for its many popular reprints.
[114] A. J. Appasamy, *What Shall We Believe? : A Study of the Christian Pramāṇas* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971). 3.
[115] Barth, Bromiley, and Gollwitzer, *Church Dogmatics : A Selection with Introduction*., 52.
[116] Barth and Hoskyns, *The Epistle to the Romans*., 229.

comes in the form of an 'emblem' called 'the English book'. [117] As long as it remains an exalted fetish of colonial power, then it retains something of its essentialised and essentialising authority. But the interrogation put to it by the colonial subject produces a new moment and articulation that results in what he calls a "displacement of value from symbol to sign[118] that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative".[119] The book begins to take on a new role. It is still present, to be sure, but as Bhabha puts it, it is "no longer a representation of an essence".[120] The newly negotiated space created by the colonial subject's aporic reading of the book produces a disturbing hermeneutical agonism - not *ant*agonism, for the hybrid's interrogation is not deliberately adversarial as such. He has simply found a new way to read the English book, wresting it from its English cultural medium.

Considering the controversy surrounding the Barthian opinion that '*bhakti* religion' "…cannot do anything to clarify or illumine Christian teaching…"[121] the title of Appasamy's paper delivered in 1950 at the conference of the National Christian Council in India was admirably controversial, perhaps even combative: "Christological Reconstruction and Rāmānuja's Philosophy". No less a figure than Barth's friend and sometime sparring partner, Emil Brunner, was in attendance who, according to Appasamy, made some 'stimulating comments' on the paper including the somewhat understated advice (and perhaps warning) that "less conscious attention should be paid to Rāmānuja". [122] A year later, in the second of Appasamy's post-Independence

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[117] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 145-148.
[118] Ibid. 219-223. His reference here for this distinction between 'symbol' and 'sign' comes, of course, from Julia Kristeva, whose notion of the 'gendered sign' he treats at length in a later context. This is mentioned here in passing as in many ways Appasamy's shift from the Sacraments to a 'sacramental principle' in which, from the Eucharist, he begins to think of the whole 'world as sacrament' is fundamentally a shift in meaning from 'symbol' to 'sign'. For our present purposes, however, I am only focusing on Bhabha's axial language.
[119] Ibid. 162.
[120] Ibid. 163.
[121] Appasamy, *What Shall We Believe? : A Study of the Christian Pramāṇas*. 3.
[122] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 72-75.

publications, *The Christian Task in Independent India,* the Bishop makes a clear case for the indigenisation of both the Indian Church and its theology. As his title suggests he calls Indian Christians to active involvement in the political process as agents of social justice rather than continuing to exile themselves to a quietist existence in the proverbial 'mission compound'. The 'indigenisation' (Appasamy's word) of Christian theology[123] had only just begun, and so, post-Independence, he continued to raise the ante.

But with these two publications, all at once the tide would turn for Appasamy. It is only a matter of time, according to Bhabha, before Appasamy the 'mimic man turned menace', becomes Appasamy the 'heretic'. For as Bhabha succinctly puts it: "Hybridity is heresy".[124] The 'heretic' has 'split the axis' and a new line must now be drawn relative to it. It is particularly interesting that, of the three publications that came out within the next decade in response to Appasamy, all critical of his theological project, two of these three did so by using the same axial wording that Bhabha describes in reference to the subverted English Book. Hybridity, it seems, causes both the shifting and grinding of all sorts of axes.

The first of these publications came from the Gurukul Theological Research Group. Convened and led by Swedish Lutheran missionaries, 1956's *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah,* was a volume intended to critique and interact with the theological efforts of the Madras Rethinking Group. Although they begin with an apparent affirmation of the *idea of* an emerging indigenous theology they are quick to name the actual *ideas of* Appasamy and his Rethinking Group colleagues as nothing

[123] ———, *What Shall We Believe? : A Study of the Christian Pramāṇas*. 95.
[124] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 322.

more than "bold heresies".[125] It begins magnanimously enough, but the book carries increasingly throughout the tone of a threatened orthodoxy. "It is… better to welcome in Indian Theology 'bold heresies'", the Council concedes, in the interest of having "an independent and indigenous expression of Indian Christian Theology relevant to the Indian situation".[126] Their foregone conclusions are also clearly stated in the introductory section itself before any attempt at engaging Appasamy has been made:

> … he [Appasamy] has shifted his centre from the Christian faith to the Hindu religion. The result of this theological method must be fatal. What he is bringing to light cannot be the Christian message, but Hindu religion adorned with some Christian ideas. There will be no real distinction between such a 'Christian' theology and Hindu thought.[127]

And here is that axial language that Bhabha describes: "the *axis*… has been shifted … it is no longer the Gospel that is expounded, but the Bhakti religion".[128]

Two years later saw the publication of a doctoral thesis entitled "Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa", written by South African Reformed theologian, G.C. Oosthuizen. With his conclusions also having been helpfully declared at the outset Oosthuizen states, quite categorically, that, "...the chief aim of Appasamy is to relate Christianity to Indian mysticism, or even to achieve a synthesis of the two. But no synthesis which he actually advocates is possible between Christianity and *Vedānta* or *Bhakti".*[129] Oosthuizen offers no real interaction with Appasamy's ideas, however, only a paraphrased restatement of what the Lutheran reverends had already come up with, accompanied by the stark conclusion that: "Christ as Saviour has no organic place in his theology". While Oosthuizen has not left us with much by way of actual substance to interact with, his statement is a

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[125] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*., ix.
[126] Ibid., ix.
[127] Ibid., 7.
[128] Ibid., 27-28.
[129] Oosthuizen, "Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa"., 35.

challenge that has yet to be met in any of the secondary literature. "Christ as Saviour has no organic place in his theology". If this thesis is successful in rooting Appasamy's Body of God doctrine both in his interpretation of the Gospel of John as well as in his Anglican sacramental belief and practice, then it will prove that, in actual fact, quite the opposite is true. For now, once again, here is that axial rhetoric: "[Appasamy] eventually stands with both feet in India's heritage as his axis, debasing Christianity to an eclectic religion".[130]

In the third of these publications, German theologian Herwig Wagner's *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien* ('Early Figures of an Indigenous Theology in South India') came to an entirely different conclusion on the Bishop's work. To him Appasamy's theological project is more occidental ('*abendländische'*) than oriental, consumed "in large parts by western theological heritage ('*westlichen theologischen Erbe'*)".[131] Wagner claims that Appasamy has moved away from "the traditional self-understanding of religions", and towards an essentialist belief in what he calls the 'mystical' that underlies the plurality of all 'religious experience' (*'religiöse Erfahrung*').[132] Although he does not use the German equivalent for 'axis', he does, as the Swedish Lutherans and Oosthuizen before him, accuse Appasamy of have having something other than Christ at the centre of his theology. The 'common centre' (*'gemeinsame Mitte'*) from which Appasamy interprets the Hindu and Christian texts, he says, unlike the two earlier critiques, is none other than the 'liberal influence' of a 'humanist philosophy of religion'.[133]

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[130] Ibid., 37.
[131] Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 32. As this has yet to be translated into English, all quotations here are my own attempts at translation of the original German with the help and confirmation of two native German speakers.
[132] Ibid. 33-34. Of all three of these contemporary criticisms of Appasamy, it shall become evident over the course of this study that I am probably most closely in agreement with Wagner's critique here. The 'traditional self understanding of religions' is what is truly at issue here. The Gurukul Lutherans and Oosthuizen have taken neither Appasamy's nor the Hindu traditions seriously enough.
[133] Ibid. 47.

Over the course of Chapters 3 and 4 I shall engage more with the particulars of Appasamy's detractors' arguments against him. For now it is enough to note the similarity in tone. With the Indian churches in the very process of being turned over to Indian hands, the missionary's worst fears have suddenly come upon him. The native catechetist has reverted back to type - "the subtile [*sic*] systems of Hinduism".[134] It is the self-fulfilling essentializing judgment of J.A. Dubois from 1815 all over again: "… in embracing the Christian religion they never entirely renounce their superstitions towards which they always keep a secret bent… there is no *unfeigned, undisguised* Christian among these Indians".[135]

Appasamy's proposal to reconstruct Christology in dialogical interaction with Rāmānuja was evidently a step too far. "Blasphemy", Bhabha says, "…is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation".[136] Rather than continuing to do the hard work of negotiation, 'translating the untranslatable', it is easier by far simply to give hybridity a new name, and assign it a new location. Appasamy's double heritage and its increasingly articulate hybridity must either be denounced by its claimant or find itself excluded from the imagined centre. It is now to be considered *ec*centric, 'out of the circle', for aporia cannot exist within a centrist sort of 'orthodoxy' for long. Multivocal agonism is soon to be silenced by univocal *ant*agonism, and myths of purity and origin adjusted to fit the newly circumscribed borders. But as the hybrid would say, "we didn't cross that border. The border crossed us".[137]

"If hybridity is heresy, then to blaspheme is to dream", says Bhabha – not the "nostalgic dream of tradition, nor the Utopian dream of modern progress", but "the

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[134] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 49.
[135] Ibid. 173.
[136] Ibid. 323.
[137] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines : The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). 1.

dream of translation as 'survival'…the act of living on borderlines".[138] Appasamy did indeed have a blasphemous dream, the dream to see within his lifetime a fully naturalised form of Indian Christianity. Forty years on, however, in his 1969 memoirs, far from seeing the realisation of this, Appasamy laments what he sees, effectively, as an ongoing cultural and theological hegemony in the Indian churches.

> Most missionaries aware of [the] close association between the Hindu religion and Indian culture … have taught their converts not to take any interest in Indian culture. This has led to the unfortunate result that most of our Christians are very Western in their cultural outlook, more interested in Western music than in Eastern, more at home in English literature than in Tamil.[139]

And not just the churches, says Appasamy, but the seminaries as well: "In Theological Colleges our young men are being fed on the theology produced in Basel, Zürich, Edinburgh, London or New York".[140] The dream of an indigenous Indian Christian theology had, according to a disappointed Appasamy mature in years, all but been abandoned. Although the nation was independent, his bid for Indian Christian theological independence, it would seem, had been flatly denied. He writes somewhat despondently in his 1969 memoirs: "When I began to write sixty years ago a number of us were very keen to re-think Christianity in India. Men like V. Chakkarai, P. Chenchiah, G. V. Job, Eddy Asirvatham, S. Jesudason, R. C. Das and others did a good deal of such thinking and writing… After retirement I found that there had been a loss of interest in the books we had written".[141]

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[138] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. 324
[139] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 157.
[140] To this day, I would add, an inordinate number of dissertations continue to be produced in Indian seminaries on Barth, Brünner, Tillich and Hick, and comparatively few on Appasamy, Chenchiah and Chakkarai.
[141] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. The year that Appasamy wrote this, however, Robin Boyd was to publish *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, which would spark renewed interest in the Bishop's work, as indeed in a number of the other early pioneers of indigenous theology.

1.3 A Survey of Appasamy's Writings

Appasamy's writings span more than fifty years and straddle either side of Indian Independence in 1947. And yet, despite the more than half a century of work to draw from, it is not insignificant that Appasamy's detractors have generally only cited from the earliest of his writings. One can only imagine how the ranks of Barthian theologians would respond had someone tried to do the same to their central figure. It is an irresponsible sort of scholarship indeed that continues, to this day, to evaluate the work of someone who wrote well into the 1970's based entirely on material from the 1920's and early 1930's. What follows presently is a brief overview of Appasamy's most important writings. While I will occasionally be drawing content from his papers and journal articles as well, in the interest of brevity I have opted not to include these in this present survey.

His earliest publication is his 1922 Oxford doctoral thesis entitled "The mysticism of Hindu Bhakti literature: considered especially with reference to the mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". Working from his early assumption that there is a common mystical 'religious experience' across the traditions he makes his first attempts at taxonomical grouping of these, the phenomena of what he calls the 'mystic experience'. As his starting place, it is a fairly even mix of both Streeter's and Otto's early influence on him. Again, what I am emphasising here is that this is *only* his starting place, and that the whole flow and development of his thought needs now to be reconsidered. Following his doctoral thesis, his earliest widespread publication, 1927's *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings* is for the most part exegetical in nature. It is an extensive reworking of his doctoral thesis highlighting what he believes to be the key *bhakti* passages from both the Fourth Gospel as well as the first Johannine Epistle. 1931's *What is Mokṣa* picks up where

Bhakti Marga left off. As one of his most thematically focused works, it outlines his soteriology in light of and in comparison to *bhakti* and Upaniṣadic conceptions of *mokṣa* (‘release’) and the *avatāra* (‘descent’). It also contains his first full attempt at a Christian adaptation of the Rāmānujan analogy. These three publications comprise the full cycle of his thinking from his graduate studies, and are the ones I shall be focusing on in the third chapter.

As I shall draw out in chapter four, the publications subsequent to this are markedly different both in tone as well as content. His 1935 publication *Christ in the Indian Church*, as his subtitle “a Primer for Christian Faith and Practice” describes it, proposes both a theology of Christian *bhakti* in view of traditionally held Christian beliefs such as the Trinity and the Incarnation as well as a description of what its normative experience might look like in the Indian Church. In this context he picks up on ideas that he first broached in *Bhakti Marga*, developing them more fully as a sacramental theology as well as bringing them to culmination in his notion of the ‘world as sacrament’. His next book, 1942’s *The Gospel and India’s Heritage,* is probably the fullest and most systematic of all of his writings and contains his application (now four-fold) of the Rāmānujan Analogy as well as an outline of what a sacramental community might look like in the Indian context. In these last two books it is perhaps important to note that he attempts to extend his study beyond the Johannine texts by including the Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels respectively, although these are still very much in service to what he has already been finding in his reading of John. In Appasamy’s own description *Christ in the Indian Church* was initially conceived as a primer instruction for caste converts to Christianity, while *Gospel and India’s Heritage* grew more out of ongoing dialogical interaction with Hindu

intellectuals while he taught at the Christian Society for the Study of Hinduism in Benares.[142]

Post-independence, as the newly appointed Bishop of Coimbatore in the newly formed C.S.I., he found little time to write and publish. For the duration of his Episcopacy right up until his final two publications his writing was limited to a few shorter biographical works, sermons, diocesan letters, memoirs and journal articles. These are not to be overlooked, however, for they have served as useful source material with which to piece together his biography as well as in providing clues for his interaction with some of the wider theological discussions that were underway in and around Independence. As outlined above, Karl Barth, Hendrick Kraemer and Emil Brunner are all mentioned, along with the varied Indian Christian responses to them. Interestingly, and somewhat tantalisingly, there is even an acknowledged awareness and appreciation of important Russian scholars such as Nicholai Berdyaev[143] and Vladimir Lossky,[144] both of whom would certainly have been, at the very least, sympathetic to Appasamy's sacramental approach. With no further textual evidence to link these, however, this too can only remain an interesting circumstantial conjecture. More applicable to this study, we also find more frequent reference to his Anglican mentors, theologians such as William Temple[145] and Charles Gore,[146] and increasingly to the latter of these.

One further observation must be made about his Episcopal writings, particularly concerning his unpublished sermons and diocesan letters. In spite of what Wagner has said of him, it is abundantly evident in reading through these that, no matter how one

[142] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*., 52 and 55.
[143] Ibid. 152-153.
[144] Ibid. 167, he describes *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* as a 'deeply abstruse book'.
[145] Concerning the then Archbishop William Temple's *Nature, Man and God* Appasamy says: "I drank deep from that fountain of learning and piety" Ibid. 50.
[146] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 26. Gore also features quite prominently in Appasamy's final publication on the Christian *pramāṇas.*

reads and understands his more apologetic works, Appasamy is certainly no 'liberal' in the pulpit. The Episcopal writings reveal that there are many layers to Appasamy's thinking. In much the same way that St. Paul's apologetic message to the philosophers at the Aereopagus in Acts 17 is strikingly different in both content and tone than his address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, so too, Appasamy's earlier more apologetic writings bear a strikingly different tone than do his 'in-house' Episcopal addresses. If all that they were reading was the Mars Hill message at Acts 17, Appasamy's detractors would no doubt have been calling St. Paul a 'liberal' whose main influence was 'natural religion' and Hellenistic philosophy, or worse 'paganism'. After all, the very verse that the Apostle famously cites in Acts 17.28 came straight out of Aratus by way of Cleanthes hymn to Jupiter! He might just as well have cited Nammālvār's *Tiruvaymoli,* whose 'Jupiter' was, of course, Kṛṣṇa, the avatāra of Viṣṇu. All that is being underscored here is the necessary research discipline of reading through a whole body of work.

In the years after his retirement the mature Appasamy returned to writing with 1970's *Theology of Hindu Bhakti* and 1971's *What Shall We Believe?: a Study of the Christian Pramāṇas*. These latter publications, in my view, are quite important to understanding his theological project for they complete the arc of the trajectory of his career. And yet one is hard-pressed to find any reference to these in any of the secondary material for these both came out after Boyd's seminal work, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, the *de facto* source text for anything written on Appasamy ever since. His mature understanding of Rāmānuja's thought becomes most evident when *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti* is juxtaposed with his 1922 DPhil thesis entitled "The *Mysticism* of Hindu Bhakti Literature" (emphasis mine). As is evident from the titles of these two works the methodological shift in Appasamy has been from

reading Rāmānuja as a 'mystic' or as a 'philosopher' to reading him more as a 'theologian'. As I read his later work, the mature Appasamy has increasingly allowed the Hindu *bhakta* to speak for himself, the summary of which shall find its way into my fifth and final chapter. And finally, his final publication on the 'Christian *pramāṇas'* serves as something of an epistemological and methodological explanation of how he got there.

Viewed in survey, it is an impressive body of work. And yet, if Thomas' assessment that "Bishop Appasamy was perhaps the first systematically trained Indian theologian to have made a pioneering contribution to indigenous theology with professional competence"[147] is correct then one might well assume that academic studies of him would abound both in India and beyond. In the foreword to his 1992 compendium of the Bishop's journal and newspaper articles Dayananda Francis assumes exactly this:

> Bishop Appasamy has distinguished himself as a Christian thinker and theologian during the early decades of the present century. His contribution towards the comparative study of Hindu and Christian Bhakti are thought provoking. Many a study has been made of his major writings both in India and overseas. [148]

While the first part of this statement, essentially echoing Thomas, is uncontroversial, the latter is truly puzzling. If there have indeed been 'many a study' done on his writings, and that too both 'in India and overseas', then the bulk of these seem to have collectively made themselves scarce for the gathering of materials for this thesis. The fact of the matter is that substantial critical studies on Appasamy are, very much to the contrary, few and far between.

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[147] Thomas and Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers*.
[148] A. J. Appasamy and T. Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1992).

1.4 A Survey of the Secondary Sources

Robin Boyd's *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* is still, for good reason, the standard text in Indian seminaries. It is as yet unsurpassed as a primer on Indian Christian thought. More applicable to this study, however, it contains a substantial chapter on Appasamy's *bhakti* approach, a reworking of portions of Boyd's own doctoral thesis. Subsequent to this, now using Boyd's book as its primary source, there have been a number of other such introductory compendiums. The majority of these, however, usually give little more than an honorific mention to Appasamy, the exceptions giving perhaps a brief synopsis of his main contributions. A smaller cohort, still mostly dependent on Boyd's analysis, has actually offered an original contribution to Appasamy scholarship. These can be numbered on one hand, however - surely much too small a contingent to comprise what Francis calls 'many a study'.

The first post-Independence analysis of Appasamy, notably, comes from an Indian Christian theologian - Rajappan Immanuel's 1950 book, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians.* As professor of Philosophy and Theology and New Testament Interpretation at Leonard Theological College in Jabalpur, his interests were much the same as Appasamy's, that of doing theology as an Indian in and for the Indian church. He is generally affirming and shares his convictions that Christianity in India can and *must* learn from Hindu culture and traditions, or at the very least to learn from them a new lexicon for its proclamation of Christ. His interest in Appasamy is confined mainly to the concerns of an Indian ecclesiology.[149] Specifically on the basis of India's religious genius for ritual and sacrament he also expresses an admiration for Appasamy's attempt at reframing the Eucharist in 'Body of God' language.[150] In all Immanuel's is a sympathetic study, but perhaps more descriptive than analytical or

[149] Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians*.
[150] Ibid., 78-80.

critical. In a tone of appreciation for Appasamy's contribution he goes on to make his own proposals for the contextualisation of a newly independent Indian church.

Within the next twelve years, however, the three above-cited works by Appasamy's expatriate detractors would weigh in with their more polemical response. The fact that these all came from European Christians (none of them Anglican I might add) is not insignificant. Theirs is not Immanuel's tone of inquiring how Appasamy and his Rethinking Group's efforts can be built upon in a newly Independent India (despite what the Gurukul Group's foreword somewhat disingenuously claims), but rather how Appasamy's attempts at naturalising Indian Christian theology can be held in check, thus, their 'bold heresies' pronouncements. There followed then a *de facto* moratorium on any further Appasamy scholarship for the next decade and a half.

The rest of Appasamy's Rethinking Group colleagues did not fare much better. V. C. Rajasekaran, the son of Chenchiah, laments: "The preparatory work done by them [Chenchiah and Chakkarai] along with late CSI Bishop, Dr. A.J. Appasamy, showed signs of quick fruition of the cherished goal of Indian Christian Theology. After these stalwarts passed away, the interest waned in due course. This is a matter of great regret". According to Rajasekaran, blame for this should rest squarely on Indian theologians themselves for their apathetic response to the Rethinking Group pioneers. Given the unequal power differential in the colonial equation, however, I would lay the lion's share of the responsibility on the expatriate response. With the state of the Indian Church being what it was, as an increasingly vulnerable minority community that had just lost its imperial patronage, that sort of hegemonic response to Appasamy and his colleagues could not *but* have had a silencing effect. In any case, Rajasekaran calls upon his generation of Indian Christians to once again take up the Madras Trio's mantle. If not trained theologians then, he adds, "…at least now some thoughtful Indian

Christian laymen should revive the interest and contribute to the development of Indian Christian Theology".[151] In a somewhat uncharitable overstatement that completely ignores the important contributions of theologians such as Jose Pereira, M.M. Thomas, Stanley Samartha and Raimundo Panikkar he concludes that "Indian Christian Theology has not made any progress at all since then".[152]

There have been a few useful attempts at engaging Appasamy in recent years, and in addition to our three polemical sources these are the resources to which this study will most frequently refer – Robin Boyd, M.M. Thomas, Sunand Sumithra and Mathew Vekathanam. Boyd's doctoral thesis and later chapter in *Introduction* have been my starting place. Thomas and Sumithra's analyses of Appasamy have interacted more topically with some of the Bishop's 'realised eschatology' on *karma* as present judgment. These are somewhat less applicable to the doctrinal focus of this study, but are mentioned here because they are substantial enough, and have at least done Appasamy the service of having interacted with some of his ideas. Mathew Vekathanam's heavy tome on the development of an Indian Christology makes reference to Appasamy throughout, applying some of the Bishop's ideas to a broader analysis on an Indian Christian reconsideration of the Christ Event.

These notwithstanding, most recent mentions of Appasamy's work are exactly that – mere mentions, which, whether honorific or critical, do not contribute much by way of substance. Two recent examples will serve as being representative of these. Subaltern theologian Arvind P. Nirmal, in his essay "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology", criticizes Appasamy (but never engages him) for being too "brahminic"[153] as a "*bhakti margi* theologian who tried to synthesize Rāmānuja's Vishishtha Advaita

[151] V. C. Rajasekaran, *Reflections on Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1993).
[152] Ibid., 101.
[153] R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology : Emerging Trends* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994)., 28.

with Christian theology".[154] This is simply the recycled rhetoric of Oosthuizen, but with the added subaltern angle this time. True to Oosthuizen's research method as well, Nirmal never gets around to actually interacting with what the Bishop *did* say about caste and untouchability, which is quite considerable given his 'realised eschatology' in India concern. One gets the distinct sense that Appasamy is being used here more as an idea rather than as a fellow theologian to interact with. Evangelical theologian, P.V. Joseph, has looked a bit more closely at Appasamy's theology in his recent book on the Madras Trio's pneumatology. Despite this he still cannot resist the simplistic language of the Gurukul reverends: the work of Appasamy and his Madras Trio colleagues, he describes as the 'Hinduization' of Christianity, the sort of theology "followed within the liberal streams of Indian Christianity… the Gospel is interpreted in purely Hindu thought forms, particularly Brahmanism".[155] In closing, what has emerged from this overview of the scant secondary material available on the Bishop is just how many versions of 'Appasamy' there are.[156] He is evidently too 'Brahmanic' for the Dalit theologians, [157]too 'Western' for comparative religionists,[158] and too 'Hindu' for Evangelicals.[159] This does little more than underscore the fact that Appasamy appears to

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[154] Ibid., 29.
[155] P.V. Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007)., 137.
[156] One such study has even got the wrong Appasamy! M. Joseph seems to have A.J. Appasamy confused with his father A.S. Appasamy. Anand Amaladoss, *Indian Christian Thinkers* (Chennai: Satya Nilayam Publications, 2005). 15. Similarly D. W. Jesudoss says: "Appasamy is, indeed, the first Indian Christian protestant theologian who consciously attempted to interpret the Christian message at the Indian background… He himself was a convert from Hinduism" A.J. Appasamy was not the convert - his father was. D.W. Jesudoss, *What Is Man?: Theological Attempts and Directions Towards the Formation of an Indian Christian Anthropology for Today.* (Madras: Gurukul Research Institute, 1986). 11.
[157] Abraham Ayrookuzhiel prefaces his brief considerations of Appasamy with the phrase "if one is allowed to generalise", and then proceeds to offer the simplistic and, in my view, quite inaccurate summation that Appasamy's "point of reference is the dominant, Brahmanical religious traditions". A.M. Abraham Ayrookuzhiel, *Essays on Dalits, Religion and Liberation* (Bangalore: CISRS, 2006). 3.
[158] J. L. Brockington, *Hinduism and Christianity*, Themes in Comparative Religion (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992)., 181.
[159] Bong Rin Ro and Mark Albrecht, *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts : An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984)., 251. See Bruce J. Nicholls chapter entitled "Hermeneutics, Theology, and Culture with Special Reference to Hindu Culture".

be too ‘liberal’ for the conservatives and too ‘conservative’ for the liberals. Surely this is not such a bad thing.

Chapter 2. Comparative method: 'theology', 'religion' or 'tradition'?

Philosopher, historian and Talmudic scholar, Daniel Boyarin, tells the story in his 2004 book, *Border Lines: the Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, of a smuggler passing regularly across a heavily guarded border with nothing but a wheelbarrow full of sand. Daily the border guards sift through the sand, and daily they find nothing. When asked years later what he had been smuggling all that time, the answer was simple: "Wheelbarrows, of course!"[1] Since the early 1920's Appasamy has had the suspicion that European versions of Christianity have been smuggling more than just their Gospel into the Indian context. While there is what he calls a 'certain' and 'definite nucleus' "taken over from the New Testament", this also comes fully laden with a number of other 'accretions' such as 'Greek philosophy', 'Roman legalism' and 'Teutonic folklore'.[2] Some of these, he says, may be more benign, some are 'positively harmful'. But his point is that he is neither Greek nor Roman. He is Indian. And as such, the 'method which I have followed', says Appasamy, is rather to enquire of Hindu philosophical and theological conceptions "what this doctrine really means, what it purposes to achieve and whether our Christian doctrines should not be thought out again in relation to this idea". By doing so, he says, we can begin to 'rethink' our own 'fundamental ideas in relation to them.[3]

What I am arguing in this present chapter is that, so too must we examine the underlying assumptions behind our comparative methods as well. 'Comparative religion', 'phenomenology of religions', 'theology of religions' - these too are wheelbarrows, vehicles that not only convey but also *shape* content. What sorts of

[1] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). 1.
[2] A. J. Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1934). 17.
[3] Ibid. 20.

assumptions do these smuggle in to the study of 'religion'? Indeed, is not the word 'religion' itself a significant part of what is being smuggled? In a post-critical age it is time now to think as clearly as possible about *all* the 'traditions' that are forming and shaping our research. Religious or non-religious, theist or anti-theist, the discourses of our varied confessions are formed within lineages of thought, what we *say* we believe. These are also constantly and often imperceptibly being shaped by our narratives, what we *want* to believe. Both of these, discourses and narratives, ultimately, are borne out in our actual lived ethic and ritual practice, what we *show* we believe. In short, religious or otherwise, all of our discursive traditions are embedded in narrative and embodied in praxis - head, heart and feet. Appasamy has professed to having been significantly influenced by the Hindu *bhakti* traditions. As I shall demonstrate over the course of this thesis, however, his reading of both Rāmānuja and the Gospel of John is informed by two dominant traditions. The first of these is his own devotional tradition, the early twentieth century Anglican sacramentalism that significantly shapes his reading of both John's Gospel and Rāmānuja's *Śārīraka-Mimāṃsā* ('embodiment exegesis'). At the same time his approach to both the Rāmānujan and Johannine texts fits quite neatly, especially in his early work, within the Otto and Schleiermacher phenomenological classifications of 'religious experience' and 'mysticism'. All of this comes straight out of his Oxford and Marburg academic tradition. As I will also demonstrate over the course of this study, although his Anglican tradition remains and, in fact, becomes more pronounced as his work progresses, his early 'mysticism' and 'religious experience' emphasis becomes increasingly subordinated to his communally defined devotional practice and 'tradition'.

In this chapter I will be exploring some of the methodological considerations that have helped to focus my research. The bulk of my interaction here is with three

comparative scholars in particulars. Francis Clooney's proposal for a 'comparative theology' provides a current context and vocabulary by which to understand what Appasamy was attempting to do in his own time and place. Alasdair MacIntyre's, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition,* provides an overview of some of the tectonic shifts that have taken place in the last century of scholarship, providing also somewhat of a conceptual bridge by which to span the distance between Appasamy's time and our own. And finally, Eric J. Lott's *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion and the Study of Religion* helps to bridge some of the 'great gulf fixed' between the 'theology' and 'religious studies' departments of my own thinking. My goal here is to develop an approach that pays special attention to how theological discourse fits within the organic structures of communal narrative and practice, an approach that I am calling 'comparative traditions'.

2.1 Appasamy and today's 'comparative theology'.

As was established in the previous chapter, Appasamy began his study of the *bhakti* traditions at Oxford and Marburg under the influence of Rudolf Otto. It was not until he returned to India in 1922, however, that he began to undertake his more focused study of Rāmānuja's texts, and he did so with the help of actual proponents and practitioners of the tradition itself. He mentions in his memoirs that he had been "fortunate in securing for nine years the services of a Sanskrit pandit who was a follower of Rāmānuja the Bhakti philosopher and had a competent knowledge of English".[4] In another context he recalls that "[f]or several years Sanskrit Pandits came to teach me regularly and read with me some of the original Sanskrit texts. I was particularly interested to study how Rāmānuja had constructed into a theological system

[4] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story* (Bangalore: Christian Literature Society, 1969). 28, and 44.

his deep personal experience of God".[5] There are two points worth noting here. First, the sort of comparative engagement that he is undertaking is a flesh-and-blood one; and second, such an engagement requires him, regardless of his own devotional commitments, to take the initial posture of a learner towards his other's text and discourse.

Following this, in the early 1930's, he began the first of his tentative experiments in a broader comparative interaction with his Hindu countrymen. In 1932, as he took up his teaching position in 'Philosophy of Religion' and 'History of Religions' at Bishop's College, Calcutta, he mentions having invited Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan as guest lecturer for some of his classes. As a fellow Oxford scholar himself, it seemed an intuitive starting place. Radhakrishnan taught Appasamy's ordinands on some of the modern developments in Hindu thought, the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna movement and the contribution of Bengali reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore and Vivekananda.[6] At the same time, and as shall be explored more fully in the next chapter, Radhakrishnan also interacted with some key passages from John's Gospel, putting a decidedly neo-Vedantin spin on what Appasamy will eventually call his 'Johannine *mahāvākyas'*.[7] Following this, the Bishop's memoirs also make mention of an initiative begun in 1934 that he calls a 'school of religions' in Darjeeling,[8] and a few years later, in 1939, the Christian Society For the Study of Hinduism based out of Benares.[9] In this context he describes, as well, his many opportunities for dialogue with contacts at the Benares Hindu University. As he is attempting his own brand of *in situ* comparative work he is also forming his earliest

[5] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest* (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1964). 28.
[6] Ibid. 28-29.
[7] …as shall be outlined in Chapter Three, Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 48-49.
[8] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 52.
[9] Ibid. 55.

thoughts on the *pramāṇas*, his epistemological framework, a structure by which not only to do theology in India, but also *as* an Indian theologian.

His proposal here is that the Hindu texts will help him learn to read his own differently, raising questions and providing analogies that draw out a richness of meaning latent to them, but perhaps hitherto undetected as a result of those aforementioned 'accretions'. He is not interested in all Hindu text, for he is quite clear that he considers some to be of doubtful value to the Christian. What he is interested in, rather, are:

> ...[p]assages which teach thoughts with which we are familiar but teach them in a specifically Indian way… When, therefore, we come across some thought with which we may be familiar in Christian teaching, but which finds a unique expression in language which is rich with association, our minds are stirred as in no other way.[10]

In a later context Appasamy asks the very poignant question of his Christian readership*: "*Why should we use the Heritage of India*?"* His answer, in stark contrast to the Barthian 'crisis theology' is quite bold in retrospect: "Because God has been at work in India through the ages".[11] To Appasamy there is no clear-cut dichotomy between two kinds of religion, 'Christian' and 'heathen'.[12] In the face of what he calls 'the growing science of religions' he is led increasingly to the conviction that "there is much truth in all the religions of the world". Christians can no longer afford to dismiss other traditions for in them can be found ample evidence that "[God] has been at work inspiring all the great prophets and seers of mankind". This, he says, comes not from a nationalist ideology but from a deeply held theological conviction that is rooted in his understanding of the Logos (as shall also be outlined in Chapter Three) in the Prologue to John's Gospel:

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[10] Ibid. 170.
[11] A. J. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage* (London and Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1942). 15.
[12] Ibid. 16.

> We do not... value India's heritage simply because it is our national culture but we value it because we believe that God has been at work in this ancient land and that He has really helped the millions of earnest and sincere souls who have sought after Him with all the fervour of which they were capable.[13]

In using the devotional heritage of India to articulate Indian Christian theology, Appasamy further claims that 'we can be better Christians by such use' for it is the difference between speaking in a second language as opposed to a mother tongue.[14] Reading the Hindu scriptures in this way will produce a very different "attitude of the Indian Christian to the scriptures of India... He will learn from them…" with the possibility that a "[n]ew emphasis on different truths of the Christian religion may be suggested by them".[15]

Key to understanding what he is proposing here is the recognition that, to Appasamy, Christ is the revelation, not the Bible, let alone a religion called 'Christianity'. The biblical texts are revelation insofar as they contain the account of the revelation of God in Christ,[16] which is why he ranks the Gospels as being of greater importance than the Pauline epistles.[17] Like Augustine famously said of the 'Greatest Commandment', if Christ is the revelation, then 'everything else is commentary', both time- and culture-bound. As such he is very open to the possibility that some of what he has received as 'orthodox' Christian theology, although it may not necessarily be 'wrong' or 'false', might yet be missing out on some of the depth and richness that are inherent and latent to the revelation itself. If it is indeed a divine revelation, he says, then why should we not expect this? In short, what he is open to here is the possibility

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[13] Ibid. 16.
[14] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 12-13.
[15] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings* (London: Macmillan, 1927). 167.
[16] "The fundamental import of the Christian scriptures is that they record the story of Jesus. They enable us to get in touch with the historic manifestation of the Divine" Ibid. 157.
[17] Ibid. 110-111.

that the Hindu traditions, which to him contain truth already revealed in India by the Logos, might draw out some of this:

> Sometimes there may be ideas inherent in Christian thought which have not received emphasis. Christianity is Eastern in its origin; its sacred books were written in the East by people who were familiar with the East. But all these centuries these Eastern books have been in the hands of Christians in the West, who have not always caught on to some of their meaning… A familiarity with the Scriptures of the east may help us to understand the Bible better. It will not necessarily give us new ideas, but it will certainly mean new emphases. Ideas which are already inherent in the Christian Scriptures will attain a new significance, will have a new power, when they are viewed in relation to the Eastern environment.[18]

While I would definitely want to challenge, post-Saïd, the simplicity of the sort of 'East' and 'West' distinction he is making here, I would not be too quick to discount his idea of proximity. Perhaps, however, the fruitfulness of the comparative engagement lies not so much in an imagined cultural or geographic proximity, but rather proximity of encounter with actual proponents of traditions as practiced, *in situ* rather than in armchairs.

Consider Appasamy's thoughts from the late 1920's alongside some of Francis Clooney's more recent descriptions of his comparative approach. Comparative theology, says Clooney in *Seeing Through Texts*, is "a theology that remains rooted in one tradition while seriously engaging another tradition and allowing that engagement to affect one's original commitments".[19] In his most recent 2010 book, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders,* he further describes this as engaging in:

> …acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions. This learning is sought for the sake of fresh

[18] Ibid. 170-171.
[19] Francis Xavier Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*, Suny Series, toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). 37.

> theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition.[20]

Prima facie the similarities are striking. Appasamy wants to 'rethink' his own 'fundamental ideas' in relation to the *bhakti* traditions. Clooney wants to see how a comparative engagement with other traditions might affect his own 'original commitments'. I am not suggesting here that Appasamy was doing the same thing as Clooney, for as I shall argue below Appasamy also comes to his comparative engagement with a number of assumptions that belong to an older brand of scholarship. But I am suggesting that he might be considered as something of a pioneer to the field, a 'proto-comparative theologian'.

What both Clooney and Appasamy have in common is their conviction that the comparativist's[21] enquiry into another's tradition then, if it is done right, is always what one might describe as 'heuristic'. It is an experiment in taking theology outside of the closed, fideistic systems of singular-tradition theologizing, of traditions 'talking to themselves'. It is more like a journey of discovery, of 'semantic motion',[22] with both the risk and promise that the encounter might potentially challenge, sharpen or even change both the understanding and articulation of the home tradition. If it is done well, as a heuristic method rather than with the fideistic confidence of a closed system's foregone conclusions, then like the Magi of the Advent story, the comparativist might find him or herself having to take a very different route back 'home'.

In an article entitled "Readings from Indian Religious Literature" from 1927 Appasamy offers this in defence of his love for the *bhakti* texts: "A familiarity with the

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[20] Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010). 10.
[21] 'comparativist' is Clooney's word. This study shall follow his use of it as designating a practitioner of 'comparative theology', and is distinguished from Ninian Smart's 'comparative religionist' or 'religionist'.
[22] Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology*, Suny Series, toward a Comparative Philosophy of Religions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). 172.

Scriptures of the east may help us to understand the Bible better. It will not necessarily give us new ideas, but it will certainly mean new emphases. Ideas which are already inherent in the Christian Scriptures will attain a new significance, will have a new power, when they are viewed in relation to the Eastern environment."[23] Clooney will echo Appasamy's claim:

> Comparative theological reading does not require the abandonment of any particular doctrines, nor a revisionist interpretation of the meaning of any particular doctrine; indeed, comparative theological reading depends on the perdurance of what is said, read, taught, written in a transition; those who would expect from comparative theology new teachings should inevitably be disappointed.[24]

But the change that Clooney foresees must happen slowly, respectfully and incrementally.

> …sheer novelty and bold progress must be eschewed, giving way to smaller and more enduring changes that take place from the inside out, until everything is irreversibly transformed and splendid.[25]

We will leave this for now, a *prima facie* resemblance between what Appasamy was attempting to do in pre-Independence India and what today's comparative theologian seeks to do in the twenty-first century academic context. 'Zooming out' now with the help of Alasdair MacIntyre, what follows presently is a consideration of some of the paradigmatic changes that have taken place in the academic context over the last century, particularly concerning the question of both 'religion' and 'theology'.

2.2 Alasdair MacIntyre's 'Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry'

In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, substantially the text of his 1988 Gifford Lectures, MacIntyre outlines three approaches, not as complementary and supplemental to one another, but as rivals in a

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[23] A. J. Appasamy and T. Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1992). 171.
[24] Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology*. 189.
[25] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 50.

bitter hermeneutical struggle, "mutually antagonistic conceptions of moral inquiry".[26] His own particular field is that of moral philosophy, but in his definition 'moral inquiry', as it falls under the original mandate of the Gifford Lectures, also extends to philosophical and natural theology as well as to related historical, literary, anthropological, and sociological studies.[27] These three rival and 'incommensurable' views he identifies as 'Encyclopaedia', 'Genealogy', and 'Tradition', and he assigns to each a founding document, all published within a decade of the original Gifford Lectures, a charter of sorts that serves both as being representative and formative of each of the three paradigms.

The 'Encyclopaedia' view is exemplified in the method and presuppositions of the Ninth Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the edition current at the time of the institution of the Gifford Lectures. Its explicit aim, as contributor Thomas Baynes asserts, was to advance the progress of "the available facts of human history, collected over the widest areas". These were then to be "carefully coordinated and grouped together, in the hope of ultimately evolving the laws of progress, moral and material, which underlie them, and which will help to connect and interpret the whole movement of the race".[28] All of this was in close concurrence with Adam Gifford's own convictions in setting his famous lectures: "to treat their subject [moral inquiry] as a strictly natural science… I wish it to be considered just as astronomy or chemistry is".[29] To do so, however, would require the presuppositions of a 'scientism', 'science as ideology'. Educated people, it was believed, could be brought to consensus and 'truth' on virtually any given subject – for if objective truths and realities could be arrived at in the natural sciences, as was seeming to be the case in 1888, then why not also in the

[26] Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition*, Gifford Lectures (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). 2.
[27] Ibid., 3.
[28] Ibid., 19.
[29] Ibid., 9.

contentious subject matter of religion and theology? Surely the conceptions of natural theology and religion could be understood in this setting as being the data of a 'science of religion', a *religionswissenschaft* as Max Müller called it.[30] These, it was further assumed, might rightly still find a place in the encyclopaedist's study either as a description of forms of "religious experience"[31] or as 'religion' now prioritized as "the subject matter of theology".[32] For proponents of Tradition, however, this came with a hefty price tag since Encyclopaedia's assumptions usually also came with an implicit or explicit "hostility to the imposition of religious tests".[33] Sectarian theologies founded and still rooted in Tradition (Thomist, Augustinian, etc.) were unceremoniously disposed of in the interest of, as Baynes of the Ninth Edition put it, 'knowledge rather than opinion'.

The view that MacIntyre calls 'Genealogy' is so named for its relation to Friedrich Nietzsche's 1887 masterwork entitled *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Written in essay form rather than the Heraclitean aphorisms of his earlier works, it is, in my view, also the most lucid and academically accessible of all his writings. In thesis it is a sustained polemic against the construct of the supposedly 'timeless' moral truth(s) assumed by nineteenth century German and 'Christian' society. In each of the three essays that comprise Genealogy he assigns in place of a divine or revelatory explanation a societal one as the actual and 'all too human' progenitor for a particular set of moral conventions. These and their resultant lineage of moral reasoning would thus comprise a 'genealogy of morals'.[34] Although Genealogy's polemic is levelled

[30] Müller, as one of the first Gifford Lecturers, delivered a series on what he called 'Natural Religion'.
[31] William James' classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is representative of this and was a result of his Gifford Lectures. Later descriptive phenomenologists in the theoretical mode of Van der Leeuw and William Brede Kristensen would take up this mantle
[32] Ibid. 22.
[33] Ibid.17. This notwithstanding Karl Barth is included among the names of the illustrious Gifford Lecturers.
[34] The first of these essays concerns the aristocratic construction of the categories of "Good and Bad" along with their counterpart response, "Good and Evil", characteristic of the "herd" mentality/morality of

specifically against the moral, and therefore also religious, assumptions and conventions of his day, it is also inextricable from his wider societal critique of the notions of 'subject' and 'object'. "We are unknown", he provocatively begins, "we knowers, ourselves to ourselves: this has its own good reason. We have never searched for ourselves – how should it then come to pass, that we should ever find ourselves?"[35]

In a previous work from 1873 Nietzsche had posed Pontius Pilate's age-old question: "What is truth?" His answer has been the genealogist's ever since. Truth, according to the genealogist, can be nothing more than:

> … a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, a sum, in short, of human relationships which… come to be thought of, after long usage by a people, as fixed, binding, and canonical. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions, worn-out metaphors now impotent to stir the senses, coins which have lost their faces and are considered now as metal rather than currency.[36]

His attack in this particular context is against the classical philology of his early instructors, and what he sees as their dishonest use of the sources of classical antiquity, plundering and acquiring them for nineteenth-century German scholarship. Nietzsche was calling for such studies to, as MacIntyre describes it, "acknowledge that their own academic purposes had alienated them from their object of study and concealed it from them".[37] The call now was for the 'knower' to know himself, to smoke out his own assumptions, rather than purporting to 'know' any so-called object of study.

Nietzsche's subversive narrative would not simply undermine religious and/or classical concepts of truth. It also ran roughshod over Kantian theories of rationality and its correlative notion of a unitive noumenal reality – the very underpinnings of

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the poor and oppressed. The second essay is an explanation of the origins of the phenomena of "guilt" and "conscience". The third is an attack on the "ascetic ideal", mostly but not exclusively a priestly fixation, as the expression of the "weak" and "sick will" of those who are unable to face and therefore own their own animal instincts.

[35] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Paul Negri, trans. Horace B. Samuel, Dover Thrift Editions (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2003). 1.

[36] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition*. 35.

[37] Ibid., 34.

Encyclopaedia's approach. The lack of self-knowledge that the encyclopaedist brings to his study (as MacIntyre describes it, a 'systematically institutionalized' one) assembles arguments that sustain "blindness to the multiplicity of perspectives from which the world can be viewed and to the multiplicity of idioms by means of which it can be characterized".[38] The encyclopaedist thus laboured under the 'myth of the given', the *a priori* guiding presupposition of thought that there is a substantive unitary rationality. The genealogist, by contrast, begins (and usually ends) with the assertion of a lack of fixity to the basic ingredients of metaphysical and ontological meaning that pervaded Encyclopaedia's notions of 'truth' and 'being'.

The charter document for MacIntyre's third approach, 'Tradition', is Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* written in 1879. It called essentially for the renewal of a type of scholastic tradition that once thrived in pre-modern academia – a mode of academic inquiry that was both exemplified and unsurpassed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. In this sense it was not in its original setting *like* Encyclopaedia and Genealogy, a critique of a rival view, but quite simply the way the Scholastics at one time did theology and philosophy. As philosophy it was dialogical. As theology it was *fides quaerens intellectum* – "faith seeking understanding". That is to say it was a decidedly non-fideistic mode of enquiry that sought to establish a rational explanation and justification for the claims of Tradition by working within its own texts and interpretive authorities, even as it relied throughout on the philosophical resources of extra-Biblical sources. In contrast to popularly caricatured ideas of pre-modern scholarship, such traditional claims and justifications were not predetermined church-supervised pronouncements but rather the lively interaction of conflicting traditions of inquiry in an agonistic academic space.

[38] Ibid., 35-36.

Far from precluding comparative and dialogical scholarship such an environment could, as Aquinas again exemplifies, in fact, foster it. In this crucible the most skilful proponents of Tradition worked at an integration of otherwise rival claims. As MacIntyre describes it: "what made Aquinas preeminent in the exercise of his craft-skill as a philosopher was his ability to integrate two quite different traditions", namely, Augustinianism and Aristotelianism.[39] But more than this, and especially pertinent to this study, Thomist inquiry was not confined simply to its own Christian theological or classical Greek philosophical engagement. It was able to take on an even broader comparative project, interacting also with the resources of Islamic and Jewish thinkers such as Averroes and Moses Maimonides.[40] The revival of a Thomist mode of inquiry as exemplified in *Aeterni Patris*, thus potentially brings with it the necessary resources with which to conduct a radical criticism of the entrenched secular doctrines of Modernity.[41]

All three of these incommensurable versions of inquiry have so completely failed to communicate with one another that there is clearly something much more fundamental than terminological differences at stake here. MacIntyre attributes this to the fact that each has set up its own independent standard or measure by which to judge the other.[42] Debate becomes impossible because each "warring position characteristically appears irrefutable to its own adherents", even as each "equally seems to its opponents to be insufficiently warranted by rational argument". In other words, when each becomes its own form of fideism with its own set of dogmas, secular or

[39] Ibid., 81.
[40] Ibid., 105. It would be anachronistic to try and read more into this than is actually there. The point is simply that the clarity of thought that an eclectic and comparative thinker like Aquinas brings to this sort of moral inquiry results in an enrichment and clarification of the tradition that he himself represents.
[41] Ibid., 25.
[42] Ibid., 4-5.

otherwise, there is little or no room for academic dialogue. The irony in this, as he rightly points out, is that:

> …the wholly secular humanistic disciplines of the late twentieth century [have] thus reproduce[d] that very same condition which led their nineteenth-century secularizing predecessors to dismiss the claim of theology to be worthy of the status of an academic discipline.[43]

To Tradition's theologian, exiled last century to the seminaries, Genealogy's relentlessly subversive critique and effective dismantling of Encyclopaedia now seems almost karmic.

2.2.1 The three rival views in 'theology' and 'religious studies'

It has taken the better part of last century's scholarship to sort through the confusion resulting from the projection of Encyclopaedia's ideological agendas onto its professed subject matter, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the academic study of 'religion'. Excluding theology from the discussion, towards the beginning of the last century anthropological, sociological and psychological approaches took their best shot at defining 'religion', some bravely even attempting to pinpoint its elusive origin. Quite apart from any constructed notions of 'world religions' the very idea of 'religion' itself, it would seem, was becoming an increasingly chimeric and problematic pursuit. Since these attempts have all been reductionist to varying degrees one would think that these would be unwitting allies of Genealogy in the sense that they have offered, like Nietzsche, a purely human explanation for religious and theological beliefs. But as has been rightly pointed out by many, these too came fully loaded with their own meta-narratives, the very currency (read Nietzsche's 'junk metal') of the Encyclopaedia approach (an evolutionist schema or Hegelian dialectic, idealist or materialist).

The more direct and obvious heirs to Encyclopaedia's unitive theories of reality and consciousness were to be found in the various forms of 'essentialism' inherent to

[43] Ibid., 7.

many studies in what would eventually be called the 'phenomenology of religion'. This, of course, is where at least some of Appasamy's graduate studies fit – under the tutelage of scholars such as Rudolf Otto, and the Friedrichs Heiler and Von Hügel. These all worked within some such configuration of Kantian, Husserlian or Hegelian notions of epistemological distinctions of the 'subject' and 'object', 'intentionality', Husserl's relation of the *cogito* to the *cogitationes*, or the distinction of 'reality' to its 'phenomena'. The 'philosophy of consciousness', as Flood calls it, when applied to the study of religion resulted in the widely held view that different cultures and religions would apprehend and experience the divine reality in their own unique cultural and religious categories, but that it was nevertheless one and the same unitive divine reality that was being experienced. The experience of this singular divine reality can only be studied, catalogued and categorized by its phenomena – whence the 'phenomenology of religion'.[44] Appasamy will certainly answer to this description, at least in much of his early work from the 1920's and early 1930's.

The resultant essentialist framework would insist over and against competing reductionist theories of religion that there was indeed an 'essence' to religion, its *sine qua non*, be it 'the holy', 'the numinous', or 'the sacred'. The various disparate phenomena of the religious traditions were but the variegated manifestations and 'essences' of the singular 'religious experience'. The only problem here, of course, as the next few generations of phenomenologists would reveal, was that the categories by which the data of religious phenomena was being grouped was already laden with a whole lot of *a prioris*, much of which was already deeply theological. A quote from Appasamy's Marburg mentor, Friedrich Heiler, will suffice. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism all hold, according to Heiler:

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[44] For a fuller synopsis of the phenomenological approach see Gavin D. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999). 91-116.

> …that there is a transcendent reality; that he is immanent in human hearts; that he is supreme beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness; that he is love, mercy, compassion; that the way to him is repentance, self-denial, prayer; that the way of love of one's neighbour, even of one's enemies; that the way is love of God, union with him, or dissolution into him.[45]

What Heiler calls the 'common religious expression' of humanity sounds suspiciously and uncannily like the 'liberal' Christian traditions of Otto and Schleiermacher. I would suggest that it is *precisely because* Heiler has been nurtured in a certain form of religious language – its vocabulary, its grammar, its syntax – that he can apparently read Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists and Taoists as saying 'basically the same thing' as him.

The primacy and autonomy of Encyclopaedia's 'lonely transcendent ego' is fundamental to such a structure. The researcher, in his own thinking at least, becomes a tradition unto himself. Where Whitehead and his Plotinian view that "religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness" becomes the default, communal traditions become "optional aids in individual self-realization rather than as bearers of normative realities to be interiorized".[46] Incidentally, although Appasamy had had a good dose of this, as far back as 1942 Appasamy criticizes Whitehead's endorsement of Plotinus' "flight of the alone to the Alone" precisely because it trivialises the communal realities of the worshipping community.[47]

This particular brand of essentialism would insist that the phenomena of religion could not be 'reduced' as the anthropologists and Marxists had attempted to do, explaining it away in socio-economic terms. It is *sui generis.* But neither, according to certain proponents of the phenomenology of religion, could it ever be explained in theological terms. As Eric Sharpe says in *Comparative Religion*:

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[45] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984). 27.
[46] Ibid. 9.
[47] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 186.

> …theology speaks about God, and this the phenomenologist cannot do… Because God, to be grasped by phenomenology, would have to be subject or object; and he is neither. So to the phenomenologist, though he may study religious experience… and may observe men and women responding… to divine revelation, the revelation itself remains inaccessible.[48]

Like nature itself, however, the 'nature' of religion also evidently abhors a vacuum. Emancipation from a more explicitly Christian and theological hermeneutic must give way to new interpretative frameworks. Although these, no doubt, may have been more socially acceptable than traditionally accountable theologies, they could certainly claim no more justification in providing the sort of hermeneutical authority they may have imagined for themselves. Thus, as Tim Fitzgerald and others have argued, in subsequent generations of phenomenological scholarship, *de facto* theologies have been smuggled into the religious studies department in the form of 'irreducibly theological' conceptual structures such as are found in Mircea Eliade's 'hierophany' and Smart's 'sacred'.[49]

Alongside such phenomenological doctrines, other more overtly theological systems were developing that could be equally endorsed, and, as D'Costa says, 'policed by Modernity'. If the wheelbarrow analogy is a post-critical parable, the now well-worn (and entirely abstracted from its original context) parable of the blind men and the elephant[50] is Encyclopaedia's. Theological (and I would add 'ideological') pluralists such as John Hick's theology of 'the Real' have gotten considerable mileage out of this.[51] Ideological pluralism ensures its proponent that we never need to think seriously and with any sense of ultimacy about truth claims, for as the vestiges of Encyclopaedia would also have it, in their authoritative narrative, these are all just blind men groping

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[48] Gavin D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions: An Introduction to the Theology of Religions* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). 232-33.
[49] Ibid., 98.
[50] Some such structure seems also to be at the heart of Hick's so-called 'Copernican shift' model? Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003). 180.
[51] Ibid. 181.

at the same elephant. There is a glaring irony, however, in the pluralist's use of the blind men and the elephant story. According to the pluralist entrenched in Encyclopaedia's assumptions, it is sheer arrogance for any one of those blind men to claim to have a full grasp on the truth, and indeed to even be able to make truth claims at all. Genealogy responds by simply stating the obvious: is not the truly arrogant position to be found in the all-knowing outside observer looking down patronisingly on all of those foolish blind men?

Pluralisms such as these, in my view, must play fast and loose with all of the historic religious traditions, even ones that might seem to be their allies, as for example in Hick's appropriation of Śaṅkara.[52] In sum, the multiple religious traditions that the ideological pluralist has been gleaning from in a buffet-style approach have too often come back sounding suspiciously like the doctrines of pluralism itself.[53] Despite the resemblances these seem to find in other traditions, D'Costa notes that, "the only agreement comes from secular liberals within each religion who fail to represent the religious tradition in terms of their founding texts and key pre-modern authoritative traditions".[54] In short, this too becomes its own form of fideism, an echo chamber of its own truth claims, not unlike the more conservative sectarian theologies they so sharply denounce. Contrary to popular belief then, I would argue that ideological pluralisms such as these do not rightly belong to the ill-defined and overused category of 'post-

[52] Clooney argues, quite rightly, for understanding Śaṅkara first in the context of both scriptures and tradition. "The meaning of Advaita is inscribed in the complex whole of the Text, its layers of text and commentary, and to this whole the thought of Śaṅkara is only a single, albeit primary, contributor". And later, that each Advaita tenet is a "complex theological doctrine... inscribed into Christian theological discourse only gradually, selectively, and with the candid admission that the doctrine as finally received will not be quite the same as it was for another tradition's theologian." Clooney, *Theology after Vedanta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology*. 32, and 197

[53] It is an interesting irony that still living proponents of essentialist forms of pluralism now want to clarify the nuances of their tradition by declaring that they are not 'essentialist'. The irony lies in the fact that while these often contented themselves with speaking in generalities about the religious traditions, they now expect the specifics and nuances of their own tradition to be respected and acknowledged. In my view, the comparative theologian's time is much better spent examining the subtlety and nuance of historic and actual religious traditions rather than recently constructed academic ones created to enshrine and justify Encyclopaedia's assumptions.

[54] Ibid., 49.

Modernity'. Rather, because of their assumptions about a unitive noumenal reality, they are, conceptually, the logical end of Modernity itself.

Clooney has argued persuasively that comparative theology must steer clear of this sort of thinking. The comparative work that he is envisioning is consciously not to be undertaken as a "narrative strategy that speaks powerfully beyond what religious traditions have always said about themselves… [and] where all extant stories are subsumed into one greater story…" Such an approach needs now to finally be rejected as, at best, inherently distorting and, at worst, a subtle new form of colonial appropriation.[55] Taken in this sense, approaching another tradition from a position of ideological pluralism, while touting itself as being more 'respectful' of the other, can quite to the opposite be considered as an "aggressive act which religious communities are quite likely to resist". Although ultimately questioning and even radically rethinking theological systems and truth claims, the post-critical comparative theology that is here being described always considers itself as being accountable to the traditions and texts that it is examining. Whether directly to the home tradition or indirectly to the tradition of the dialogue partner there is always a sense of responsibility to both sides of the dialogue.

It has taken the patient exile of Tradition, the persistence of Genealogy's subversive narrative, and a century of getting over Kant and Hegel, to convince the 'religious studies' department that perhaps it was not nearly so neutral and 'objective' as it had once supposed itself to be. As far as the religious traditions are concerned Genealogy has insisted that the only unitive fact is the fact of there are multiple perspectives, and that these have been generated not as universal truths but as relative to their own narratives and cultural and linguistic contexts. Edward Schillebeeckx is

[55] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 302.

correct in stating that plurality is now "not just a 'matter of fact' but a 'matter of principle'". To boil the 'many' down to 'one', as Encyclopaedia sought to do, is therefore to "harm ourselves and maim the world". "Logically and practically…multiplicity now takes priority over unity".[56] In this regard it is extremely important that comparative theologians and scholars of religion not be sloppy with their terminology – specifically, in the distinction between 'plurality' and 'pluralism'. To put it succinctly, 'plurality' is reality, whereas 'pluralism' is an 'ism'. And just as with any other 'ism' that comes already intact with its own ideologies and truth claims it can no longer be afforded the 'meta-narrative' status it once hegemonically held under the superintendence of Encyclopaedia.

The only 'ism' now, as Genealogy has also insisted, is 'perspectivalism'. The researcher is already a 'participant observer', and that participation affects every stage of the research project from inception to outcome. With there no longer being a 'view from nowhere', the need of the hour is for the comparative scholar to employ the self-identifying and dialogical reflexivity[57] of what Flood calls the 'situated observer'.[58] In this regard, like proponents of Feminist, Postcolonial, Queer or Subaltern theory, the comparative theologian who is consciously rooted in Tradition simply becomes one more such self-identifying situated observer, and certainly no less qualified to be a good Indologist or Buddhologist than any secularist. In this regard, an openly confessional theologian is no more or less qualified, or more or less biased, to be doing comparative work in the religious studies department than the decidedly non-theological 'religionist'.

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[56] Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002)., 7-8.
[57] Gavin D. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology : Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999)., 34-38.
[58] Ibid., 143.

While MacIntyre is quite convinced that Encyclopaedia's assumptions and cultural context "are not and cannot be our assumptions and our culture",[59] and therefore ought to be relegated to a bygone era, the evidence from some quarters would seem to suggest otherwise. In many sectors of scholarship 'religious studies' and 'theology' continue to work with the systemic assumptions of Encyclopaedia's prejudices. Remarkably, in 1988, exactly one century after Adam Gifford set his lectures under the premise that 'knowledge' could be "discriminated from mere belief",[60] a descriptive phenomenologist such as Ninian Smart who professes to be a proponent of the 'objective study of religions', can still refer to theology as being a "conceptual albatross around the neck of religious studies".[61] More recently, in the introduction to his *Dimensions of the Sacred*, he describes as 'phenomenologically absurd' some of the insider theological accounts that he has encountered. While these may indeed have been absurdly myopic *as far as theologies go*, that is to say divorced from or dissonant with historically attested text and interpretive frameworks, they are not 'phenomenologically absurd' when it is recognised that fundamentalisms are traditions too. No less than their more 'rational' co-religionists, they too are proponents of discourses that are embedded in narrative and embodied in praxis.

But Smart's purpose here is simply to set his example up as a straw man with which to put theology in its place. "Indeed, one major use of the word 'phenomenology'", he continues, "is to mark off what we as religionists are trying to do from those committed interpretations which essentially are part of preaching".[62] This is exactly the sort of rhetoric Encyclopaedia has employed, effectively and for the better

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[59] MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition*., 24.
[60] Ibid., 42.
[61] D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions : An Introduction to the Theology of Religions*., 63. Quoting Smart in "Religious Studies in the United Kingdom". *Religion*,18, 1-9.
[62] Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred : An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs* (London: HarperCollins, 1996)., 4-5.

part of last century, to confine 'theology' to the seminaries. He apparently does not want to relate to traditionally situated theology as a second-order discourse ('faith seeking understanding'), or academic theology ('understanding faith seeking understanding'[63]) that is robust enough to be able to take on board the analysis and critique of the third-order resources of 'religious studies' – a reflexive and dialogical mode of theological discourse that would make it viable academic study. He goes on further to describe what he calls 'cultural tribalism' such as prevail "especially, in theological schools". Tribalism indeed!

It would seem, therefore, as though this sort of 'ghettoization of theology', as George Lindbeck aptly calls it, is still very much alive and well in recent phenomenological work. Francis Clooney as well describes the situation thus in his 2010 publication, and possibly this is especially true of his American context:

> …comparative theologians need also to be candid about a cultural tendency evident in our universities, to exclude theology from the study of religions. They need to defend a space for studies that are theological in intent, pursued with faith, from a particular perspective, for a community".[64]

This sort of disciplinary segregation, ideologically excluding whole swathes of intellectual discipline, can only thrive when it is accompanied by its own commitments to the 'myth of objectivity'.[65] 'Religious studies' is 'objective'; 'theology' is 'subjective'. One is to be trusted the other not. D'Costa astutely and somewhat humorously describes this sort of prejudice against theology as being nothing short of "Oedipal… as it is in fact a child of secularized forms of theology".[66] To turn E. B. Tylor's word back around on Encyclopaedia itself, today's post-critical theologian may

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[63] Flood's term.
[64] Clooney, *Comparative Theology : Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. 12.
[65] Even this unfortunate phrase like Hick's "myth of Christian uniqueness" and other such applications denigrates, with Modernist contempt, the conception of 'myth', as though it is antithetical to cold, hard empirical 'fact'. I would, therefore, rename it the 'pretense of objectivity'.
[66] Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square : Church, Academy, and Nation*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005). ix.

well hope that these are mere ‘survivals’, vestigial reminders of a bygone era. Nevertheless, as long as ideological pluralism continues to flatten out the textured terrain and ignore the matrices of meaning in which the truth claims of particular religious traditions are planted, the very ground that comparative theology is concerned with; and as long as segregationist attitudes such as Smart’s still persist, it would seem as though the religious studies department remains one of the last safe havens for Encyclopaedia in academia today. To preclude a theological approach to the religious traditions is therefore to continue unnecessarily to pay allegiance to the academic orthodoxy and polemical agendas of a bygone era. It is time now to put paid to this sort of thinking and, quite simply, to move on.

Finally, we are in a position to situate this present study within MacIntyre’s 3-fold outline. This thesis will most obviously be categorised in the mode of enquiry that MacIntyre calls ‘Tradition’. The sort of comparative work that I am undertaking takes tradition-based theology seriously by focusing on how texts and interpretive traditions have historically been used within worshipping communities. This should not, however, be misconstrued as being an attempt to resurrect a mode of inquiry from pre-modern, and therefore also pre-critical times, for this sort of comparative work also takes seriously the genealogical critique. While it obviously cannot share Genealogy’s cardinal belief in the disqualification of revelation as explanation, it considers, along with Foucault, the very real possibility and danger that truth claims are simply thinly veiled power claims. Even while reflexively and dialogically professing a particular tradition and its narratives, along with Lyotard it is suspicious of attempts (often entirely undetected) to privilege ‘master’ or ‘meta’ narratives as hermeneutic lenses by which to examine all its ‘others’. It also recognises, in response to Nietzsche, and later Wittgenstein, that notions of ‘truth’ are deeply formed and conditioned by the language

and culture in which they are expressed. While it cannot accept Nietzsche's assertion that truth is *only* a collection of "mobile metaphors and metonymies", the 'junk metal' of worn down coins, it does take seriously the reality that a tradition's truth claims are deeply formed and, in fact, generated by its own cultural and linguistic milieu.

2.3 Comparative encounter on the border lines of traditions.

Proximity of encounter is important, and the nexus where traditions meet provides a new liminal zone for discovery. If we can stop thinking of traditions as being hermetically sealed, pristine world-views that developed all by and unto themselves, then perhaps the new encounter becomes the new 'location of culture', to borrow Bhabha's term, more a matter of communal survival than of academic curiosity. The language of comparative study as liminal zone certainly lends itself nicely to the first chapter's discussion on the 'third' and 'interstitial' spaces of the hybrid. Daniel Boyarin's *Border Lines* describes this specifically in terms of first- and second-century Judeo-Christian devotional traditions. Before boundaries were drawn up between the groupings that would eventually be called 'religions' there were only smaller clusters and communities of devotion and practice, *i.e.* the Qumran community or the Johannine churches. The locations of culture where these met and encountered one another was the crucible where doctrinal convictions as well as communal identities were forged. In this sense it was a devotional encounter in two ways - not just a devotee's encounter with his or her own ritual, temple and deity, but with those of devotees of 'other' or rival traditions as well.

As with artificially created and imposed political boundaries, so too the border lines of which Boyarin's title speaks are, at once, both those interstitial spaces that bear 'the burden of the meaning of culture' as well as "places where people are strip-

searched, detained, imprisoned, and sometimes shot". [67] More often than not such border outposts are makeshift and hastily defined *ad hoc* artifices, constructed by a threatened power or 'orthodoxy'. Border lines such as these are imposed with the express purpose of masking and/or silencing a newly emerging hybridity, the purpose being, as Boyarin describes it, "to occlude and disown it. The localization of hybridity in some others, called the hybrids or the heretics, serves the purpose".[68] It should come as no surprise then when a figure such as Appasamy claiming a 'double heritage' as he did is written off as dealing in 'bold heresy'. Although separated by two thousand miles and years the Judeo-Christian fault line that Boyarin describes, in fact, sounds strikingly similar to Appasamy's situation as well. Substitute 'ancient heresiologists' with the Lutheran reverends of the Gurukul Research Council, and 'Jew' with 'Hindu', and Boyarin's analysis transfers quite nicely:

> Ancient heresiologists tried to police the boundaries so as to identify and interdict those who respected no borders, those smugglers of ideas and practices newly declared to be contraband, nomads who would not recognize the efforts to institute limits… and thus to clearly establish who was and who was not a "Christian", a "Jew".[69]

In short, comparative work done on the border lines is almost always costly. According to his European detractors Appasamy has shifted the axis with a theology that is no longer 'Christian' but 'Hindu'. The comparative theologian has become a 'marginal person' in both traditions.[70] As Clooney puts it, in language very similar to Boyarin's:

> … the person who has seriously studied another tradition and taken it to heart will surely have trouble in remaining comfortably in the mainstream of her tradition… Comparative study leaves her, if she is successful, at the border between two worlds in a space distinguished by a seeming multiplication of loyalties. She exists in between, no longer a sure fit in a theological world defined within one community. While she may not abandon her home tradition,

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[67] Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines : The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)., 15.
[68] Ibid., 15.
[69] Ibid., 2.
[70] Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. 158-159.

> she is likely then to remain a marginal figure, though of a kind valuable to that community and also to the wider religiously diverse society.[71]

Despite the danger of marginalization, the payoff of doing this sort of comparative work is potentially very great indeed. First, when we read the emic account, honestly and non-polemically, about and with the Indian traditions, it becomes readily apparent that other discursive traditions are easily as complex, subtle, nuanced and taut with paradox as previous generations of Europeans once assumed could only be true of the Judaeo-Christian traditions. The scope and depth of Rāmānuja's thinking, I would argue, is *easily* on par with that of an Augustine or an Aquinas. When we begin to recognise the depth and subtlety involved in the terrain of thinking, comparative encounter across traditions becomes truly a collegial meeting of equals, of peers and counterparts in other contexts. In doing so we begin, as well, to challenge and redress the colonial and Kipling-esque view that 'Christian' and 'Hindu' devotional systems are "radically different enterprises situated on either side of the chasm dividing 'West' and 'East'".[72] Second, by understanding a theological counterpart in another tradition thus, we also forge the beginnings of what Clooney calls, in a clever nod to the Jewish practice of *midrash*, a new 'comparative intertext':

> The goal is a reflective one, to create "a comparative intertext", a detailed map of tried and true pathways back and forth, by which to see the texts and see oneself in relation to them, finding one's way, learning what works, what belongs together or doesn't, where one might take a worthwhile step, and the next one after that.[73]

This comparative intertext becomes, again, that new location of a "cultivated hybridity, a multiple religious belonging accomplished through serious study".[74]

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[71] Ibid. 158.
[72] Francis Xavier Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York Oxford University Press, 2001). 15.
[73] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts : Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 297.
[74] Ibid. 160.

To read back and forth between the traditions then, ultimately, is to newly contextualise them. Sometimes this will confirm an established exegesis of a home tradition's texts, but it will only do so with the deepened conviction of having taken another's theological reasoning seriously. Sometimes, however, as Appasamy has stated on a number of occasions, the comparativist's project may create new or extended meanings. This, again, has always been the risk inherent in the comparative reader's heuristic project. As Clooney puts it:

> Established meanings, simple or complex, are extended through previously unintended juxtapositions. Something of the independent, first meaning of one's Text may be changed, even distorted or lost, while new meanings, not intended by the author, occur to the reader. Conversely, the elements of the new, wider context themselves experience a similar adjustment in their signification, and they too begin to mean differently.[75]

The goal, ultimately, is not to rewrite the Text, its revelatory core, but rather to rethink and re-imagine the theological systems that have grown out of them by unsettling them from their familiar setting, if only temporarily, by 'dis-orienting' them in juxtaposition to the other. Neither is the goal to now syncretistically pick and choose from among the doctrines of both traditions, to fit whatever doctrine suits. It is, rather, to rethink in light of the 'other' the whole range and complex of questions that the home tradition has historically raised.[76]

And finally, there is now no longer a 'no-man's land' between heavily drawn lines or 'fronts', the Modernist notion of 'religions' or 'world religions'. There are now the beginnings of pathways of interaction between *particular* traditions. The layered terrain of the home tradition is no longer deemed as being too 'subtle' or 'mystical' for a theologian from another tradition to be able to understand. Such an intertext, Clooney

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[75] Francis Xavier Clooney, "Reading the World in Christ - from Comparison to Inclusivism", in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990). 70.

[76] To be truly 'dialogical' means much more than simply listening to another's theological discourse. Being a believer/practitioner the comparative theologian is always considering the implications of the other's universalizing truth claims alongside his or her own, 'taking both to heart' as Clooney describes it.

says elsewhere, "… [is] most fruitfully appropriated slowly and by way of small and specific examples taken seriously and argued through in their details… is not the domain of generalists but rather of those willing to engage in detailed study, tentatively and over time".[77] It may well turn out in the end that the traditions being juxtaposed have little or nothing else in common but the simple fact that each engages in an analogous sort of theological reasoning about text, narrative and practice. At this point the content of theology is not what is primarily at issue. It is the fact, says Clooney, that the "logic, reasoning, and argument" of the theological process offers "a sturdy bridge for making our way forward in our encounters with faiths and religious ways other than our own".[78]

2.3.1 'Theology' 'philosophy' and 'religions' in the Indian context

With the help of MacIntyre we have found good reason to suspect the methodological assumptions that undergird the sort of phenomenological study of 'religions' that believes, ideologically, in the necessity to exclude theological discourse from its enquiry. We should, in fact, be suspicious of the systematic exclusion of any field of study that might potentially challenge or modify the assumptions of committed belief systems, as for example, the sort of 'theology' that refuses to take seriously 'historical', 'textual' or 'redaction criticism'. We have also seen how the resultant staged fight between 'theology' and 'religious studies' largely serves the purposes of the now rightly discredited assumptions of Encyclopaedia's approach. We will have to learn how to cross the boundaries between these, even with the knowledge that orthodoxies of all shapes and sizes, religious or otherwise, never seem to take kindly to having their borders breached.

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[77] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*. 163-164.
[78] Ibid., vi.

Along with Fredericks,[79] Clooney[80] and MacIntyre I too am describing 'theology' in the Anselmian sense, as *fides quaerens intellectum,* not a study of or about a *Theos,* but a kind of reasoning about ultimate concerns as referenced to and rooted in traditionally recognised sources of religious revelation and authority. In this regard I am in agreement with Rāmānuja scholar, Eric J. Lott, who states that: "... the term 'theologian' can also be a simple analogous term to use in referring to one who, in *any* religious tradition, reflects on the meaning of the tradition and who articulates its meaning in various ways".[81] On this definition traditions the world over, quite apart from any Judeo-Christian or Hellenistic foundations, have been engaging in 'theology' for millennia without any reference to a Platonic or Christian *Theos*. The Indian sages have always explored and explained the meaning of their sacred texts, their revelation, by way of a dialectical process of translation and negotiation, a 'faith seeking understanding' very deliberately practiced in the context of its others. Just as European thinkers such as Anselm and Aquinas did in their setting, so too, did their Indian contemporaries, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, wrestle with the interplay between 'reason' and 'faith'. Although that latter grouping would identify this interplay in the epistemological categories known as *pramāṇas* ('evidences')[82] the medieval Indian scholars would, no less than the European Scholastic, also employ various modes or aspects of 'reason' as 'handmaiden' to faith, pressing multiple other authorities and disciplines into service for its explanation and understanding. All of this still sounds like the second-order discourse of theology to me.

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[79] Clooney, ed. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*. xiii.
[80] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 37.
[81] Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*. 6.
[82] Recognizing the importance of his epistemological framework, Appasamy proposed an Indian Christian use of the *pramāṇas* in the development of theological resources for the Indian Church. His first attempt at outlining his pramāṇas is found in the June 1949 edition of "The Pilgrim". He would follow this up in 1953 with "The Christian Pramāṇas" in the Indian Journal of Theology. Evidently a subject of abiding importance to him, after his Episcopacy, he would make a third attempt in his final publication 1971's *What Shall We Believe? A Study of the Christian Pramāṇas*.

Two objections might understandably be raised at this point, however. First, is 'theology' as a designation applicable to non-theistic or even atheistic traditions such as the various forms of Buddhism,[83] the Cārvāka ('materialist' sometimes also called Lokāyata)[84] and even as is sometimes claimed of the Sāṃkhya school?[85] While it is true that these have generally not posited a theory or belief in the ultimacy of God or the gods, it is clear that these yet work within the 'givenness' of Vedic cosmologies in which the gods are but citizens and inhabitants of a Veda-circumscribed universe. They are, to the pan-Indian traditions, a simple matter of fact.[86] Sometimes, as is the case with classical Buddhism, the gods are considerably demoted in that they are, just as any other beings, caught in the eternal *saṃsāric* round, karmically conditioned, fettered and equally in need of the enlightenment that the Buddha's dharma teaches. There are powerful narratives at work in the classical Buddhist story of Brahma the so-called 'creator' pleading with the newly enlightened Buddha at the foot of the bodhi tree: "The world is lost... let the Blessed One teach the *dhamma'*.[87] One of the Buddhist *suttas* will even go so far as to ridicule Brahma for wrongly associating his wish for a companion in the *mahā brahmā* realm and the sudden appearance of one from the *ābhassara* plane with the misguided assumption that his wish must, therefore, have caused it.[88] There are references both veiled and openly ironic to the Vedic deities throughout these,[89] but as has been earlier mentioned, and as is widely known, the Buddha's rejection of a being

[83] Fredericks has proposed that Buddhism can equally engage in comparative theological discourse. See Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. 49, and Fredericks' book *Buddhists and Christians: Though Comparative Theology to Solidarity.*
[84] Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 224.
[85] …Appasamy among them. See, A. J. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage* (London and Madras: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1942). 6.
[86] Paul Williams and Anthony Tribe, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000). 4-6.
[87] Found in the *Ayacana Sutta* of the *Samyutta Nikaya* 6.
[88] From the *Brahmajala Sutta* in the *Digha Nikaya* 1. On the wrongful assumption of his having caused the event he declares: "I am the Great Brahma, the Vanquisher... the Lord, the Maker and Creator, the Supreme Being".
[89] …as Gombrich has argued about the Buddhist cosmogony in the *Agaña Sutta.*

or principle called ‘Brahman’ precludes it from being a ‘theology’ proper, even if it is practiced in the form of discourse that most closely resembles ‘faith seeking understanding’. Even where classical Buddhism might deny a creating deity, however, its discourse is always conducted in polemical contrast to the theological language of Veda and Vedānta, producing its own ‘systematic atheology’ as it were, while at the same time appealing to its own authoritative texts for justification.

Although the practice of much if not most of what the ancient Indian discursive traditions have done may be called ‘theology’, I would argue that the term ‘comparative theology’, as a methodological term becomes unnecessarily strained in its attempt to include traditions such as the Buddhists (and the Mīmāṃsakas for that matter). Lott has suggested that the Buddhist ‘theologian’ might better, or at least more accurately, be understood in “some other category such as a ‘dhammalogian’ or even better ‘dharma-vādin’”.[90] For argument’s sake let us say for now, along with Fredericks, that ‘theology’ as a specialized mode of reasoning sketched out above can also appropriately be applied to these non-theistic traditions as well. As long as it still falls under the purview of what Clooney has delineated as “reasoning marked by attention to scripture and other religious authorities” there is no need to put too fine a point on it, or as Clooney says, to be too ‘precious’ about it.[91]

The second objection that might be raised at this point, as Clooney has also identified, is that the term ‘theology’, when here applied in the Indian context, is a foreign term and concept, and therefore might even be taken as a new form of academic colonialism. The response to this, uncovering the double standards in the objection itself, is to point out that a whole host of other words are regularly applied in the Indian

[90] Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation : Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*. 72.
[91] Clooney, *Comparative Theology : Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. 79.

context, and yet without so much as an eyebrow raised – words such as 'philosophy', 'commerce', 'science' and not least, 'religion'.

> All these words are imperfect loan words, but they are received into the Indian context and given workable Indian meanings. A correction of Western biases and a legitimate and understandable resistance to the imposition of alien categories therefore need not add up to a complete rejection of "theology".[92]

In fact, to single 'theology' out as an inappropriately foreign concept while allowing 'religion' and 'philosophy' to enjoy pride of place seems to me to be an arbitrary or, worse, outright prejudicial act, and smacks once again of Encyclopaedia's unreasonable allergy to it. The fact that a growing number of contemporary Hindu thinkers have apparently felt free enough to use the term 'theology' to describe what they are doing suggests that this second objection might actually be more of a western hang-up, stemming either from Encyclopaedia's aversion to the term or to the residual guilt of Christian imperialism from the colonial era.

2.4 Comparative theology or 'comparative traditions'?

In his recent book, *The Argumentative Indian*, Amartya Sen outlines what he calls "the Indian argumentative tradition",[93] a construction of communal identity through exchange and competitive conflict with others. The discursive nature of the argumentative tradition of which Sen speaks is probably best and most widely defined as *vāda*, 'discourse' from the root *vac* ('to speak'). Certainly by Rāmānuja's day, these discursive traditions were very aware of each other, their commentaries and exegeses of common text were, in fact, routinely written in reference to its others.[94] Sometimes the

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[92] Ibid. 79

[93] Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian : Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Penguin, 2006). 6.

[94] The Vedāntic inquirer explores the dialogue partner's viewpoint in a formal section known as the *purvapaksa* (literally 'previous wing'), a stage that is often referred to in English translation as the *a priori* view. This is then responded to in a subsequent (although not always discrete or clearly demarcated) section known as the *uttarapaksa* ('later wing'). This functions as the *paksantara*, the 'on

Indian traditions are also known as *darśanas*, literally, 'sight' from the root *drs* ('to see'),[95] a word that is often translated in English as 'philosophy'. As I have outlined above, however, because it is almost always done with reference to a revealed sacred text, it is like no 'philosophy' that Hume would have been comfortable with.

Usually the purpose of the multiple *darśana* or *vāda* traditions was not to establish a consensus or agreement on a subject, but rather to establish a place for their own sectarian difference. Sen's 'Indian argumentative tradition' was certainly no politically correct mutual admiration society, tiptoeing through the minefield of each other's truth claims. An argumentative tradition, after all, must come down to argument, to the supremacy of one position over another. Neither is it an in-house, intra-traditional sort of argument, fighting as only a family can fight with itself. It was happening between and across *āstika* and *nāstika* traditions from ancient times. The *Suttas* of classical Buddhism are full of stories of the Buddha and his disciples happily demolishing their *purvapaksins'* arguments against the *dhamma*.[96] The ritualist Mīmāṃsakas, the materialist Cārvākas, all held some sort of view that was triumphally, yet always rationally, declared to be superior to the other. Even a cursory reading of some of the texts in which these discourses are preserved should quickly disabuse a secularist reader of the misguided notion that 'respect' and 'tolerance' means simply 'to let someone believe whatever they want'. In Vedāntic discourse 'respect,' ultimately, is

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the other hand' statement, and introduces the agonistic space where the aporic questions of the 'later' position unsettle the assumptions of the *a priori* view. Finally, the enquirer's own thesis is then clarified and expounded on as a result in what is known as the *siddhanta*, the 'established view'. Frits Staal, *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

[95] Usually there are six recognized *darśanas* that conveniently get called *Āstika* 'orthodox' and only lately, 'Hindu', Vedānta being only one of them. But this does not mean that there are only six contenders for comparative interaction. If one is to include the Śaiva traditions as Madhva has done in his *Sarvādarśanasamgraha* ('compendium of all visions (philosophies)'), and the Buddhists and the Jainas as well, one begins to realise just how complex and agonistic Sen's 'Indian argumentative tradition' actually was.

[96] Williams mentions that "Buddhist sources speak of six or ten groups of renouncers familiar to young Gautama, with their teachers and teachings, although whether these are very accurate portrayals of the views of their rivals can be doubted". Williams and Tribe, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. 19.

shown to another's system only by interacting with it, with the explicit and quite unapologetic goal of dismantling and refuting it. Rāmānuja is no different. In his opening salvo against Śaṅkara's views on undifferentiated Brahman and the ultimate unreality of the universe, the Ācārya calls his opponent's position a:

> …fictitious foundation of altogether hollow and vicious arguments… devised by men who are destitute of those particular qualities which cause individuals to be chosen by the Supreme Person… whose intellects are darkened by the impression of beginningless evil…[97]

Vedāntic discourse, as one can readily see, is anything but irenic. Instead of 'comparative theology' then perhaps it should, more accurately, be called '*competitive*' theology. All of this is *vāda*, a crowded and competitive agonistic space[98] where truth claims become unavoidable. The point here, simply, is that Clooney's 'sturdy bridge' of 'logic, reasoning and argumentation' across traditions does seem to have plenty of ancient Indian precedent.

Clooney notes that David Tracy, "in keeping with his view that theology in general be included in 'religious studies', thinks that comparative theology should be considered a sub-discipline within comparative religion".[99] There is no question that if theology is to be 'comparative' and yet still competent in the broader academic setting then, no doubt, it must become adept at using the best of the current and most applicable third-order resources (philological, Indological, sociological, anthropological, semiotics, *etc.*) at its disposal - in other words, to work also within the multiple disciplines of 'religious studies'. But what of comparative researchers who also inhabit a confessional position, those who do not write for themselves as individual scholars, but for their devotional traditions? Should confessional theologians have to answer to the 'religious studies' department? They must, of course, on some level be

[97] George Thibaut, trans. , *The Vedānta-Sutras with the Commentary by Rāmānuja (Part 3, Sacred Books of the East Vol.48)*, The Echo Library (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006). 29.
[98] For a good outline of these see Chapter 10 of Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*. 224-249.
[99] Clooney, ed. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*. xiii.

accountable to all the disciplines that they invoke. But will putting confessional theologians under the supervision of 'comparative religion' not simply perpetuate the now discredited assumptions of Encyclopaedia? What exactly does Tracy mean by 'comparative religion' anyway?

Having clearly declared his own Jesuit commitments, what Clooney has envisioned, rather, is a comparative engagement that is "distinct from the study of religion (with which it overlaps in many of its procedures) because theology is an inquiry carried on *by believers* who allow their belief to remain an explicit and influential factor in their research, analysis and writing". Here is perhaps one of the most important points of discussion in comparative theology today, specifically between Clooney's position and that of Keith Ward. In the first of his four volume series on comparative theology Ward states:

> … it is wrong to limit theology proper to one's own group and make it simply an exploration of what is officially believed by that group or even of what is contained in the Scripture and tradition of that group. I would go even further and suggest that to advocate a "Catholic theology" or an "Anglican theology" or even a "Christian theology" is unduly restrictive. For it suggests that there is a specific intellectual discipline which can only be undertaken by Catholics or Anglicans or Christians. [100]

In response Clooney argues:

> I concede the merit of distinguishing between comparative and confessional theologies, but I do not wish to separate them, as Ward appears to do, nor to distinguish "the exploration of a given revelation" (in confessional theology) from a broader survey of traditions (in comparative theology). Rather, I suggest that theology can still be specified as confessional provided we first realize that "theology" is not unique to any particular confession. Comparison retains a confessional dimension, while confession is disciplined by comparative practice.[101]

The first part of Ward's statement seems to me to be not so much a criticism of confessional theology as it is of a 'theology of religions' approach, the tendency to try

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[100] Keith Ward, *Religion and Revelation : A Theology of Revelation in the World's Religions*, Gifford Lectures (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). 46.
[101] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*. 25-26.

to understand other traditions *within* the structures of a home tradition. Fredericks has similarly reminded us that it is unwise for confessional theologians to continue to interpret "the religious classics of other traditions in keeping with the doctrinal demands" of their own traditions. This, he says, quite rightly, "usually leads to systemic distortions in the reception of the Other [and] the 'domestication of difference', in which the threat of the Other, as well as its transformative power, are muted".[102] In agreement with both Clooney and Fredericks this study is attempting a comparative engagement that is very deliberately an alternative to both the 'theology of religions' and 'comparative religions' approach.

I am in agreement with Ward, however, on his assertion that confessional theology might be 'unduly restrictive' in comparative work, but only insofar as it is unaware of or underestimates the pervasiveness of its *a priori* structures. So too, if the confessional base requires foregone conclusions, that is to say, if confessional theology actually *prevents* the comparativist's study from being heuristic. I would disagree, however, if he means by this that it *ought* not be confessional. This sort of distinction again smacks of Encyclopaedia's pretence concerning 'knowledge rather than opinion'. Ward's approach is a bit too close to this for my liking. Confessional theologians will want to insist on the particularity of their engagement in a way that non-confessional 'religionists' will not. To the traditionally situated comparativist the truth claims of their own tradition still matter, indeed even ultimately so. Disqualifying confessional theologians from the comparative study will also ensure that other traditions are never actual dialogue partners. They cannot talk back. They can only ever be objects of study. In blunt terms, it is the difference between doing comparative work *with* other traditions or simply *about* them.

[102] Ibid. xiv.

Finally, translating this back into Indian terminology Clooney suggests that a confessional theologian will love the text in a very different way than a more dispassionate observer might:

> … perhaps the ideal reader can be described as one who reads like a *prapanna* – like someone who does *prapatti*, who surrenders completely, somewhat desperately, having run out of strategies and plans: surrendering to the text and its meaning after attempting and abandoning every skilful strategy by which to make something certain and safe of it. This *prapanna* would then speak and write from this simple, clear, unadorned learning.[103]

I am in agreement with Fredericks in saying that the way forward is neither in depending on 'meta-religious theories of religion' nor in requiring the texts and discourses of other traditions to be read and understood within the 'doctrinal requirements of the home tradition',[104] but rather in a much more open exchange between the subject matter of 'theology' and 'religion':

> I do not think it wise to draw too sharp a distinction between these two disciplines. The comparative theologian, perhaps more than any other theologian, should be interested in the methods of comparison and the findings of the non-theological study of religion.[105]

2.4.1 Embedded in narrative

Much of the foundational thinking for today's 'comparative theology' has come out of the so-called 'Yale School' of theology. As such it has been strongly influenced by Hans Frei's landmark book, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics.* Frei traces the development and trends of post-Enlightenment thought from the 'precritical interpretation' of an earlier age to the form-, literary- and historical-criticism in late nineteenth-century European scholarship. He demonstrates how the literal and historical 'realism' of the precritical age gave way to a widening gap between the sacred narrative and the secular ones of post-Enlightenment ideology. Where older scholarship mapped the narrative onto experienced realities, in

[103] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 310.
[104] Clooney, ed. *The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*. xiv.
[105] Ibid. xiii.

the critical age to which he refers this order was reversed. Extra-biblical philosophical and ideological structures were increasingly being imposed on the biblical texts, the inevitable result being the near complete concealment and 'eclipsing' of the Bible's narrative(s):

> Literal and figural reading of the biblical narratives, once natural allies, not only came apart, but the successors looked with great unease at each other - historical criticism and biblical theology were different enterprises and made for decidedly strained company.[106]

Eclipse is an exploration into the breakdown between 'realistic' and 'figural' interpretations of the text, arguing strongly in the end for the post-critical recovery of narrative in a 'realistic' reading of the biblical text that is "history-like (though not necessarily historical)". Because "[M]eaning and narrative shape bear significantly on each other", Frei argues ultimately for the 'indispensability' of recovering that narrative shape in the reading of biblical texts, particularly the Gospels.[107] Gerard Loughlin, summarizing Frei's position, states that:

> Frei insists that theology must begin with the scriptural word; with the *particular* story that the Bible has to tell. It is because there is this particular story that there is theology at all. (In this sense, all theology is narrative theology.) Rather than starting with a theory of the narrative self, of which Christ's story is but an example, it is the scriptural story that comes first, upon which individual and communal stories are then shaped.[108]

The individual and communal shaping 'realistic narratives' that the Gospel witnesses construct come in sharp contrast then to rival traditions and societal configurations. These, too, are all narratives of course, but which of these claims primacy to the interpreter? Lindbeck, as Frei's disciple, applies this to comparative engagement:

> Christians believe they cannot speak of these apart from telling and retelling the biblical story… [but this] is not at all the same as denying that other religions have resources for speaking truths and referring to realities, even highly

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[106] Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative : A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1974). 8.
[107] Ibid. 12-13 *passim.*
[108] Gerard Loughlin, *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 67.

> important truths and realities, of which Christianity as yet knows nothing and by which it could be greatly enriched.[109]

Clooney agrees and, citing Lindbeck, notes that a properly *Christian* theology must also necessarily be a *biblical* theology: "For those who are steeped in [canonical writings, scriptures], no world is more real than the one they create … Scripture creates its own domain of meaning … the task of interpretation is to extend this over the whole of reality…"[110] Thus to the biblical theologian the universe and its inhabitants are completely inscribed within the text; "the Christian has to 'read' the non-Christian within the Christian horizon",[111] thus "reading the world in Christ". Appasamy actually says something quite similar in this regard. Like Clooney and Lindbeck's biblically inscribed world, Appasamy says: "The Christian Scriptures form the mainstay of our spiritual life in the same way as the pipes carrying fresh water into a city do. These pipes are hidden, and yet at every point where water is required there is a tap and the water comes out bubbling, fresh and clear".[112] His analogy reveals that he sees his primary texts as acting in a pervasive and almost subterranean way. The biblical narratives, he continues, "become a part and parcel of the devout Christian being. They do not merely affect the conscious thought. They permeate the subconscious levels of the soul". In short, they are infrastructural, formative before they are *in*formative.

Discourse is always shaped by narrative. But what relationship does narrative play on practice? In *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology,* Gerard Loughlin, points to another trend in the recovery of sacred narrative in the 'theo-drama' as proposed by Karl Barth as well as, more directly, by Catholic theologian, Hans Urs Von Balthasar. Much ink has been spilt in analysis of Barth and Von Balthasar, so more

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[109] Ibid. 47.
[110] Ibid., 67.
[111] Ibid., 68.
[112] A. J. Appasamy and T. Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy : A Collection of His Writings* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1992). 168-169.

is not required here. The connection being made here is that of the biblical narrative as a 'performed story'. The notion of the biblical texts as being God's 'drama' has also been applied in the more liturgical and sacramental setting by Rowan Williams who, in his essay "Postmodern theology and the judgement of the world" states that people are "invited to 'create' themselves in finding a place within this drama – an improvisation in the theatre workshop, but one that purports to be about a comprehensive truth affecting one's identity and future".[113] The community becomes the stage on which the story is performed, its *dramatis personae* the worshipping community performing a Christ shaped story of incarnation and cruciform identification through sacramental re-enactment and hopeful eschatological acts.[114] It is both performance of as well as rehearsal for an age to come, at once both re-enactment and pre-enactment.

As Loughlin puts it, the narrative goes 'all the way down'. They construct, as it were, both the human subject as well as the world that he or she inhabits. This inevitably leads the Christian comparativist to, as Clooney says, read 'the non-Christian within the Christian horizon'.[115] Clooney is quite unapologetic about just how triumphalist this sounds, and Appasamy would likely have worded things similarly. But if comparative theology is ever to be a truly interreligious discipline, and not simply the latest comparative project that Christians are doing, then it should go without saying that a Caitanya Vaiṣṇava understands him or herself to be 'reading the world in Kṛṣṇa', with a horizon that very much belongs to the *pūrṇa avatāra* of Viṣṇu. In that case it is a world that is inscribed by the narratives of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and reasoned in the

[113] Ibid. 20.
[114] Loughlin also identifies John Milbank as being cut from the same sort of cloth as, in much the same sort of dramatic language, he emphasizes the performance: "[A]ll stories stage themselves; that is, they imagine a context for their telling, they imagine how the world must be for the story to make sense". Christianity, he is summarized as saying, "is postmodern because it is not founded on anything other than the performance of its story. It cannot be established against nihilism by reason, but only presented as a radical alternative, as something else altogether". Ibid. 21.
[115] Clooney, "Reading the World in Christ - from Comparison to Inclusivism"., 68.

discourse of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. And so must the comparativist take *as* seriously the narrative, ritual and textual dynamics of the other tradition as well. Perhaps attempting to move away from his earlier more parochial-sounding language, in his most recent publication Clooney describes a much riskier venture:

> … if a text praises a deity and is intended to draw readers into relationship to that deity, religious readers from outside the tradition will have to take these textual dynamics seriously, without attempting to render the text safe and ineffectual. They will have to respect the potency of the text of the other tradition, and in turn think more deeply about their own religious identity as textually mediated.[116]

I would go so far as to say that *unless* the comparativist is ready and willing to do this, there is little to defend him or herself from the charge of 'neo-colonialism', a plundering and acquisition of the other's narratives and theological reasoning in order to enrich one's own. The colonial enterprise, after all, is nothing more than the justified theft of another's raw materials.

I would want to add to this that there must now be a recognition of plurality within the authoritative texts themselves. Post-critical narrative theology, while not prepared to relativise, atomise or make a pastiche of the biblical narratives as Genealogy might wish, recognises that the Bible is not so much a text but *texts*, a plurality of stories interwoven and produced by multiple communities of faith. Rather than attempting to tell a single harmonized story called the 'life of Christ' then, culled from all four Gospel witnesses and conforming to a single 'orthodox' and institutionally sanctioned systematic theology or Christology, a narrative theology that reads particular texts will read each of the Gospel witnesses as distinct compositions emerging from distinct communities. A Christology that emerges from the Johannine communities, for example, will be unique and distinct from one that might emerge from Pauline or Petrine ones, precisely because it is rooted in a very different sort of Jesus narrative. To

[116] Clooney, *Comparative Theology : Deep Learning across Religious Borders*. 63.

the Johannine communities that read and practiced the Johannine text, the Jesus of John's Gospel was the Jesus that they knew, their devotion lived in accordance with the shapes and contours of the story that the 'beloved disciple' tells. I am not suggesting here that we go on the 'fool's errand' of trying to identify an original Johannine community. All that I am arguing for is the necessity of acknowledging the link between a text, its narrative(s) and communal performance. Analogous to this would be the necessity of acknowledging that Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine of divine embodiment is not developed with reference to any and all other Vaiṣṇava texts. Unlike the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavism that comes out of the *guru paramparā* of Caitanya, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is not his narrative. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is his narrative. His devotion is to Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa and his *arca,* Ranganāth, the temple deity at Śrīrangam, *not* to the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa.*

2.4.2 Embodied in practice

In the previously cited publication in which we found Ninian Smart discriminating between the 'albatross' he calls 'theology' and the 'objective' endeavour he calls the 'phenomenological study of religions', he proposes a sort of taxonomical approach to religions, as his title would have it, *Dimensions of the Sacred.* Smart's 'dimensions', in my view, look something like the crowded glass cases of the Pitt Rivers Museum, or indeed the headings of Baynes and Gifford's Encyclopaedia articles: "The Ritual Dimension", "The Experiential & Emotional Dimension", etc. – and these feature prominently in his analysis.[117] Like the Pitt Rivers, the method is itself

[117] This is not, however, to denigrate the valuable contributions of phenomenologists such as Ninian Smart and Mircea Eliade. The phenomenological emphasis on description must certainly still be an important aspect of sound research method, whether theological or not – especially in the initial stages. To break down the phenomena of religious belief and practice into taxonomical schema of 'dimensions of the sacred' as an academic study of a *single* religious tradition is therefore, in my opinion, still viable, provided that it is only used as a heuristic tool and that it is understood as being categories imposed on it from the outside. The real problem with this sort of scholarship, of course, comes in attempting to do anything *comparative* across the religious traditions as both Smart and Eliade have done.

the artefact. 'Theology', unsurprisingly, does not even get a mention, let alone warrant its own dimension. Instead theologians must find their subject matter relegated to a chapter with the grab-bag title of "Doctrine, Philosophy & Some Ingredients", as if it might alternately be called 'and sundry items'. Whether Smart's complex of 'doctrine' and 'philosophy' is all that different in the end from the 'albatross' that he is disavowing is uncertain.

Rāmānuja scholar, Eric J. Lott has suggested something much more inter-disciplinary in *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion.* Because traditions are all about 'interconnection and interaction' an adequate study of them will require "… a legitimate comparative approach [that] will need to recognise the intra-relatedness of phenomena within a tradition, and will therefore need to be that much more cautious and subtle in attempting analysis".[118] Lott's approach, therefore, is to attempt to incorporate important aspects of both 'theology' and 'religious studies' in pursuit of this more 'subtle' analysis. Following from but, in my view, greatly improving on Ninian Smart's structure of religious 'dimensions', he too has outlined what he calls the 'dimensional' aspects of traditions into six categories: ritual, mythic, doctrinal, social, ethical and experiential.[119] These are, for the most part, self-explanatory and he uses them uncontroversially. What is important here, however, is his repeated emphasis on their interconnection and inextricability from one another:

> …each religious tradition is, as it were, organically structured, with each of its component parts being interdependent upon other parts within the tradition as a whole. In the analysis of any particular dimension of a religion we have continually to bear in mind its interconnection and interaction with other aspects of the total structure. [120]

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[118] Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*. 31.
[119] Ibid. For his full argument on this see 16-30.
[120] Eric Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*, Religion and Reason (Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin, 1988). 30-31.

Although each of these dimensions can indeed be studied on their own as 'dimensions of the sacred', as Smart and others have done, to even begin to do justice to traditions as the 'organic' and 'interconnected structures' that they are, what would be the purpose in doing so? A tradition is comprised of a whole range of phenomena:

> …its beliefs and life practices, its rituals and ethical attitudes, its esoteric inner life as well as its outward forms, its intense and its casual participants, its priests and its prophets, its classical scriptures and its continuing process of interpretation...[121]

As the semioticians of the last century have pointed out, the communication and utterance of any discourse, theological or otherwise, already comes fully loaded with sign systems, often entirely undetected, but always, as Mikhail Bakhtin has emphasized, communally inscribed and circumscribed matrices of meaning.[122] Lott rightly says in view of this that theologically developed 'belief-systems' are already, in fact, their own specialized form of 'symbol-systems' that can only really be understood as fitting already within other 'patterns of meaning'. Theology is thus understood semiotically as being both governed and shaped by what he calls 'varied symbol-systems'.[123] To frame this now in terms of Lott's more theologically-inclusive dimensions, in Rāmānuja, for example, although it may be easier to try to read the *Śrībhāṣya* in isolation and as a stand-alone philosophical or 'doctrinal' system, as many have undertaken to do, in my view it is a fairly significant distortion to do so. For this abstracts it from its 'social' use and function in Śrīvaiṣṇava communal piety, and gives a skewed sense of what was most important to Rāmānuja. We must follow the leads that the Ācārya has left for us back to the 'mythic', his *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* references, as well as pay attention to the 'ritual' dimension, devotion to the *arcāvatāra* in the Śrīrangam temple. And finally, although

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[121] Ibid. 15.
[122] Gavin D. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology : Rethinking the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 1999). *Passim*. For much of my analysis I will be relying on Flood's distinction between the 'philosophy of consciousness' and the 'philosophy of the sign', preferring the latter over the former.
[123] Eric Lott, *Vision, Tradition, Interpretation: Theology, Religion, and the Study of Religion*, Religion and Reason (Mouton de Gruyter: Berlin, 1988). 121-122.

unfortunately exploration of this is beyond the scope of this study, we must acknowledge the 'experiential' dimension that flows from 'ritual', text 'enscribed on the body' as proscribed in the Śrīvaiṣṇava *Āgamas*.[124] Then and only then do we begin to get a sense of Rāmānuja's belief and practice, not simply his Vedāntic justification for it. A study such as this will have to significantly blur the lines between the subject matter of both 'theology' and 'religious studies'

2.4.3 Comparative traditions and the Indian *sampradāya*

Even if a comparative sort of theology as outlined above might best describe what many or even most of the Indian thinkers were doing in their own time and place, does this necessarily mean that 'comparative theology' is the best methodological tag by which to do comparative work in the India context? I propose use of the term 'comparative traditions' instead of 'comparative theology', and I would do so for two main reasons. First, because the word 'theology' means different things to different groups and individuals, it has first to be carefully defined as we have attempted to do above. Unless definitions have been adequately clarified then the danger of its being misconstrued as being primarily a 'Christian' or 'western', and therefore 'colonial' or 'neo-colonial' enterprise runs high. Second, 'theology' is conventionally considered as being *primarily* discursive, again Clooney's 'sturdy bridge' of "logic, reasoning and argument". But what of the many and varied non-verbal and pre-cognitive signifiers of which Lott speaks? Again, where 'theology' has, for the most part, focused on the doctrinal development and commentarial discourse around texts, 'religious studies' has, for the most part, just as fastidiously tried to focus on all other religious phenomena but this. The method that I am calling 'comparative traditions' attempts to move freely between both, to acknowledge the 'organic' and 'interconnected structure' of traditions.

[124] Gavin D. Flood, *The Tantric Body : The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006). For an extended discussion of Rāmānuja's tantric practice see 99-119.

In conclusion then, what I am proposing here is roughly a cross between a 'religious studies' approach that is influenced by the 'philosophy of the sign' as opposed to the phenomenologist's 'philosophy of consciousness',[125] and a theological approach that is influenced by both 'narrative' and 'comparative theology' that may or may not be confessional in nature. With the help of MacIntyre's 'three rival versions of moral enquiry' I have identified this as being a post-critical application of 'Tradition'. 'Comparative traditions' is a very deliberate attempt to incorporate the attention to text, particularity and historically developed discourse that theology insists on, while at the same time, recognizing *as of equal importance* all of the *a priori* 'givenness' that that discourse assumes, and as a semiotically-informed 'religious studies' has also emphasized. I am strongly in agreement with Lott in his appraisal that "[p]robably the most pressing issue in theology today concerns the grounding of theological articulation in that creative cultic matrix of myth/symbol/ritual in interaction with its broader contextual life".[126] And it is only in doing so that we gain an understanding of how proponents of other traditions "have expressed *their* understanding" and how "such perceptions are in various ways in *interaction with the primal matrix of meaning of the concerned traditions".*[127]

Is there a Sanskrit term for 'traditions' that best suits the Indian context? I would suggest that the term *sampradāya* is probably the closest match. Where the *vāda* and *darśana,* like 'theology' and 'philosophy' is primarily discursive in nature, *sampradāya* is a much more inclusive term. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* a *sampradāya* is: "In Indian religions, any established doctrine and set of practices transmitted from one teacher to another. From this it has come to mean any

[125] Flood's distinction in… Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*. *passim.*
[126] Ibid. 10.
[127] Ibid. 10.

sectarian religious teaching or a religious sect".[128] The first part of the definition refers to the *guru paramaparā*, the succession and transmission of discourse from authoritative teachers, while the latter part of it acknowledges what I have referred to throughout as its 'embedded-ness' in the soil of communal narrative and its 'embodied-ness' in the root system of communal practice.

[128] John Bowker, *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). 849.

Chapter 3. 1922-1932: The Body of God in the Universe and the Incarnation

This present chapter is an exploration of the first two of Appasamy's four divine embodiments - the Universe and the Incarnation. As these are the predominant themes of his earlier work, the textual focus here is on the first three of his publications. Although I will also reference his later writings on occasions, my goal here is to understand his earliest line of reasoning from the 1920's and early 1930's, exploring its dominant themes and the sources he uses in developing them. In his doctoral thesis, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel", Appasamy poses a question up front that marks out the terrain not only of his thesis, but of his lifelong theological project as well: "What is the purpose of bringing together Hindu Bhakti Literature and St. John's Gospel?" His answer reveals a primary concern that is not so much academic as it is pastoral: "What the Christians of India have to do", he says, "is to interpret Christian documents, like St. John's Gospel, with these [*bhakti* traditions] constantly in mind. Then the Christian Theology of India will become naturalized to the soil".[1] 'Saintly Indian Christians' and Hindus alike, he says, "have found much help in the writings of St. John for in them they have found a great emphasis on a life of union with God".[2] He is not alone, he says, in declaring John to be India's gospel, 'the *bhakta's* gospel'. It "has been the favourite of many Indian readers of the Bible" and is relevant to a "great many problems on which Hindu thinkers and saints have sought light; its teaching meets exactly the deepest needs of India".[3] More than any other Christian text, it outlines the experience of 'fellowship with God' through the 'doctrine of the indwelling

[1] A. J. Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel" (Thesis (D Phil), University of Oxford, 1922). 7.
[2] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church : A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 109.
[3] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 269.

Christ', a form of *bhakti,* he says, which appeals to his fellow countrymen 'with special force'.[4]

In subsequent argument he makes the more focused proposal for a Christian interaction between John and the 'systematic doctrine' of Rāmānuja, the "philosopher par excellence of Bhakti mysticism".[5] Their affinity in *bhakti,* he says, is that both are "at one in seeking union with the Ultimate Reality of all",[6] "in recognizing the supremacy of the mystical quest… not [as] an incident but [as] the primal act of the soul".[7] Rāmānuja and the 'Johannine mystic', he says, are also "at one in their deep longing for the permanence of this relation".[8] And yet despite his admiration for Rāmānuja, John still, he claims, presents "a much fuller concept than Rāmānuja's",[9] for John speaks not only of a divine immanence but of a double relationship in which "Christ abides in him and [the *bhakta*] abides in Christ".[10] The idiom of 'eternal life'[11] defined in John 17.3 as 'knowing God' is the presently embodied yet eternal relationship of *bhakti*, an 'endless fellowship with Christ'. Appasamy developed the content of his thesis more fully over the course of the next decade with two further publications: 1927's *Christianity as Bhakti Marga,* and 1931's *What is Mokṣa?* and to these we now turn.

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[4] Kirsteen Kim notes that Stanley Samartha has also emphasized John's Gospel, and Henri le Saux, also known as Abhishiktananda refers to it as the 'Johannine Upaniṣad'. Kirsteen Kim, "India," in *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, ed. John Parratt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 60. See also, Christopher Duraisingh and Cecil Hargreaves, eds., *India's Search for Reality and the Relevance of the Gospel of John : Papers from a Conference Held in Pune in February 1974* (Delhi: I.S.P.C.K., 1975). 41.
[5] Ibid. 39.
[6] A. J. Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 168.
[7] Ibid. 169.
[8] Ibid. 170.
[9] Ibid. 186.
[10] Ibid. 137.
[11] Ibid. 185.

3.1 The Universe as the Body of God

3.1.1 Appasamy's reading of the Johannine Logos

He begins, of course, with the Prologue. Apparently well schooled in contemporary historical criticism about John,[12] he is of the opinion that John is a later text written not as a history like the synoptics, but rather as an extended meditation on the theological meaning of the Christ event.[13] Importantly, however, and in contrast to critical scholarship, he also sees the text as being written by a single author,[14] and therefore cohering as one integral whole. The Prologue is not a tacked on later theological interpolation, but a very deliberately placed frame for the narrative that is written by the same hand. "More as its tower than as its gateway", he says, the Prologue "does not stand by itself, a magnificent piece of writing, having no real connexion with the Gospel. But, as on a tower, we see from it rapidly and yet clearly glimpses of the truths which are laid out in the Gospel".[15] The first five verses describe 'the One', the object of the *bhakta's* love and devotion, and the next nine our response to him, a very deliberate design to confront the reader with decision:

> All through his writings, and particularly in the prologue, he has given expression to strong convictions with a boldness which cannot but challenge. Men who set out to write theological treatises generally begin with the known and the accepted and proceed from them to the less known and the debateable. But this writer guards his very entrance with flaming swords.[16]

The 'immanent Christ' has 'initiated man's approach to God' in the form of the Logos, the 'light which lighteth every man'. 'Every man', to him, evidently means 'every man', and so he is clear that we should expect to find evidence of that Logos revealed in diverse places. It is precisely because of this conviction that the Fourth Evangelist, he says, also very deliberately draws on a term that connects to multiple

[12] Ibid. 268.
[13] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 59.
[14] Ibid. 19.
[15] Ibid. 31.
[16] Ibid. 34.

conceptions from the Ancient world, not simply from a first century Palestinian Jewish context; Heraclitus' Logos, "a power similar to man's reason", Plato's more dualist and rigid demarcation of "the world of matter from the world of ideas", the Stoics "maintaining that the universe is entirely pervaded by an eternal reason".[17] Added to these Greek philosophical conceptions was the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo who "as a Jew... was eager to maintain belief in one supreme God. But the Jewish idea of God as transcendent had [also] resulted in a severe type of dualism".[18] None of these are saying quite the same thing as the Prologue is about Christ, and the "personification of the Divine Word probably took place later than Philo", although "there was already in his time a strong tendency in that direction". But like Philo's use of the Old Testament wisdom literature, particularly the Job and Proverbs references to "Wisdom working with God in the creation of the world",[19] this allows him to draw on both the Hebrew and the Hellenic in fairly equal measure, his Logos "a means of explaining how God works in the world".[20]

All of these combined, say Appasamy, galvanized the early apologists' theological explorations of the Logos, the 'keystone of the arch' with 'stability against educated paganism'. By such conceptions, he says, Justin's Logos and Clement's 'educative Word' were able to argue for belief in the Logos 'incarnate in Jesus', while at the same time, "the creative Word of God, the Reason revealed in the universe, the origin of prophetic utterance, and the rational soul in mankind; and thus absorbed all the energies of the immanent Deity".[21] The human Jesus:

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[17] Ibid. 35.
[18] Ibid. 35.
[19] In *Mokṣa* a few years later he develops the Jewish sources a bit more, tracing the references in the Prologue back more obviously to both Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8. Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 185-186.
[20] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 36.
[21] Citing C.E. Raven, Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 190.

> ...who walked the land of Galilee is also the eternal Christ, who was before all time and who made all things. He is the life that animates the whole world, the light which enlightens every man. The Jesus whom we know and love and adore is the plenitude of Being.[22]

This, he says, the Fourth Evangelist's conviction of 'Christ as cosmic principle',[23] is "the great fact of the immanence of God", that becomes "the bed-rock of our oneness with God".[24]

He has cited Dean W. R. Inge for much of his information, a connection very much in keeping with his early tutelage under Streeter. Inge, Streeter, Sanday, Rashdall and others were known both by self-profession, as well as, more critically, by opponents as 'modernists'.[25] Appasamy's naming of Inge as his source for an eclectic Johannine Logos certainly fits with the Dean of St. Paul's endorsement of a 'Christian Platonism in the tradition of Whichcote'. His exposition of the philosophy of Plotinus and subsequent *Cambridge Biblical Essays* on the 'theology of S. John' seem to be a very logical starting place for the views ascribed to Appasamy above.[26] In all it was a fairly typical outline for his day, but more importantly, it is just the interpretation he needs to give him permission to search for the same in a Hindu context.

3.1.2 The Logos in the Hindu context.

Appasamy has not said that the Johannine Logos is the same as the Hellenic concepts, for John, he says, is an 'original thinker' "who sometimes manipulates facts as well as theories to suit his own ends". 'Likely influenced' by the Greek Logos, he means yet something quite different, the great Johannine *scandalon,* of course, being that the Logos now has both a name and flesh and blood existence. If this is the case, he

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[22] Ibid. 187.
[23] Ibid. 190.
[24] Ibid. 187-188.
[25] Gore, the liberal of a previous generation, by the early 1920's found himself to be considerably at odds with the Modernists. Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 66-68.
[26] Ibid. 66.

says, then surely Hindu terms are no less applicable than Greek ones.[27] As the early Christian writers found their *preparatio evangelica* in the Hellenic world, why should not he and his countrymen expect to find them in the Hindu one? Why should Hellenic concepts be retrospectively baptized and Hindu ones written off as 'idolatrous' or 'pagan'? Repeating his logic in *Mokṣa* Appasamy admits that:

> …[t]here is a large assumption behind this – that there is much of real value in the spiritual heritage of India; that the Eternal Word has been at work illuminating men's hearts and quickening their consciences; that through saint and prophet, through rsi and bhakta, God has been preparing a way for Himself slowly through the ages.[28]

His understanding of an eclectic Johannine Logos thus becomes his justification for his own exploration of Rāmānuja's texts. "This inner capacity to see and to recognize goodness is the work of the Logos. Let no one who believes in a historical revelation deny to others any such capacity".[29]

In this regard he is not too far off from Gore's thesis in the contemporary *Philosophy of the Good Life,* in which "Zarathustra, Confucius, Mohammed, Socrates, Plato, the Hebrew prophets and Jesus Christ, force us to notice a widespread testimony to the supreme good".[30] The difference here is that Gore, unlike Appasamy at this stage in his writing, "distrusted the distinctive appeal to 'religious experience' such as mysticism".[31] We find such statements also in another one of Appasamy's named influences, William Temple. In *Readings in St. John's Gospel,* he says of the Logos that 'enlightens':

> From the beginning the divine light has shone... the energy of Life... this is what urges all kinds of living things forward in their evolution... All that is noble in

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[27] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 37.
[28] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 10.
[29] A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings* (London: Macmillan, 1927). 171.
[30] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 94.
[31] Ibid. 95.

> the non-Christian systems of thought, or conduct, or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them.[32]

In a later context, speaking of the 'I am' statements, Appasamy explains that Jesus, "while making it absolutely clear that He is the Way, the Truth and Life, teaches that wherever there is goodness, truth and beauty, it should be recognized and respected". In the spirit of the early apologists, there are 'fragments of truth and glimpses of knowledge' to be found everywhere, and in India, much that is 'in harmony with the mind of Christ'.[33] The *bhakti* writers are much more to him than mere 'fragments of truth' however. They begin to take on an almost prophetic role in his thinking. "If Jesus blamed his contemporaries for not listening to the voice of Moses, with equal power and vehemence will He condemn us for not listening to Rāmānuja, Manikkavacakar, Tukaram, Kabir and Caitanya who have left behind them teaching of such undying value, pointing the way to Christ".[34]

3.1.3 Appasamy's early Logos Christology

Wagner has found in Appasamy's acknowledgement of "[a]lle großen Ideale der Propheten", both Biblical ones as well as 'Manu and Confucius', the influence of Idealist philosophy. Casting aside the conservative Christian conviction that God has been revealed only in Israel and in the historical Jesus, Appasamy has found evidence of divine revelation, he says, wherever there is 'goodness, truth and beauty'. As far as the 'fragments of truth' are concerned, this much at least is accurate. But he will go further to say that "Idealistisch gedacht ist der Geist primär"[35] in Appasamy. His charge here fits within a larger critique that he is making about Appasamy's pneumatology,

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[32] William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel: (First and Second Series)* (London: Macmillan, 1945). 10.
[33] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 85.
[34] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 166-167.
[35] Herwig Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1963). 62.

which shall be examined in the next chapter, so more need not be said presently. My disagreement with Wagner at this stage of the argument is in his identification of Appasamy's *primary* influence being Idealism.[36] Although he more circumspectly admits that such a connection is only hinted at ('nur angedeutet'), it is nonetheless this 'underlying Idealism' ('zugrundeliegende Idealismus'), he feels, that is Appasamy's 'starting point' ('Ausgangspunkt').[37]

In my view it is quite unlikely that this is his starting point. For as I shall also demonstrate at the beginning of the next chapter, on the rare occasions that Appasamy does speak directly to a Hegelian Idealism or subsequent Process theologies or philosophies he is unambiguously critical. As far as Appasamy is concerned he is getting this straight out of the Prologue. Just as the Fourth Evangelist has done with the Logos, so does he want to do with the *Antaryāmīn* ('Inner Ruler'), for "[m]any and emphatic are the assertions which speak of God as present *in* the world and *in* man as the Antaryāmīn".[38] Oosthuizen,[39] Joseph,[40] Stephen[41] and Sumithra[42] have all, more reasonably, found something analogous to Justin Martyr's *logos spermatikos* here. Although he does not explicitly invoke this, it is a much likelier pairing than Wagner's Idealism, for Appasamy has already admitted to the influence that Justin and the early apologists have had on his thinking.[43] Not unlike Justin, the 'fragments' and 'glimpses' are not the result of a 'general' or 'natural' revelation, but the divine agency of the Logos, for the affinity that he finds in the Hindu scriptures somehow "fit[s] into the

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[36] Ibid. 62-63.
[37] Ibid. 63.
[38] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 36.
[39] G. C. Oosthuizen, "Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa". 37.
[40] P.V. Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007). 61.
[41] M. Stephen, *A Christian Theology in the Indian Context* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2001). 52.
[42] Sunand Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*, Rev. ed., Text Book Series (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 1995). 109.
[43] Appasamy, *My Theological Quest*. 24.

perfect revelation which has been given to the world through Jesus".[44] In this sense his views on the possibility of extra-biblical divine revelation are not, as it were, 'extra-biblical'. All of it in some way, whether directly or indirectly, is the revelation of the Logos. He is also clear, however, and again like Justin, that the extra-biblical revelation could lead only to a partial knowledge of God, for "[i]t is only when we realize that the Eternal has become flesh and dwelt among us that we can behold His glory… We cannot see or know the Father but we can see Jesus and through Him we can know the Father."[45] Supremely in the Incarnation "all the movements of men before and after find their real meaning in His life and teaching. History is important as it prepares the way for this supreme manifestation of the Divine."[46]

While he is unambiguous that the Logos has revealed himself to Hindus, he is somewhat less clear as to what sort of response he wants to call his countrymen to. In *Gospel,* for example, he invokes two passages, interestingly, from the Synoptics, in which he seems to be arguing against the need for conversion. In the first of these he makes the case that although Jesus commended the Roman Centurion for his faith, "We are not told that He called the centurion to leave his ancestral religion and to follow Him, though on many occasions He called His own… to give up all and to follow Him." In the second of these, he offers a very interesting reading of Matthew 25's vivid judgment scene of the Sheep and the Goats. Although grouped into two categories, a careful and more inclusive reading of the text, he says, reveals that these are sheep 'not of Jesus' Jewish flock who:

> …do not seem to know anything about Him; they profess ignorance of Him and of His demands. Does this mean that they are not His acknowledged followers? And yet Jesus, as the final judge of men, gives them the joy of dwelling for ever in the immediate Presence of God."[47]

[44] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 85.
[45] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga*, 160.
[46] Ibid. 160.
[47] Ibid. 85.

Again, I would argue, this is not too far off from Justin's claims that Socrates and Heraclitus might be considered '*christianoi'* through the agency of either the *Logos* and/or the *logos spermatikos*.[48]

On the other hand, Appasamy expressly does *no*t share Justin's 'demonic source' or 'loan' theories.[49] In his own day not a few of his co-religionists had been positing the theory that India's early encounter with Christianity, according to tradition, through the first-century mission of St. Thomas, had been the catalyst of some of the major developments in the Indian traditions. Among these was the claim that both the *avatāras*[50] of the Hindu devotional traditions as well as the *bodhisattvas*[51] of Mahayana Buddhism are soteriological developments that emerged as Indian responses *to* the Christian message. One of the more convincing of these came from E. Ahmed Shah, an Indian Christian not only contemporary to Appasamy, but also studying at Oxford at the same time. So there is the very likely possibility that the two men knew each other. In *Buddhism and Christian Faith*, Ahmed-Shah claims that by the second century the Christian traditions were established enough on the Subcontinent that the Kushan king, Kanishka, called 70 Christian representatives to his court along with 700 other "bhikkus, brahmins, monks and priests" to "present the best of [their] faith".[52] Unfortunately, references in Ahmed-Shah's writing are few and far between, so it is unclear from where he is getting his information.

[48] Those who 'lived reasonably' or 'with reason', such as Heraclitus and Socrates are to be called *christianoi.* Justin's *Apology* 1.46.
[49] The former in *Apology* 1.23-24 and 54 and the latter in *Apology* 1.59.
[50] E. Ahmed-Shah, *Buddhism and Christian Faith* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1973). 62.
[51] Ibid. 61 and 63.
[52] Ibid. 58.

Although such theories may help conservative theologians explain away apparent parallels in the Hindu texts, conjectures such as these, says Appasamy, are baseless in terms of actual historical or textual evidence.[53] In *Bhakti Marga* he says:

> It has been suggested by competent scholars that leading exponents of Bhakti like the author of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Manikkavacakar, Rāmānuja and Kabir were influenced by Christian thought. This book does not proceed upon any such theory of the historical dependence of Hindu Bhakti on Christian teaching. The data at our disposal do not make clear such a dependence.[54]

Concerning the variation of the argument that claims the original St Thomas Church in Travancore to be the influence, Appasamy says that it "has tended to live its own life in isolation. We have no historical evidence that it actively propagated the Christian Faith in other parts of India. The early growth of Bhakti in India seems to have been an independent movement". The most he will say on the matter is that substantial Christian influence on any of these traditions cannot be established before the sixteenth century, so it is only in recent centuries that any "Christian ideas began to influence Bhakti thought…"[55]

Appasamy's point here, however, is at its heart a theological one. Christians do not *need* such theories for parallels are explained by the fact that, in the Logos, "God has been at work in India through the ages".[56] And nowhere is this more clearly seen, he says, than in Rāmānuja. Immanence, no less than in John's Gospel, he says, is the bed-rock doctrine of Rāmānuja's *bhakti* which always seeks to reconcile "two different ideas, of which one is an eagerness to attain the closest possible intimacy with God, and the other, the conviction that God and man are different".[57] He does this through his

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[53] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 8.
[54] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 27.
[55] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 13.
[56] Ibid. 15.
[57] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 37.

'many and emphatic' assertions of Rāmānuja's *Antaryāmīn*: *"*God as present *in* the world and *in* man..."[58]

This appears to be something of an organizing principle for Appasamy. As the 'Inner Dweller', God is immanent both 'in the world and in man'. But from where is he getting this? His reference here, and as we shall see with increasing clarity in subsequent passages, is to the Ācārya's doctrine of *prakāras* ('modes').[59] As Bhashyacharya describes it, the 'central point' of the Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine of God is that the Supreme *Parabrahman* is rightly called 'the only One', the primary and singular *tattva* ('reality'), and so, on that count, *a-dvaita,* 'non dual'. But it is not 'non dual' in the absolute and unqualified sense, for even the Parabrahman has attributes.[60] But Brahman is also in "inseparable union with Chit (*Atma*) and Achit (*Anatma*), two other realities. It is different from Chit and Achit".[61] The *Para-tattva* is thus modified or qualified by its embodied form as *cit* and *acit,* both *viśiṣṭa* ('qualified') and *advaita* ('non-duality'):

> The only independent reality is Parabrahman. The other two are dependent on it. These three, Chit, Achit and Parabrahman, do not exist separately, but, like substance and quality, in inseparable union with one another. Brahman is compared to substance, and Chit and Achit to quality...[62]

The 'dependent forms' are also called the *prakāras* ('modes') of Brahman, and as 'modes', known as *jīvātman* ('individual finite self') and *prakṛti* ('primordial material'). Appasamy has rather oversimplified all of this by referring to it simply as

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[58] Ibid. 36.
[59] Lott also refers to this as central to understanding Rāmānuja's views on divine embodiment: "the *prakāra* analogy (which I would translate as a prototype-ectype relationship) signifies in a *general* way the *utter dependence* of the universe on the Supreme Self, it is the self-body analogy that most directly and most richly explicates the meaning of this dependent relationship... this analogy take us to the core of Viśiṣṭādvaita's whole conceptual structure". Lott, "God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja: A Study in His Use of the Self-Body Analogy." 21.
[60] Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 63-64.
[61] Ibid. 66.
[62] Ibid. 67.

God "present in the world and in man", but following our chronological exposition this is his starting place.

One further point of clarification must be made. In Rāmānuja's system, the modes can still, in a contingent sense, be called 'Brahman', through the principle of what Lipner identifies as 'correlative predication'.[63] It is in this sense that the 'Essential Self' (Brahman as substrative 'consciousness')[64] can, and indeed *must*, be distinguished from the 'Contingent Self' (embodied in the *prakāras*)[65] even while, at the same time, it is also rightly identified as 'Brahman'. It is in some such sense that Rāmānuja affirms what Lipner calls an 'identity-within-difference',[66] in the relationship between the *prakāra* and *prakārin,* the 'mode and mode possessor'.[67] As shall be made clear below, however, Appasamy is very clear that his Christian *bhakti* can in no sense call either 'man' or 'nature' 'God'. There is a fairly significant ontological difference between these two positions.

3.1.4 The Logos/*Antaryāmīn* in relation to 'World' and 'Man'.

Continuing with his exegesis of the Prologue, the author, he says, deliberately repeats himself for emphasis in his declaration that the Logos is Creator of all things: "All things were made by him" in v. 3 and "And the world was made by Him..." in v. 10. This, he says, is a safeguard against the supposition by many "that God is the sum total of the energy and the life in the world".[68] For *bhakti* support he turns to the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*: 'having created that, He then entered the same'.[69] John's Prologue and the *Taittiriya*, he says, have the same sort of idea of a transcendent deity who

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[63] In Sanskrit, *sāmānādhikaranya.* As Rāmānuja defines it, and in Lipner's translation: "The experts say that correlative predication is the application to one object of more than one word having different grounds for their occurence". Lipner, *The Face of Truth : A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*. 29. As an explanation for his 'identity-in-difference' thesis see 43.
[64] Ibid. 50, but see all of chapter 3.
[65] Ibid. 63-64, but see all of chapter 4.
[66] Ibid. 45.
[67] Ibid. 38.
[68] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 40.
[69] *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* 2.6.2.

creates, and then subsequent to that creation, makes himself immanent, entering creation for the sake of that creation. "[T]he immanence of God in creation is for the sake of clearer perception…" Just as with the *Antaryāmīn,* so too with the Logos: *"*By being in the world, the Logos illumines it".[70]

Although divine immanence in the human subject can fairly be said to be his overarching *bhakti* focus, a reconsideration of the value of the physical universe is an important aspect of his thinking. "If Hindu thinkers are tempted to stress overmuch the thought of a God who fills the universe, Christian thinkers are apt to think too much of the conditions on which God abides in the heart of man". By over-emphasizing 'strict ethical values' they remain "oblivious to the thought of a God-filled universe".[71] Perhaps this is the Gurukul group's problem. 'God in nature and God in man', says Appasamy, provide a much more balanced and 'rounded conception of the Divine'. On a number of occasions he quotes extensively from the Hindu *bhaktas,* and in addition to these, composes his own bucolic descriptions, reminiscent of Psalm 104:

> He dwells in the world. He abides in everything – the flower blossoms because of His bidding; the sea roars because He has willed it so; the storm rages, the sun rises, the stars come out on the dark sky, the river flows along, the wild beasts howl, all because He has created them so. It is not merely in the world of nature that God is present; He is present in the heart of man, stirring him to new life, beckoning him with glowing ideals, endowing him with large measures of moral strength.[72]

This sort of language, he admits, can easily be over emphasized, and especially in India, he feels, "[i]t should be remembered that the mountains and the rivers, the sun and the ocean are created by God. They are not God".[73] In a line of reasoning that almost seems to betray his later sacramental theology, he states correctively that the physical world, as creation, can never be identified *as* God, "[f]or God is a Spirit and cannot be

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[70] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 42.
[71] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 184.
[72] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice* (Madras: S.P.C.K, 1935). 10.
[73] Ibid. 22.

identified with material things".[74] In a later context he will temper this considerably upon further consideration of Sacrament and the 'sacramental principle': "As a spirit God has no form... So He creates the world in order that through it His character may be revealed. The world of physical objects is the instrument by which He makes known His nature and evokes the worship and love of His devotees".[75]

Calling anything in the natural world 'God' then, as a matter of identity, is a mistake. But it is yet God's 'instrument' in revelation. Because he is making such a close connection between Creator and creation, 'having created it he entered the same', and because he is defining this Creator as the Logos, incarnate in the first century as Christ, as Boyd points out Appasamy's doctrine of creation thus fits 'within the confines of Christology'.[76] In Appasamy's words:

> The Force or Energy that is immanent in the universe guiding it in the moment of creation and continuing to guide it ever since, became flesh and dwelt among men as Jesus... a tremendous relation stretching back to the very beginnings of time, yes, even when there was no time".[77]

And in another context: "The human Jesus who walked the land of Galilee is also the eternal Christ, who was before all time and who made all things".[78] Boyd's statement is accurate. I would want to add, however, that to say that Creation 'fits within the confines of his Christology,' is not the same as saying Creation is part of Christ.

In *Mokṣa* he returns to the Logos as *Antaryāmīn*, illustrating it this time with a proof-text from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka:*

> He who, dwelling in the sky [the stanza is repeated verbatim with 'sun', 'quarters of heaven', 'breath', 'light' and 'all things'] yet is other than all things, whom all things do not know, whose body all things are, who controls all things from within, - He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.[79]

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[74] Ibid. 23.
[75] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 206.
[76] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 297.
[77] Ibid. 298.
[78] Ibid. 299.
[79] The whole quote is from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.7.8-20. In Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 166-167.

The Inner Controller, as in Psalm 104, "is in contact with His wonderful universe all the time. He inspires its energy; He rules its forces". Creation fits within Christology, but there is also a sense in which his 'anthropology fits within his cosmology'. For it is precisely in this context that human beings are located as well. For again in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*:

> He, who, dwelling in breath [again, repeated verbatim for 'speech', 'the eye' and 'the mind'], yet is other than breath, whom the breath does not know, whose body the breath is, who controls the breath from within – He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.[80]

It is in this context that we also find his earliest full Christian application of Rāmānuja's Body of God analogy. Although he refers to it as Rāmānuja's analogy, he knows from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* that it is not original to Rāmānuja, but as an explanatory principle is a markedly ancient one. His full comment on the *BrU* text is:

> God is in the world in the same way as the spirit is in the body. In this context the word 'spirit' is used to indicate that which makes the difference between a dead and a living person. By spirit or mind or soul is meant here that which distinguishes the inert mass of matter known as the body from the moving, energizing being known as man.[81]

The *BrU's* 'inner controller', the dweller within a divinely embodied universe and humanity, he says, now much more directly is comparable to the "Mind or Reason behind the whole world", the mind that the Prologue calls 'Logos', the Word that "animates the whole world. All that happens in the universe is the direct result of the working of this Mind".[82] The *Antaryāmīn* is the 'eternal Mind' and Jesus is identified with this eternal Mind. Again, in Johannine terms:

> The Force or Energy that is immanent in the universe guiding it in the moment of creation and continuing to guide it ever since became flesh and dwelt among men as Jesus... All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that has been made.[83]

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[80] Ibid. 167.
[81] Ibid. 168.
[82] Ibid. 168-169.
[83] Ibid. 169.

Although the Logos, the *Antaryāmīn,* may not be identical, as in 'identified' with the world, the world with all of its inhabitants is the body, the 'instrument', dependent at all times on the animating Spirit within it the "world lives because of its functioning". And so, just that quickly he has drawn a direct line of theological argument from Rāmānuja's analogy and the *BrU* back to his interpretation of the Logos of the Prologue.[84]

At this point the Gurukul group has taken considerable issue with Appasamy's 'immanence' language:

> 'Immanence' denotes a different concept. It is the central term of the pantheistic view, according to which God is in the universe as its innermost force, power and controller, and, consequently, in man too in the same way. This is not Biblical doctrine. But by using the two words interchangeably Dr Appasamy is able to equate the Biblical doctrine of God's indwelling with the Hindu doctrine of God's immanence in the universe and in man. God is the *Antaryāmīn* in man.[85]

But what, precisely, is not a biblical doctrine, divine 'immanence' or 'pantheism'? With typically broad brush-strokes the Gurukul reverends seem, either to have conflated two very distinctly defined terms, or perhaps more deliberately, made him 'guilty by association'. 'immanence' equals 'pantheist'. But like 'plurality' and 'pluralism', 'immanence' is not the same thing as 'immanentism'. My response is two-fold: first, the Swedish reverends are ignoring some very clear statements he has already made concerning the God who "exists in, *and yet beyond*, the world", and similarly, to a Creator who is decidedly *not* to be understood as "the sum total of the energy and the life in the world". On what basis, then, can they dismiss Appasamy's claims to divine

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[84] It is perhaps a bit too direct, conveniently bypassing some important traditionally inscribed narrative and practice. I will return to this in the fifth chapter. For now all that is intended is an exposition of his view.

[85] Gurukul Theological Research Group of the Tamilnad Christian Council; Convener Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1956). 13.

immanence as 'pantheist'?[86] What do they even mean by 'pantheism'?[87] Second, Appasamy's 'immanence' and 'indwelling' are not interchangeable. Within the decade, in fact, Appasamy will shift towards the more Johannine language of 'indwelling', and he will do so with specific reference to the Spirit, Sacrament and the Church. I would suggest that, just as we saw with their polemic against an imagined religion called 'Hinduism', so too with their construction of Appasamy. The Bishop is, to them, more of an idea, and their refusal to engage with what he has actually said to the contrary allows them to keep him there.

Another variation of this sort of criticism can be found in P.V. Joseph who assumes that Appasamy has uncritically conflated the Logos with the Holy Spirit:

> One of the key terms that Appasamy employs in his interpretation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is *Antaryāmīn*. Although Appasamy does not directly use the term *Antaryāmīn* for the Holy Spirit... *Antaryāmīn* expresses the concept of the immanent and the indwelling God in Hinduism. Appasamy, in fact, borrows the application of the term *Antaryāmīn* from Rāmānuja.[88]

There is substantially more to this argument, since Appasamy does indeed apply the term *Antaryāmīn* to both the Logos and the Spirit. The Spirit is indeed intimately related to the workings of the Logos, and this we see as Appasamy's thinking develops in the 1930's. But I will argue that his pneumatology is much more precise than either Joseph or the Gurukul Group have detected and has a much more specific role with regards to the presence of the 'Living Christ' in Church and Sacrament. This shall be the subject of the next chapter, so more need not be said at present. I mentioned it here because this too is an aspect of the *Antaryāmīn.*

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[86] Appasamy himself defines 'pantheism' as the belief in which the 'world of physical objects' is 'identical with God'. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 7.

[87] Rāmānuja's system is usually categorized as being some form of pan*en*theism, the view that although the universe is contained 'within' God, God is not exhausted by or identical with the Universe. So, Carman and Bartley. See especially Bartley, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: Realism and Religion*. See Chapter Three in particular. Lipner is less convinced, Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*. 142.

[88]Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 44

Although the Gurukul group has called it 'pantheist' and 'Hindu', I would argue that Appasamy is well within his Anglican devotional tradition to say such a thing. For Anglican scholarship of the previous generation had already been saying something strikingly similar. Notably we find, for example, Appasamy's named influence, Charles Gore, for whom the "material universe makes clear His infinite wisdom and power". In his essay in *Lux Mundi* entitled "The Holy Spirit and Incarnation", [89] Gore cites Psalm 104's description of a God that is intimately involved in the natural order - seasons, water cycles, the very breath in the lungs of man and beast - the Psalmist's God is anything but the absentee landlord of the deists. Gore, in fact, uses nearly identical language to Appasamy in saying that:

> *Nature is one great body, and there is breath in the body; but this breath is not self originated life, it is the influence of the Divine Spirit.* 'By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.' The Spirit, the breath of God, was brooding upon the face of the waters of chaos where life and order were. It is the sending forth of the breath of God, which is the giving to things of the gift of life; it is the withdrawal of that breath which is their annihilation. (emphasis mine)[90]

Gore's description here, invoking three separate passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, Ps. 33.6, Gen. 1.2 and Ps. 104.29, as in Appasamy, neatly connects the initial creation with ongoing sustenance and maintenance of that creation. And as with Appasamy he will go on to say that this is supremely seen in man, for "in humanity, made after the Divine Image, it was the original intention of God that the Spirit should find His chiefest joy, building the edifice of a social life in which nature was to find its crown and justification…[91]The 'social life' to which he refers is the Sacramental nature of the

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[89] Although Gore's essay is ostensibly pneumatological, it must be remembered that it fits neatly within a volume that is subtitled "a series of studies in the religion of the Incarnation". And this precisely is Appasamy's early emphasis. Ramsey has illustrated that *Lux Mundi* Incarnational thinking emerged out of the scholarship of the so-called 'Cambridge Trio', namely, Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort.Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 1.

[90] Charles Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*, 13th ed. (London: John Murray, 1892). 232.

[91] Ibid. 232.

Church, a society which he believes 'nourishes individuality'[92] in the context of Community.[93] It is in this sacramental sense that Gore develops his Spirit in the Body language. The 'one Spirit', who 'was the original author of all' now also "claims for His own, and *consecrates the whole of nature*".[94] Appasamy develops his sacramental thinking along very similar lines within the next decade and will be the subject of the next chapter. Like Gore, he too is strongly against the 'absentee landlord', the notion that "God once made the world and has allowed it to go on of its own accord". This, he says, is a seriously 'inadequate view of truth' for the God of Psalm 104 "is in contact with His wonderful universe all the time. He inspires its energy; He rules its forces; and daily, yea hourly, His will pervades the mighty realms of nature and man, and sets in operation the manifold happenings in them".[95]

Despite the attractiveness of the Spirit in the Body logic, it is important to note that neither Gore nor Appasamy can produce proof-texts for such a statement in any of the New Testament writings. In some of the higher Christological passages, such as in Colossians 1.16-17, it is clear that it is Christ who is both Creator and Sustainer, "in him all things in heaven and on earth were created", who is also "before all things, and in him all things hold together". There is also Hebrews 1.2-3, whose author declares that it is by the Son, "whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds", who is also "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word". That the Son is both Creator and present Sustainer, can thus be warranted from the Christian scriptures. And given the parameters that Appasamy has already set in not equating anything in the

[92] Ibid. 236.
[93] Ibid. 235.
[94] Ibid. 238.
[95] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 166.

created order as 'God', is he actually saying nothing more than this? The Logos creates, enters and sustains the world.

3.1.5 The 'moral' and 'metaphysical' distinction in humanity.

Appasamy does begin to depart more significantly from the traditional script, however, with regards to his ideas on immanence in the human subject. John's Light that 'lighteth every man', he says, means that "[a]lready there is kinship between man and God and it is on the basis of this kinship that we are called upon to seek further fellowship with God". Verses 12 and 13 of the Prologue "as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which are born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God" he interprets as meaning that "[b]haktas are already children of God. This relationship may be described as metaphysical but the relationship does not become perfect until a moral relationship is added on to it…"[96] There is an intimate connection between the metaphysical and moral, he says, but this in John is the difference between being 'born of God' and 'oneness with God', descriptions of two related but still distinct realities.[97] All that Appasamy means to say here is that "mere community of nature imparted at birth - unalterable as it is - does not constitute the perfect relation between a father and his son. To this community of nature must be added a life of moral conformity".[98] The latter is only possible because 'God is already in us'. Divine immanence is thus the necessary, but not sufficient condition for *bhakti.*

Although exegetically, as far as the Prologue goes, this is somewhat disastrous, his later developed Johannine *mahāvākyas* ('great sayings') will clarify exactly why he is making this distinction. Boyd characterizes Appasamy's view as saying that, "the God whom we seek is already in a sense within us, as what [Appasamy] calls 'the

[96] Ibid. 70.
[97] Ibid. 71-72.
[98] Ibid. 72.

Immanent Christ'".[99] I am in agreement with Estborn *et al.* on this single point, that Appasamy's reading here does indeed fly in the face of both a traditional as well as more obvious exegesis of the verses in question:

> Dr Appasamy, led by the light of Bhakti, interprets 'born of God' as referring to a metaphysical kinship of man to God. Whatever may be said of this Hindu doctrine, it must be stated that the verses quoted do not contain anything of it. Nor can it be said to be a Biblical doctrine.[100]

The latter part of their statement, however, that human 'kinship' with God cannot 'be said to be a Biblical doctrine' is somewhat less defensible in light of St. Paul's affirmation in verse 28 of that same Acts 17 passage. He (a *bhakta)* and his Athenian interlocutors (clearly not *bhaktas)* are yet, in some undefined sense, 'all God's offspring'. Even still, Appasamy's exegesis at this point, I quite agree, is forced and would add to this that it is probably his attempt to assimilate Rāmānuja's *prakāras* that has got him there. I would argue, as Martin Hengel has recently done, that these verses in the context of the Prologue are actually better understood as fitting within the author's 'salvation history',[101] a redemptive retelling of Israel's story.

Appasamy's anthropology thus fits within his cosmology which, in turn, fits within his Christology, because he sees humanity as being both children of nature as well as, by special vocation, instruments by which the Logos, 'the Mind within the universe', reveals and is revealed. "All through the ages and in every country the eternal Logos has been at work quickening men's hearts and minds".[102] But to what end? The revelation of God as Logos and *Antaryāmīn,* the 'soul' to the body, he says, is purposively moving creation towards Christ, for although "he has been quickening

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[99] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 295.
[100] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*. 17.
[101] Martin Hengel, "The Prologue of the Gospel of John as the Gateway to Christological Truth," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008). 277-279.
[102] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 172.

men's hearts everywhere in the world He is fully embodied in Jesus. In Jesus His resplendent glory is wholly seen".[103] The universe and all its inhabitants, Hebrew, Hellenic or Hindu, whether they acknowledge it or not, are thus on a Christ-ward trajectory. But this Christ-ward trajectory is not dependent on accidence of birth or missionary exploits for, according to Appasamy in a later context:

> He does not do all this in a distant or remote way. He dwells in our inmost heart and works from there. He is bound up with our very heart and soul. Christ is our light. He illumines our pathway to God. He reveals to us all that we need to know about God, man, the future life and salvation.[104]

"Do you long to see God?" he asks. It is for this vision that all humanity was created: 'The life of man is the vision of God'. His reference here, interestingly, is to Irenaeus' *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.7 "the glory of God is a man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God". "God Himself", he says, "has awakened that longing in you".[105]

In closing this section outlining his doctrine of the Universe as divine embodiment we return to one of the many later occasions in which he connects what he is saying back to Rāmānuja's analogy. In *Gospel and India's Heritage* he says: "There is a famous passage in the Brihad-Aryanyaka (*sic*) Upanishad which speaks of the world as being the body of God",[106] referring of course to the previously cited *BrU* 3.8.3-10, and 16-22. "Rāmānuja", he goes on to say, "has made this teaching about the world being the body of God fundamental in his philosophy", a claim which he then backs up by a quote from *Śrībhāṣya* 1.4.27:

> Brahman – essentially antagonistic to all evil, of uniform goodness, differing in nature from all beings other than itself, all-knowing, endowed with the power of immediately realizing all its purposes, in eternal possession of all it wishes for, supremely blessed – has for its body the entire universe with all its sentient and non-sentient beings…and constitutes the Self of the Universe.[107]

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[103] Ibid. 174.
[104] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 10.
[105] Ibid. 14.
[106] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 204.
[107] Ibid. 205.

To clarify what exactly is meant by the terms 'body' and 'soul' (in Sanskrit of course *ātman,* 'the self', but I will stay with Appasamy's wording) he follows this with yet another extensive quotation from *Śrībhāṣya* 2.1.9*:*

> We are thus led to adopt the following definition – Any substance which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purposes, and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation, is the body of that soul…In this sense, then, all sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by him for his own ends, and are absolutely subordinate to him.[108]

Also in his four bodies of God passage, he adds to his previous reasoning not only *that* God wants to reveal, but also *what* God wants to reveal. His answer, again very Johannine, is: 'love'. If God is love, and love's "great purpose is to manifest His love to men and to receive their love in return", then Love desiring love from Creation, 'does not remain aloof', as certain ideas in the Hindu traditions would have it, a deity immersed in its own bliss. With what is a clear shot at Śaṅkara, he continues, "He is not an impersonal being, devoid of all qualities. Only when men realize His love and return it fully, yielding themselves up voluntarily into His control, is He satisfied…"[109] In short, he says, "Love is at the heart of the universe",[110] inviting creation to be partakers in that loving communion. But God is also Spirit, he says, and since God is Spirit, without physical form to reveal to physical creatures "He creates the world in order that through it His character [love] may be revealed". Because of all this, or so goes his reasoning, "[a]s Christians we may also well say that God has made the entire universe as His body".[111]

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[108] Ibid. 206.
[109] Ibid. 206.
[110] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 24.
[111] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 206.

3.2 The Incarnation as Body of God

The universe may go some way towards revealing the loving character of God, but it can only go so far, and for two specific reasons. First, as often as something of the character of God is revealed in nature, its revelation is still primarily only that of the 'wisdom and power of God'. The natural world, after all, can be just as much a revelation of its own nature, invoking Tennyson, "red in tooth and claw".[112] And as he has just said, "God is love". But second, human limitation, ignorance and evil has also obscured the revelation of God in the universe. And for this we go back to *Bhakti Marga:* "the emphasis in the prologue on creation may also be to demonstrate the fact that God's purpose could not be realized and that, therefore, He had to use another and more effective means of making Himself known to men. That way is the Incarnation".[113] As the Prologue itself says, the Logos in Creation has not been 'understood'. And "Because men have not understood Him, even though He is immanent in them, he has 'become flesh'". The Incarnation is thus, in his thinking, continuation, clarification and further more focused embodiment of the revelation that is already sown throughout the universe, "a more effective means of showing God than mere immanence".[114] 'He was in the world', we have established, means to Appasamy that the selfsame pre-existent Logos who has been speaking to the ancients as 'Reason' or *Antaryāmīn* is none other than the one who is now incarnate. It is thus the 'pre-incarnate Christ' who was *already* in the world, not the 'Incarnate Christ' as it is usually rendered.[115] The mystery of the eschatological 'now' in the Prologue is that "[w]ith rare insight John identifies the historic Jesus with the immanent Logos and tells us, with a boldness which would have shocked the philosophers of his day, that the

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[112] Ibid. 206-207.
[113] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 43.
[114] Ibid. 43.
[115] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 295.

Logos became flesh".[116] The eternal Logos, the Self of the embodied universe, is now fully present in the historical person of Jesus.

Although obscured by both the vicissitudes of nature and the stupidity of human evil, we find that "the immanent Logos is no stranger, of whose real nature we are ignorant... but One of whom we know much for in the Jesus of history and experience we behold His unutterable glory".[117] His fulfilment theology wants to stress here that although God is immanently and variously known in a diversity of traditions it is always Christ that is their *telos.* Framed in Alan Race's paradigms, Appasamy is certainly no pluralist. He posits, rather, a classic sort of inclusivism that grew out of the previous generation's 'fulfilment theology':

> …this book will fail in its purpose if it gives the impression that all religions are equally true and that all religious experience is equally valid. It is one thing to acknowledge beauty and reality and depth of religious experience...it is another thing to say that all religious experience of whatever kind and degree is the same. Christ is the differentia of the Christian religion.[118]

Christ is always the differentia, for "[i]n Christ Jesus we see God reflected with a perfection and a clearness which we see nowhere else".[119] The 'noblest' and 'finest capacities' of other traditions are gifts endowed, 'best realized' and "most thoroughly *fulfilled* in fellowship with God and Christ" (emphasis mine).[120] From Christ the revelation of God in man and the universe has come, and so to Christ these are called to return. Gore has put it succinctly in *The Mission of the Church: "*We are to proclaim Christianity as superseding all other religions by a method not so much of exclusion as

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[116] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 44.
[117] Ibid. 45,
[118] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 152.
[119] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 24.
[120] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 155.

of inclusion. For Christ 'the light which lighteth every man,' the Word in every man's heart, has left Himself nowhere, in no religion, without witness".[121]

3.2.1 The Incarnation and history

An important theme for Appasamy in outlining the Incarnation is that of history. The Judeo-Christian emphasis on a God who accomplishes eschatological acts in a shared public history he sees as being an important corrective in the Indian context. The Prologue, he says, is a careful balance of time and eternity. In this he very deliberately sets a biblical notion of revelation of the Logos as both pre-incarnate Christ and the historic person of Jesus in juxtaposition to the mythical time in the Hindu texts.[122] In contrast to these the Fourth Gospel shows how "accepting the historical Christ we may live in eternity... history and metaphysics are woven together. This correlation between time and eternity ought to prove of the greatest importance to us in India."[123] Emphasizing metaphysics should never be at the expense of a shared, public history.

> The historic Jesus began to appear to him [the Fourth Evangelist] vividly as the eternal Logos. On the one hand, St. John is aware of the importance of history as he reckons with a person who has appeared in time. On the other, he fully realizes the significance of metaphysics, being aware of the eternal issues in time. If it can base itself on St. John's Gospel, Indian Christianity will, we may hope, avoid the danger of neglecting history.[124]

Herein also lies the safeguard against the sort of reading of John that he finds in Sri Parananda's *An Eastern Exposition of St. John*, a work that Appasamy feels makes John out, essentially, to be a Śaiva Siddantin! The Christ story in Sri Parananda's reading is allegorical and symbolic of timeless truths. Interestingly, he finds here some degree of parity between Hindu approaches to time and that of certain Hellenic versions

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[121] Charles Gore, *The Mission of the Church: Four Lectures Delivered in June, 1892, in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph* (London: John Murray, 1892). 112.
[122] The distinction between the Semitic prophetic/eschatological linear version of time and the cyclical version of the Pan-Indian religions is important, but often overstated. It would be a mistake to infer from it that mundane history does not matter in India, or that only a mythological past is recorded.
[123] Ibid. 14.
[124] Ibid. 15.

of the same. The timelessness of both such approaches he sets in stark contrast to the Hebrew notion of an *eschaton*. Indeed it is this biblical historical and eschatological thinking that he finds to be missing from *both* the Hellenic and the Hindu conceptions. "Every student of his writings must agree that John was considerably influenced in his thinking by Hellenic philosophy. But in our eagerness to recognize the Hellenic strain in him we must not forget the Hebrew."[125] And yet this respect paid to historic revelation, he says, need not irrationally freeze Christian experience of revelation within the first century. "Our feet must be firmly planted on a historic revelation as on solid earth", Jesus, and yet it is the Spirit of Jesus, the 'Living Christ' who "not only interprets the ancient Scriptures but leads us to unexplored realms of thought, enabling us to deal with new problems in new ways".[126]

Like much of the more liberal-minded Anglican scholarship of his day, he is quite clear that he welcomes the various forms of historical and textual criticism that were prevalent at the time of his writing,[127] "a very welcome addition to the Christian scholar's study of the scriptures".[128] Although the Bible, he says, "is a human document to be judged like other books by historical and critical standards… nevertheless it contains all that is essential for our spiritual well-being." But what does he make of the Old Testament? The Children of Israel, Appasamy says, were taught by degrees, a revelation within history, but appropriate to their stage of development. As a result "we

[125] Ibid. 197.
[126] Ibid. 170.
[127] Following from the Cambridge Trio of Lightfoot, Westcott and Hort, the *Lux Mundi* scholars, according to Michael Ramsey treated "contemporary secular thought as an ally rather than as an enemy". Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 3.
[128] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church*, 150. Although, to my knowledge, he does not make explicit reference to or use of Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis, his notion of a developed theological understanding shows evidence, at least, of sympathy with the theory of redaction by multiple J.E.P.D. authors.

see in the Old Testament the evidences of a sustained process of spiritual education".[129]

As Appasamy outlines it:

> God made known His nature and His will to saintly men of old through their religious experience and that they put down on record these truths about God… This does not imply that they did not make any mistakes…With regard to facts of history, geography and science they believed whatever their contemporaries believed… We should not expect to find in the Bible scientific ideas and historical information such as we accept today…But in the language which men then understood the sacred prophets and historians explained the essential truths...[130]

He is happy to say, with most Christian scholars, that the Spirit has inspired the scriptural writers, but this, he makes clear, need not necessarily lead to a belief in their writings as inerrant or in their being the result of 'dictation'.[131] The Bible reflects the times in which it was written, and so he makes this important distinction:

> Their early belief about Him was that He was a mountain God of war and storm, exercising His dreadful power in all sorts of mysterious ways, so that His worshippers had to stand in perpetual awe of Him. This primitive conception was slowly replaced by the idea of a God who is present everywhere ready to help the seeking soul and who requires from His people justice, mercy and humility.[132]

Wagner is critical of Appasamy at this point. Although he acknowledges that the Bishop does see the value in the biblical revelation as being written in history, the Bishop's interpretation of it, he says, is given over to a theory of "ahistorical religious experience" ('ungeschichtliche Erfahrungsreligion'). In doing so, Wagner continues, "Appasamy has subordinated ('untergeordnet') the historical witness of the Bible" to his 'Obergriff von Religion'.[133] To his credit, at least Wagner has not overstated his case here. He has recognized that Appasamy insists that the Logos incarnate must be understood in the context of salvation history, preparation through Israel. It is strange

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[129] Appasamy, *Gospel and India's Heritage*, 58.
[130] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church*, 103.
[131] He notes, in contrast to the Qur'an.
[132] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. As above, but here he cites H.E. Fosdick's *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 1-37, as his reference.
[133] Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 68.

then that he returns to his thesis that Appasamy's source is a *Geist* that is 'the Origin of all Knowledge ('der Geist Ursprung aller Erkenntnis').[134] Ignoring what he has just said about salvation history, Wagner rushes to his usual criticism of Appasamy, that the Bishop's views are essentially '[n]ach idealistischem Verständnis'.

I would argue, once again, that Appasamy's views on the Scriptures come primarily from his own Anglican tradition. The sort of Anglican scholarship that Appasamy was instructed in under Streeter's supervision was keen to position itself not as being in opposition to the science of its day, but rather as being robust enough to be able to incorporate it. As such, the various configurations of evolutionary theory that had gained ground in the English scholarship of the previous generation were frequently being incorporated into Streeter's and his cohort's writings.[135] Appasamy reads the Old Testament texts stratigraphically, as an evolutionary progression from an age of idolatry and images, to an understanding that God is one and not to be made an image of. The revelation of Jesus is situated as the culmination of the final stage, not as a representative of a sacerdotal cult of the priestly community, but of the moral God of the Prophets who requires 'clean hands and a contrite heart'. Appasamy identifies Amos 5.22-24 as a key text illustrating this evolutionary development:

> Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream".

It is this mature prophetic emphasis, what he calls 'individual and social righteousness', that he believes will prove to be Christianity's biggest challenge as well as blessing to

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[134] I will return to Wagner's discussion on the three layers of Appasamy's pneumatology in the next chapter. What is important here is that Wagner has understood the deepest layer to be an 'Idealist concept of Spirit' ('ein idealistisher Geistbegriff')' and not the Johannine Logos. Ibid. 62.

[135] Probably the clearest example of this is in Richard Brook's contribution to the *Foundations* volume, entitled "The Bible". See especially his argument at 39-40 in Richard Brook, "The Bible," in *Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought*, ed. Burnett Hillman Streeter (London: Macmillan, 1913). 39-40.

India.[136]

In the very context of discussion on the development in the Scriptures, Appasamy has given us another clue as to what his sources are: "I have been reading again Bishop Gore's Gifford Lectures bearing the title, *The Philosophy of the Good Life".*[137] Several decades before Brook and Streeter had done so in the *Foundations* volume, Gore had been working on the idea that "[t]he history of humanity has in fact been a development…"[138] and that this is reflected in the Scriptures.[139] Like Streeter, Gore too had had to respond to the immediacy of textual and historical criticism. Only he did so by relying, as he often did, on the Fathers for the strength of his position. And so, rather than pointing to an evolutionary schema, his own position can be traced back to an Irenaean sort of pedagogical reading of the Scriptures as indeed to the Old Testament in particular. In *Lux Mundi,* for example, after he has invoked Irenaeus' doctrine of Recapitulation, Gore makes reference to the Patristic notion of the 'educative Word', the schoolmaster who leads children from infancy to maturity. Citing Gregory of Nazianzus he states:

> Thus the first law, while it abolished their idols, tolerated their sacrifices; the second, while it abolished their sacrifices, allowed them to be circumcised: then when once they had accepted the removal of what was taken from them, they went further and gave up what had been conceded to them.[140]

As in nature, so in the scriptures:

> I ask rather, how should it not be so, when we have regard to the plain teaching of the fact of growth in all things, fruits of the earth or acquirements of man?

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[136] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church*, 106.
[137] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 75. Gore's *Philosophy,* which according to Ramsey is 'a classic exposition of the Anglican appeal to Scripture, tradition and reason', would be a good text to read in counterpoint to Appasamy's *pramanic* proposal. This would be beyond the scope of this present study, so I have opted not to explore this connection any further.
[138] Gore, *Lux Mundi : A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 232-233.
[139] There is not a little irony in the fact that Gore, the 'liberal' of a previous generation of *Lux Mundi* scholars, had by the 1910's and 20's found himself considerably at odds with Streeter's and the *Foundations* authors' brand of 'Modernism'.
[140] For his full discussion on this see Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 239-241.

> Look at man's own nature; the food, the occupations which suit his infancy, are repulsive to his manhood.[141]

Perhaps herein also lies some of the vehemence behind Appasamy's views on idolatry, as shall be explored in the final chapter; it is not so much a polemic against the Hindu traditions, but rather that all idolatry in Gregory's language is 'repulsive to his manhood'. It belongs to a lower level of human development. Once again, we see that there is nothing that Appasamy has said here about the biblical text that has not recently been said in Anglican scholarship,[142] and indeed, in this case, first said in some incipient form by the Fathers.[143] Not only is Appasamy being true to his devotional tradition, he is now starting to explicitly appeal to it.

If this is, in fact, his source, as I am suggesting that it is, then related to this are the implications of a kenotic view of the Incarnation that can be also traced back to Gore. He has no problem with saying that the biblical authors were limited to the scientific and geographic knowledge of their day. To my knowledge, however, he does not go so far as to say the same of Christ. He comes close in his discussion on the John 14.28's 'the Father is greater than I', that "the Incarnation does not exhaust all the wonderful love and truth and beauty in God. In the nature of God there are infinite riches which are still beyond the grasp of man". He follows this with a rare connection to St. Paul in his affirmation of the high Christological statements of Colossians 1.9 and 2.9 that in Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily'. He then adds to this the much more Philippians 2 understanding that:

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[141] Ibid. 241.

[142] Evidently an enduring line of reasoning in Anglican scholarship, Keith Ward has said something very similar in his *Religion and Creation*: "Such reflection is founded on a cumulative tradition of historically contextualized experience of the Divine. It begins from a basis of tribal shamanistic experiences and goes on to develop the idea of one universal spiritual presence, willing justice and mercy." Keith Ward, *Religion and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). 35

[143] Ramsey points out that although many Anglican scholars of less liberal leanings have suspected here something 'smelling of the immanentism in some contemporary thought', as Gore illustrates "it was no less a principle as old as the Greek Fathers". Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 3.

> ...the last word 'bodily' is of great significance...in Christ there were physical limitations. His was an ordinary human body, one subject to weariness and hunger and thirst. There were many things in God which could not be expressed through this limited human body. Yes, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ but it dwelt under the limitations of the human flesh.[144]

This clearly begins to get into Gore's territory, although again, to my knowledge, he does not go so far as to say, as Gore would, that *kenosis* means that "[Christ] advances in knowledge, He asks questions as needing to know the answer, He shews ignorance..." [145] But neither, in my view, would Appasamy be particularly opposed to the notion of Christ's divine self-limitation in relation to age-specific scientific knowledge. We do find one particular passage in which Appasamy acknowledges that, "the incarnate Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man… It is quite scriptural to maintain this development in the consciousness of Jesus… This brings Him very close to us".[146]

In answer then to Wagner, it seems clear to me that it is once again to Appasamy's Anglican tradition that he is most beholden, not to Idealist philosophy. There may yet be something to what he is claiming however. Ramsey notes that there was indeed a Hegelian strain of the doctrine of divine self-limitation following Dörner, in which "the Incarnation was a gradual process whereby the Deity was restrained and the Humanity grew in the one Christ". In view of Gore's reliance on the Fathers for his explanation, as in Irenaeus, Cyril of Alexandria[147] and Gregory of Nyssa,[148] however, I am very much in agreement with Ramsey in saying that: "[t]o the continental doctrines of kenosis it would seem that Gore owed very little. Indeed, it is probable that his own

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[144] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 50.
[145] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 31.
[146] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 74.
[147] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 31.
[148] Ibid. 35.

thought on the subject developed quite independently of them".[149] Uniquely Anglican kenotic theology in the tradition of Gore and later Weston was dependent primarily on both text and tradition for its development, and as Ramsey notes, there must have been "something in the Anglican climate which created for [the kenotic doctrine] this prominence; the propensity both for patristic orthodoxy and for Gospel criticism, the emphasis upon the Incarnation even more than upon the Cross as the primary scene of redemptive love".[150] Much of this, as we have seen, is already also in place in Appasamy.

Why then should Appasamy's critics be so unsettled at this particular point of his reasoning? It should go without saying here that such a view flies in the face of the more conservative 'inerrancy' claims of his contemporary co-religionists, for which contemporary historical and literary criticism was seen as scourge rather than blessing. Appasamy's very Anglican approach to the Scriptures, it would seem, has freed him up considerably in the reading of his texts. But how much more so in the production of his theology? If not even the scriptures are inerrant and 'dictated', he reasons, then certainly no system of theology could ever arrogate itself to having been handed down 'perfect and complete'. The progressive revelation of the scriptures must therefore also, of necessity, function as an 'educative process' within the communities that have produced the texts. Theology is never foreclosed upon. It is always 'faith seeking understanding', a present continuous gerundive.[151] Bearing this in mind, says Appasamy, will provide a safeguard against three hermeneutical dangers that he sees in

[149] Ibid. 33.
[150] Ibid. 36.
[151] In his later work he attributes this work more consistently to the present agency of the Holy Spirit. And yet it must be said that even in that later configuration it is not strictly pneumatological, because the Spirit is the 'Spirit of Christ' and the revealer of Christ to the Church so that she can continue the 'works of Christ' in each subsequent place and age. I will argue in the next chapter that, rather than being a conflation of terms as some of his critics read it, this should probably more accurately be described as Appasamy's version of that very twentieth century notion of a 'Spirit Christology'

contemporary biblical exegesis. The first is a deadening casuistry in which the reader forgets the "spirit in the letter".[152] The second is a literalism that expects contemporary challenges to fit within "ready-made moulds" rather than heeding the much higher call to "follow Him through unknown paths into new realms of understanding and practice".[153] And finally, there is the danger of "pride in revelation already possessed", all but blinding us to the truth in other religious traditions. His view of the biblical text can thus be described as being both grounded as well as open. It is grounded on the historic Incarnation of God in Christ. And yet it is open to the possibility of this revelation newly articulated.

3.2.2 Personal, Impersonal and Semi-Personal attributes in John

Like Rāmānuja's *kalyanaguṇas* ('auspicious qualities'),[154] Appasamy has argued for the eternal divine personhood of God, a deity who possesses eternal and not contingent attributes.[155] He is saying two things; that there are qualities and attributes that are unique to God, and that God is always personal, the 'Supreme Person'. It is undoubtedly a *saguṇa* ('with attributes') vision of God, not a *nirguṇa* ('without attributes') one. It is surprising, and perhaps somewhat misleading, then, that he attempts to outline what he calls the 'personal and impersonal aspects of God' in the gospel of John. I am in agreement with Boyd on this point who says: "[h]is exegesis here appears to be somewhat forced",[156] for it becomes readily apparent that he means something markedly different by this than either Śaṅkara or Rāmānuja would have understood.

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[152] Ibid. 171
[153] Ibid. 171-172.
[154] Generally six in number, the *sadgunas*, which according to Carman "are often mentioned in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* to define the nature of *Bhagavān* and which play an important role in the doctrine of the *Vyūhas* in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. These six are *Jñāna, bala, aisvarya, sakti, virya* and *tejas".* John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*, Yale Publications in Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). 92.
[155] To my knowledge he does not ever mention Rāmānuja's *svarūpa* ('essential nature') or *svabhāva* ('inherent nature').
[156] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 304.

There are two categories of divine epithets, he says, that run throughout John's Gospel. There are those that give "a clear and vivid picture of the man called Jesus", personal and relational titles such as 'Son', 'Messiah', 'Lord'.[157] Less frequent, he finds, are those references to God described more as impersonal and material analogy, titles such as 'the Door' and 'the Vine'.[158] This is something unique to John, he says, for "[i]t is only in the Fourth Gospel that this way of describing Christ in material images occurs".

The Logos, he says, stands somewhere between the personal and impersonal, as 'semi-personal' along with words such as 'Light' and 'Life'. This is not, he says, to make, anachronistically, the Nicene claim that Christ is 'very God of very God', and therefore not *merely* a man. Nor is it, he says, just an appropriation of 'current philosophical vocabulary'.[159] John wants, rather, to communicate something about Christ as being the source of all things. What he means by this is that the gospel "speaks of Christ not merely as He who gives the Light but as the Light, not merely as He who imparts Truth but as the Truth, not only as He who gives Life but as the Life".[160] But he also wants equally to assert that he is fully a man. John starts with the historical person, says Appasamy, and has come to know him as 'Lord and Saviour'. "It is evident that with the other Evangelists he thinks of the historic Jesus as living for ever", but not as a 'mere projection into eternity'. "According to the Johannine writer, the Living Christ is not a permanent extension into eternity of the historic Jesus... The idea in the Fourth Gospel of the Eternal Christ is [that]... He is the one who exists from eternity to eternity, the Creator of the worlds, the Life of men".[161] Similar to Arjuna's deepening vision of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā, from the charioteer of the first chapter to the

[157] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 98.
[158] Ibid. 98-99.
[159] Ibid. 100.
[160] Ibid. 100.
[161] Ibid. 102.

cosmic *Puruṣottama* (‘supreme person’) of chapter eleven, John’s vision of Jesus also reflects the early church’s theological trajectory in understanding the man Christ Jesus to be none other than the ‘Creator of the worlds’, not just radiant and effulgent, but the very source of Light itself.

What is the difference, Appasamy asks, between saying that “God is a loving Being and God is Love”? God is not simply an abstract quality called ‘love’. He is, to Appasamy, a personal being, the Supreme Person, “who is actually guiding and ruling men with love”. But Love is his essential *guṇa* (‘attribute’). For explanation, once again, we are pointed back to Rāmānuja. His reference this time is to *Śrībhāṣya* 2.3.29, in which Rāmānuja is commenting on Badārayāna’s Sūtra: “A thing is called by the name of a quality when its essence is that quality”. As Appasamy explains it:

> A garment, for instance, is called white when whiteness is its characteristic feature. Sesamum seed is called oil as it is full of oil. In the same way Brahman is called Knowledge and Bliss, as Knowledge and Bliss are His essential qualities”.[162]

It is not quite clear what he is saying here as far as Rāmānuja is concerned. If I understand it correctly, one of Rāmānuja’s central themes is in defining the relationship between the ‘Essential Self’ and the ‘Contingent Self’ (Lipner’s distinctions). In the *maha siddhanta* of his commentary, *Śrībhāṣya* 1.1.1, the Ācārya makes the distinction *and* connection between the self-luminous light of the substrate “not as dependent on anything else”, and the contingent self in the *ātman* as a lamp, “which is verily of the form of consciousness, has consciousness [also] for its quality”. The paradox here, says Lipner, is that “consciousness is the ‘form’ of the *ātman* as well as its quality”.[163]

This is not quite what Appasamy is trying to say however. He began by saying that God is not “merely a mass of abstract love but he is a Being who is actually

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[162] Ibid. 104.
[163] Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*. 50.

guiding and ruling men with love".[164] At the same time, however, he wants to make it clear that Jesus is not merely another *jivā,* the contingent self in embodied form. "He is the one who exists from eternity to eternity, the Creator of the worlds, the life of men". We find the essential attributes of God fully and completely present in Christ because they are themselves sourced in Christ:

> Christ is the picture of God. To see God, we must see Christ. God is infinite in glory and power and His nature cannot be understood or described by man. But He wills to make Himself known to us and is born on this earth as a human being.[165]

But Christ also demonstrates contingently that he is a 'loving being'. Citing John 1.18, 5.37, and 6.46 he concludes: "We find many other passages in the Gospel of St. John setting forth the fact that God in and by Himself cannot be seen, but that through Christ we can understand and know Him". And yet he is also clear that there is much more to be known of God than what can be seen in Christ. The Incarnation is the fullest revelation of the eternal Godhead available to humanity, but there is yet more, which is what he understands Jesus to be saying in his statement that 'The Father is greater than I'.[166]

3.2.3 Divine initiative and human response

The revelation thus far, from 'immanence' to 'Incarnation', is the one continuous act of the same divine initiative. He is clear that raw humanity is unable to draw itself towards God. "We do not endeavour with our unaided effort to attain Him, but he floods our path with light and leads us on to Himself".[167] It is God who first calls the *bhakta* and 'implants in us deep and strong longings for Himself'. Through the example and teaching of Christ, the 'Light in Jesus' "shows men clearly and without

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[164] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 104.
[165] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 48-49.
[166] Ibid. 50.
[167] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 50.

any possibility of error the path along which they should walk".[168] On the other hand, he is also clear that this is no monergistic universe in which the singular will of God arbitrarily chooses some and not others.[169] For indeed another aspect of that divine initiative is the "inherent God-given capacity in all men to respond to the Divine Will working within them". His reasoning is simple: "If God is love, He cannot well awaken in some the longing for Himself and leave others in the darkness of their own desires".[170] So the Bishop is evidently no Calvinist, but clearly sits more comfortably in a more Wesleyan understanding of a 'prevenient grace'. It is God who always takes the initiative, and the Incarnation is this supremely, but *bhakti* is the necessary and only appropriate human response. "Bhakti arises when man, who is not God, but in whom God dwells, seeks with eager love to attain a full experience of that God".[171]

Another aspect of the Incarnation that Appasamy finds significant, especially in the Indian context, is the exaltation of all flesh in the fact of Christ's en-fleshment. The Hindu *bhaktas,* he says, are frequently singing with reference to 'the degrading power of the flesh'.[172] And not just the Indian sages, there is evidence in the Johannine text itself, and here he includes the first epistle, that at the time of John's writing there were many "who taught that matter was evil and believed that Jesus did not really have a human body".[173] Be they 'Gnostics' or 'Docetists', however anachronistic the terms may be, evidently such belief "was already within the Church". The Incarnation not only illumines the whole 'process of human life and history', but it also reveals that, because Jesus was 'no phantom' but fully flesh and blood, of the same flesh and blood

[168] Ibid. 56.
[169] Ibid. 52.
[170] Ibid. 52.
[171] Ibid. 49.
[172] Ibid. 137.
[173] Ibid. 138.

of the rest of humanity,[174] "[t]he body of man is no base thing to be despised. If it has been the medium for revealing the Divine, its capacities are indeed of an infinitely high order".[175] John, he says, has no sharp dichotomy between flesh and spirit. Rather, "[l]ife to him is all one. It is we who are in the habit of marking off physical from spiritual life. But he regards them as cohering in a larger unity".[176] His argument thus, goes something like this: Because the Logos is present and immanent within the universe, Jesus as Logos incarnate is the fulfilment of what all of Creation already knows, albeit partially and imperfectly. Now that the Logos has become incarnate He elevates humanity itself, even the body as fleshly instrument, in order that a new sort of humanity can walk in the fullness of relationship with God, eternal life, *bhakti.* As shall become evident in the next chapter, it is this very reasoning that provides the foundation for his doctrine of the Eucharist.

3.2.4 The Johannine *Mahāvākyas*

The man Jesus is, significantly to him, both the object of *bhakti* as well as the model *bhakta,* the pattern. Appasamy is keen to establish that 'oneness' in John does not mean 'identity', and here we return to the reasoning behind his less successful earlier exegesis of 1.12-13. Nature and history, he says, verify that God is always supreme and greater than man. To do so he borrows another important concept from the Hindu texts, the Upaniṣadic notion of *mahāvākyas* ('great saying') that are "held to reveal the unity of the Self (*ātman*) and Ultimate Reality (*Brahman*)". Usually five of

[174] There is no special flesh for the divine Incarnation as one finds in certain of the Hindu traditions. As for example, Clooney points out: "Siva does not have an ordinary body, vulnerable to weaknesses and suffering, but rather a special, auspicious body, which actually enhances his glory". In the same context Clooney says of the Vaishnava *avtaras* "… the Vaiṣṇava theologians argue that while karma – bad and good deeds from a previous life – normally necessitates embodiment and determines the nature of one's embodiment in the world, karma does not govern Nārāyaṇa's freely chosen divine descents", and therefore that Rāmānuja's position is that "No ordinary or impure matter is present in the body of a divine descent, but its material is nonetheless real matter". Francis Xavier Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God : How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions* (New York Oxford University Press, 2001). 102-115.
[175] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 139.
[176] Ibid. 140.

these are offered:[177] *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.3: *prajñānam brahma* (‘wisdom/knowledge is Brahman’), *Mandukya Upaniṣad* 1.2: *ayam ātmā brahma* (‘the Self is Brahman’), *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.8.7: *tat tvam asi* (‘you are that’) and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 1.4.10: *aham brahmāsmi* (‘I am Brahman’) and *sarvam khalvidam brahma* (‘all this indeed is Brahman’). The explanation and harmonization of these ‘great sayings’, embedded as they are in Upaniṣadic philosophy and theology, is the task set before the *Vedāntic* commentator. Rāmānuja’s *Viśiṣṭādvaita* claims to be able to do so while holding in tension both the duality (the ‘I’, ‘you’ and ‘that’ distinctions) and the ultimacy of all four statements. Śaṅkara’s *advaita* must collapse any seeming dualities within these into the One, Brahman who is all, with the creation of two groupings of Upaniṣadic statements, an absolute one and a contingent one.

Appasamy has made the very interesting move of proposing, since John is ‘the *bhakta’s* gospel’, the identification of what he calls the ‘Johannine *mahāvākyas’.* Just as with the Upaniṣadic *mahāvākyas,* so too, must the Johannine commentator hold some important passages from the Gospel in creative tension as well. Two in particular he begins with: John 10.30’s ‘I and the Father are one‘ and John 14.28’s ‘the Father is greater than I’.[178] Appasamy notes that a number of Hindu commentators have read the first of these two statements in an *advaitin* sense. Fellow Oxford scholar, Radhakrishnan, for example, he quotes as saying:

> The incarnation of God in Jesus... is essentially one with the indwelling of God in the other saints of the world. The Divine relationship revealed by Him is potentially present in all of us... the history of Hinduism gives several instances

[177] John Bowker, *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). 602.

[178] Duraisingh and Hargreaves claim that, “Bishop Appasamy has often reminded us that the words ‘Abide in me’ in John chapter 15 are the ‘mahāvākya’ for Christian spirituality”. The Bishop has often referred to the ‘abide in me’ passage for description of his vision for Christian *bhakti*, but to my knowledge he does not refer to it as one of his *mahāvākyas.* Duraisingh and Hargreaves, *India's Search for Reality and the Relevance of the Gospel of John: Papers from a Conference Held in Pune in February 1974*. 1.

> of souls who were saved, who had the experience of the oneness of 'I and my Father'.[179]

This, Appasamy says, is precisely why the Indian *Christian* commentator on John cannot rush to Nicene assumptions about this verse. The neo-Vedantin will just as automatically assume his own *a prioris,* with Jesus saying more or less the same thing as Śaṅkara![180] But Appasamy is clear, John 10.30 is decisively *not* the *aham brahmāsmi* as Radhakrishnan supposes. "In a country like India... such a conclusion is indeed likely to be drawn even if there be little basis for it".[181] And so, the Bishop proposes, John 10.30 must be read alongside of the other *mahāvākya* at John 14.28, 'The Father is greater than I'. This abiding conviction no less than 'I and the Father are one' was a 'belief held every moment' in the life of Jesus. Mathew Vekathanam has found here in Appasamy, as in another of Appasamy's mentors, Keshub Chunder Sen, some undertones of subordinationism.[182] While there is perhaps some truth to this, in my view Appasamy's intention here is not to put Jesus in the place of a *deuteros theos,* to borrow Philo's[183] phrase, but rather to present Jesus as the model *bhakta*[184] patterned after the Son's "complete dependence upon the Father... an instrument in the hands of God".[185] Such a statement, he says, is also to be coupled with John 5.19-23's 'the Son can do nothing of himself', illustrating not only the Son's unique relationship with the Father, but once again the Son as 'model *bhakta'.* Against Radhakrishnan's intuition, Appasamy says "[t]he conscience of man ever tells him that the Divine is greater than

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[179] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 48.
[180] In a later context he also mentions that, "Many Hindus believe that this is an example of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, that identifies the advaitin with Brahman. Rather the Christian Samadhi always maintains a form of Sivakalpa Samadhi". See Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 35.
[181] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 50.
[182] Mathew Vekathanam, *Indian Christology: Perspectives and Challenges*, 1st rev. Indian ed. (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corp., 2004). 374.
[183] Specifically it is the Logos who is the 'second god' in *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 2.62.
[184] Immanuel claims that, "Dr. Appasamy himself treats our Master not as the model of *Bhakti*, but as the object or aim". In my view, however, it seems as though Appasamy is presenting Jesus as being both. Rajappan D. Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians* (Jabalpur: Leonard Theological College, 1950). 162.
[185] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 50.

the human".[186] Distinction within the Godhead, as between *bhakta* and Deity is always to be maintained. He notes that some have suggested a Gnostic sort of reading here that, "Jesus was living on two levels, one a level of unity and the other a level of dependence".[187] And this would certainly be akin to Śaṅkara's distinction between 'ultimate' and 'contingent' truths, a distinction, says Appasamy, that is 'entirely at variance' with the whole of the Johannine account. The Bishop has no time for the suggestion of an 'esoteric' set of teachings: "This distinction between the two kinds of teaching given by Jesus has absolutely no ground in the Gospels".[188]

The simplest way to harmonize these two *mahāvākyas*, he says, is to understand the 'oneness' of 10.30 as being primarily that of a moral union. Although Father and Son are intimately related and connected, it should not be assumed that it was impossible "for Jesus to do anything but the Father's will. We are sometimes apt to imagine that Jesus always carried out the Father's will without experiencing in the least any desire to do otherwise".[189] But this would mean no Gethsemane,[190] or in Johannine language, none of the anguish of John 12.27-28: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." It is strange then that, despite clear statements to the contrary, Vekathanam finds here in Appasamy a "monothelitism in a semi-Arian sense".[191] Boyd, more perceptively,[192] has found in Appasamy's view of the submitted will of Christ something similar to what J.A.T. Robinson would later say in *Honest to*

[186] Ibid. 51.
[187] Ibid. 56.
[188] Ibid. 58.
[189] Ibid. 59.
[190] See his extended discussion on this at Ibid. 61-66.
[191] Vekathanam, *Indian Christology: Perspectives and Challenges*. 377.
[192] Robin H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*. 120-121.

God: "He is perfect man and perfect God... as the embodiment through obedience of "the beyond in our midst", of the transcendence of love".[193]

Some seem to have understood Appasamy's moral exegesis of 10.30 as being a deliberate challenge to the traditional *homoousios* formula. Boyd has claimed exactly this[194] with Vekathanam followed suit. The latter will even go so far as to add that "Appasamy admits the eternity of the '*Logos*' with God, even though [he is] inferior to him. Arian tendencies are evident in the Christology of Appasamy".[195] Sugirtharajah,[196] Batumalai[197] and Sumithra[198] have also claimed on the basis of Appasamy's moral/metaphysical distinction that he is rejecting the Chalcedonian dual nature formula outright. In my view he has no such polemic in mind. Appasamy is clear that the ontological and metaphysical uniqueness of Christ as well as his unique relationship to the Father can be established elsewhere, most notably in the 'only begotten'[199] language in the Prologue.[200] *Monogenēs* is not about being the 'first of many', but rather 'one of a kind'. Taking Appasamy at his word then, I would propose that he does not intend to overturn hundreds of years of Christian theological development with his *mahāvākyas.*[201] His point is simply that the Indian Christian commentator should not be

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[193] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 293.
[194] Ibid. 291-292.
[195] Vekathanam, *Indian Christology: Perspectives and Challenges*. 372.
[196] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations*, Biblical Seminar (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). 13.
[197] S. Batumalai, *An Introduction to Asian Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991). 260.
[198] "It is necessary to start with Appasamy's rejection of the Chalcedonian formula – namely that Christ is fully God and metaphysically one with the Father. Usually the two great sayings or *mahāvākyas* from John's Gospel…" Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*. 107.
[199] Philip Thomas has rightly summarized Appasamy's argument as being "that the nature of our relationship with God is similar to the nature of Jesus' relationship with the Father. Does it mean that Jesus was like every other human being? Appasamy does not think so. He believes that Jesus is the only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, who sees what the Father does and who declared it to the entire world."Philip Benjamin Thomas, "Christian Theology and Hindu Philosophy" (Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000). 299.
[200] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 67.
[201] In view of this and several passages that have already been cited it is unclear as to how Vekathanam can make the bald statement that "For [Appasamy] Jesus Christ cannot be equal to God, not because he is just a man, whose will is in full conformity with that of God, but because he is the incarnation of the 'Logos', who although from all eternity coexists with God, is inferior to him, so much so that the identity

so quick to read dogmatic theology or creedal language back into the text, for in the Indian context he may find himself unwittingly supporting a Radhakrishnan sort of interpretation.

The common assumption behind the varied opinions of Appasamy's critics is that, because he has not clearly enunciated a more familiar Nicene or Chalcedonian sounding formulation, he must therefore be rejecting or challenging it. I would argue that he is rather in good company with Gore who identified the exegetical difference between the Patristic authors and the Scholastics. Of the former Gore says, "[t]o Irenaeus, to Origen, to Athanasius, the New Testament is the real pasture-ground of the soul". Of the latter, "[t]he dogmas are used as premises of thought. The truth about Christ's person is formed deductively and logically from its dogmas".[202] Appasamy's Johannine *mahāvākyas* and his original and intuitive exegesis of them is evidence of the former, a Patristic sort of boldness in trying to figure out what the text actually means.

3.2.5 Appasamy's views on the Cross and the Atonement

Perhaps no doctrine of Appasamy's is more misunderstood or misrepresented than his doctrine of the Cross. The Gurukul reverends declare that: "... there is no *Atonement* or *Redemption* in this theology. There is no need for any… Man can help himself, by his own resolution, prayer and meditation, in his striving towards 'the goal of religion', the maximum of Divine indwelling. There is no history of Divine redemptive facts in Dr Appasamy's theology".[203] Similarly Oosthuizen declares baldly and, as usual, without any textual backing that "Atonement and redemption have no place in [Appasamy's] theology as there is no need for it. Starting with mysticism and

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between God the Father and the Son is not one of nature but one of the will resulting from his obedience and submission to God". Vekathanam, *Indian Christology: Perspectives and Challenges*. 377.

[202] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 22.

[203] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*. 22.

bringing it to its logical consequences, he must conclude without an Incarnation and without a Cross".[204] Nicholls has followed suit stating that Appasamy's 'unsatisfactory' Christian application of "*Bhakti* has no real place for grace and the forgiveness of sin, while *karma* rejects the possibility of substitutionary atonement",[205] and in a later context that "Appasamy gave little place to the biblical understanding of sin and the cross as an atonement for sin".[206] Kirsteen Kim claims that because Appasamy focused on the *bhakta's*'loving relationship with Christ' he "paid little attention to the cross".[207] As even the wording begins to sound familiar, one begins to get the sense that the secondary sources are in desperate need of some new material to work from. Even, it must be noted, the usually much more careful scholarship of Appasamy apologist, Robin Boyd, succumbs to a similar flattening out of the Bishop's atonement theology. As Boyd says in his thesis, according to Appasamy, *Mokṣa* "is to be thought of as the state of union with God in Christ, and as a result little stress need be laid on traditional theories of atonement".[208] In the book that his thesis became, Boyd claims that there is "no hint of an effective 'transaction'" in Appasamy's 'moral influence' theory. "The Cross is a 'manifestation' of God's love which wins our love in return".[209] Boyd finds two poles in Appasamy's atonement doctrine; the first, 'the moral effect', and the second, 'the self-identification of the *bhakta* with Christ's suffering'. I would say, in response to Boyd, first, that neither of these, technically, is an atonement theory. They are 'subjective' descriptions of the effects of the Cross after 'it is finished', as opposed

[204] Oosthuizen, "Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa". 36.
[205] Bong Rin Ro and Mark Albrecht, *The Bible & Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1984). 195.
[206] Ibid. 250.
[207] Kim, "India." 62.
[208] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 289.
[209] Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*. 133.

to an 'objective'[210] consideration of what exactly Christ has finished in his "*tetelestai"* declaration. And second, there is more to Appasamy's view of the Cross than these 'two poles' which he describes. To put it in Aulen's terms, Appasamy is not nearly so 'Abelardian' as he is made out to be.

Only Vekathanam and Sumithra seem to have broken free of this. The former, although he does not deny that there may be some aspect of substitution involved in Appasamy's view of the atonement, wants to emphasize rather that, "the Cross has also a deep anthropological significance. It is a sign raised in the midst of the nations, a sign of man's inhumanity to man. It is a warning that God is not indifferent towards human injustice, which is a radical violation of God's creation".[211] The latter, although he is critical of what he sees as Appasamy's 'moral influence' model of atonement, has at least found "indications that later Appasamy seems to have seen the inadequacy of this interpretation of the cross and has tended to accept the penal substitutionary theory, at least in certain aspects".[212] But is even this more generous position true? Was it only later on in his career that Appasamy acknowledges anything substitutionary in the atonement? If so, can the substitutionary view that he allegedly arrives at really be identified as 'penal'? Is 'moral influence' really the best way to describe Appasamy's atonement theology? I would suggest that the answer to all of these questions is 'no'.

There is no denying that 'moral influence' does indeed play a significant role in his atonement theology, as Boyd and others have adequately pointed out.[213] But to suppose that this is all there is to Appasamy's view of the cross is, in my view, a fairly serious misrepresentation of what the Bishop is trying to say. In his earliest writing on the subject, for example, in *Bhakti Marga,* Appasamy makes statements that seem to

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[210] Gustaf Aulen's distinctions in Gustaf Aulen and A. G. Hebert, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1965). 2-3.
[211] Vekathanam, *Indian Christology: Perspectives and Challenges*. 535.
[212] Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*. 111.
[213] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 313.

lean more towards a *Christus Victor* model, a view, I would add, that he seems to be getting mainly from the text itself. We are told, for example, in reference to Jesus' declaration at John 12.31 (and later repeated in 16.11) 'now shall the prince of this world be cast out', that in the lifted up Son of Man: "... there is a certain solidarity in the way in which the death of Christ operates against the sins of the world. It is not merely a sin here and a sin there that is cast out but the entire power of evil".[214] To be sure, this is set in the context of what he describes as "an internal judgement, a greatly modified law of karma, which inevitably brings about certain consequences", but the point surely is that it is still the cross that is the necessary power for redemption: "He who beholds the uplifted Christ and allows himself to be drawn into Him has thereby set out on the path which will lead him away from wrong doing and sin".

Appasamy's views here must also be understood in the context of his citations of other Johannine texts concerning the atonement. In particular he cites the first Johannine epistle 1.5-9, 'the blood of Jesus his son cleanseth us from all sin' and John the Baptist's declaration at John 1.29: 'Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'.[215] This is followed again from the first epistle, 1 John 2.1-2, with Christ as advocate with the Father 'Jesus Christ the righteous... propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world'.[216] While it is true that he does not develop these, it must also be pointed out that neither does he deny or downplay them. Boyd points to a passage in *Gospel* in which Appasamy will say quite clearly that "the suffering of Jesus... shows us what suffering there had to be in God on account of sin... The Cross is the revelation of the tremendous cost which God has to pay for the redemption of man". In Boyd's view this is perhaps the closest Appasamy comes to

[214] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 122-123.
[215] Ibid. 124-125.
[216] Ibid. 126.

anything that sounds like 'penal substitution',[217] although it comes couched in his own idiosyncratic use of the word *karma:* "That evil karma produces suffering has been demonstrated beyond all doubt on the mount of Calvary, where Christ was crucified; the evil karma of men led to his untold suffering".[218] In this sense, I would add that he is actually saying something quite strongly substitutionary within the karmic idiom. In its original Indian setting *karma* is anything but transferable. Almost unanimously across the Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina traditions, karmic consequences belong inexorably to the *ātman* or aggregate of *skandhas* that has incurred them, whether in this or in previous births. Appasamy, on the other hand, is saying quite clearly to the contrary that all the 'evil karma' (Appasamy's short hand for 'sin') of humanity has been laid upon Christ crucified, a radical departure from the classical use of the term. How is this substantially any different than what St. Paul is saying in the classic substitutionary formula at 2 Corinthians 5.21? "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God".

He is not unaware of what his own tradition teaches on substitution, and his regular recitation of scriptural passages in his duties as an Anglican priest would have brought these and other texts to his constant remembrance. But it is true that he does not focus on the Atonement. Turning once again to his Anglican devotional tradition, a significantly diminished Atonement theology was certainly a trend among certain sectors of Anglican scholarship. *Lux Mundi* scholar J.R. Illingworth, for example, according to Ramsey, was so "bent upon the recovery of the Incarnation as the central principle in theology" that "he wrote in depreciation of those who gave centrality to the

[217] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 319.
[218] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. For his full discussion on this see his chapter entitled "The teaching of Jesus on sin". Particularly concerning *karma*, 97-99.

Atonement".[219] Gore too has distanced himself from what he calls 'old-fashioned Evangelicalism' that "dealt almost exclusively with the doctrine of atonement and the vicarious aspects of Christianity".[220] But this is not what Appasamy is doing. In my view, Appasamy understands and accepts some aspect of substitutionary exchange, even if in the Indian context he wants to emphasize more both the victory of Christ over the 'prince of this world' and the cross as the love of God revealed. It is, quite simply, a misreading to take from his particular set of emphases the assumption that, because he has not explained the Cross as more conservative quarters might have wanted him to, he rejects a sacrificial exchange. We further read in one of his papers:

> We are all sinful creatures... fellowship with God cannot be realized unless the barrier of sin is removed and we are reconciled to Him. The supreme meaning of the Cross is that, Christ has suffered on our behalf, and has borne our sins so that we may live in Communion with God.[221]

What about this does not sound like an exchange or substitution? It may not be as 'penal' sounding as his Evangelical counterparts may wish, but in this he is, once again, very much in line with his Anglican mentors. Gore, for example, is of the view that "it is proper to speak of *vicarious sacrifice* but unwarranted to speak of *vicarious punishment".* Ramsey says of Gore that, although he was very emphatic about a sacrificial exchange, he "could find no place either for penal substitution or for the idea of Christ as the perfect penitent [Moberley's view]: neither conception seemed to him to accord with Scripture or with reason".[222]

Philip Thomas, in his doctoral thesis, has made the useful observation that perhaps Appasamy "is not able to emphasize enough the vicarious nature of Christ's

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[219] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 4.
[220] Gore, *The Mission of the Church: Four Lectures Delivered in June, 1892, in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph*. 107.
[221] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*.
[222] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 50.

suffering because he limited himself to the Johannine literature".[223] Although he does not take the question any further in his thesis, Thomas has put his finger on something here. Perhaps Appasamy has not sounded substitutionary enough for his detractors for the simple reason that he has very deliberately declared himself to be Johannine. For when we turn to consider what he actually does say on the matter, as opposed to what he does not say, we certainly do find a much more Johannine emphasis than any of his detractors have yet detected. This does not mean that he is unaware of what other New Testament writers are saying. In *Gospel,* for instance, Appasamy notes that the Synoptic writers have made use of Second Isaiah's 'servant songs', and further the very important connection between the 'servant' as Israel and the 'suffering servant' whom Christians call Christ. In doing so he is anticipating the sort of emphasis we find in later 'third quest' scholars such as N.T. Wright who emphasize that Christ is not simply 'God incarnate'. He is almost as importantly in a prophetic sense 'Israel incarnate' as well.[224] Christ sums up all that the nation of Israel was supposed to be. "Isaiah had a new revelation given to him. He saw that the purpose of the suffering was redemptive. Israel did not suffer as a penalty for its sins. Israel did not suffer because God wanted to purify it through affliction. But Israel suffered so that it might save the world".[225] Reading these "poems of the servant of the Lord", Appasamy goes on to say, "Five centuries after Isaiah, Jesus realized that He was the Suffering Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah had spoken".[226] So Appasamy is not ignorant of other New Testament explanations, and neither of the root Prophetic texts that formed the early Christian

[223] Thomas, "Christian Theology and Hindu Philosophy". 287. I would only add that vicarious atonement, although not as explicitly developed in John as, for example, in Paul's epistles, is there, nonetheless, in the Fourth Gospel, but it is embedded in the author's use of both Isaiah and Zechariah.
[224] Appasamy probably find this in C.S. Paul, one of his named references, in C.S. Paul, "Interpreting the Cross," in *The God Who Suffers*, ed. C.S. Paul G.V. Job, V. Chakkarai, S. Jesudason (Madras: The C.L.S. Press, 1993). 14-15.
[225] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 223,
[226] Ibid. 224.

kerygma. He is, in fact, on the contrary, quite insightful at this point and even prescient of future scholarship. And although he does not reference him, one cannot help but detect the influence of his Oxford New Testament instructor, C.H. Dodd.

But Appasamy has declared his Christian *bhakti* to be primarily Johannine, and we have to take him seriously on this. As such he is tending to develop a more distinctively Johannine conception of the cross, an important aspect of his thinking that all of the secondary material on him seems to have overlooked, namely, the revelation of God's glory. The teaching of the cross is "the central fact of the Christian life"[227] for in it we see the exaltation of Christ, the 'glory of God revealed'. "[T]he death of Jesus is radiant with hope for mankind" he says, for "[i]n the Fourth Gospel the passion and death of Jesus are regarded as occasions for the revelation of His glory. Even if the Cross had had no results, it would still be His glory; for His death is the sealing of His victory".[228] Here we have an interesting combination of *Christus Victor* and glorification, a combination I might add that is uniquely to be found in John, for it is in the glory of the Son of Man 'lifted up' that the Cross becomes "the means of winning that great multitude of whom the first-fruits were now ready to be gathered in". Appasamy is simply reading his own text for what it is saying. He is not trying to make it sound more Pauline than it does for the simple fact that it is not Pauline. But, just as importantly, he is not reading it alone, as the Enlightenment's 'lonely transcendent ego' meeting the Reformation's *sola scriptura.* He is reading it within his tradition, for here again he appeals to Anglican scholarship, this time in William Temple's *Readings in St. John's Gospel.* Temple has drawn out these very themes - glory, first-fruits and a tinge

[227] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 113.
[228] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 235.

of *Christus Victor*.[229] From the writer of the Prologue's declaration that 'we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth', to the frequent *doxa* references throughout, he is quite right in stating that "in the Fourth Gospel Jesus constantly speaks of the tragic events of His passion as being His glory".[230] As Ramsey says of Temple, so too can we say of Appasamy, that his "thought is intensely Johannine, the glory of Calvary being one with the glory which the Son had with the Father in the unity of the Spirit before the world began".[231] Perhaps we would do well to add to Aulen's three theories of Atonement a fourth - a Johannine glorification theory.

Appasamy finds another important emphasis in John's glorification doctrine, the thematic pairing of suffering and glory. As he has found in Isaiah 'servant songs', so has he found in John an intimate connection between the two.[232] He outlines at length all the many ways that Jesus suffers, from the renunciation of family,[233] the failure of his mission in places like Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, and the reception of bitterness and hatred from religious authorities. But it is most clearly seen, of course, in his anticipation of the cross[234] and in the crucifixion itself.[235] This can all be found in the Synoptics, he admits, but John's account deliberately connects all of this thematically.[236] It is an intimate connection that he finds throughout the Fourth Gospel as, for example, in 7.39, 12.16, 12.23, 13.31-32, 17.1,5,22. Again, none of Appasamy's detractors have picked up on this.

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[229] For Temple's full argument here see, Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel: (First and Second Series)*. 193-197.
[230] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 108-109.
[231] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 148.
[232] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 234.
[233] Ibid. 225.
[234] Ibid. 226-229
[235] Ibid. 231-232.
[236] Ibid. 234.

3.2.6 The God who suffers: Appasamy's views on divine passibility

The revelation of the glory of God through the suffering of Christ leads Appasamy to another age-old Christian question: Can God suffer?[237] The Bishop's answer is that indeed he can, and that it is in Christ that he does. "It is exceedingly difficult for the Hindu religious consciousness to grasp the idea that God suffers with us... This belief runs counter to most Indian thought".[238] The Christian church, on the other hand, has never accepted a docetic view, says Appasamy, of a Christ who only *seems* to suffer. Boyd has rightly noted that Appasamy's view on divine suffering is not passibility 'in any Patripassian sense',[239] in which it is the Father who suffers. Because "God took, as it were, a body, the fleshly organism of Jesus", "God himself suffers in Christ", and it is a "suffering and shame which God endures with the purpose of making clear his love to men".[240] It is not the Father who suffers, but Christ. And yet Christ, as we have already seen, is God the 'only begotten', Creator and Logos 'from eternity to eternity', so of course, back to his 'I and the Father are one', it is never quite so simply demarcated as systematicians might like.

His thinking is certainly in keeping with his desire to extract Greek doctrines such as a divine *apatheia* from the biblical God of the Prophets, but again, the Bishop makes no connections in this regard. Here, notably, he also finds himself fundamentally at odds with Rāmānuja, identifying what he sees as a radical difference between the Incarnation of Jesus of John's Gospel and Rāmānuja's *avatāra:*

> The followers of Rāmānuja understand Ananda to mean the possession of positive calm and peace. God cannot be moved by the change in human lives.

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[237] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 116.
[238] Ibid. 116-117.
[239] As could be said of Temple in *Christus Veritas* according to Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 149.
[240] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 327.

> He cannot be at the mercy of the various tides which flow through men's affairs.[241]

Just as John is true to the prophetic 'suffering servant' of Isaiah so too are Rāmānuja's views consonant with his root Upaniṣadic texts.[242] Representative among these he cites the Viṣṇu focused *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* specifically at 5.11:

> As the sun, the eye of the entire world, is not touched by the external impurities seen by the eyes, so the one immanent Self of all things is not touched by the sorrow of the world, for He is outside it.[243]

While there are references that seem to refer to the suffering of God-men as in the Valmiki Ramayana 2.2.4 in which Rama becomes grieved by the affairs of men, these are, to him, the exceptions that prove the rule represented by Rāmānuja and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.[244] And yet, Appasamy says, suffering is the human condition. Why should not a God who is truly incarnate be made like us in every way?

> In making suffering and sacrifice central Christianity certainly proceeds upon a fundamental experience. If we do not understand this but insist that no Divine Being could have been really crucified, we may bolt the heart's door against the gracious entrance of the crucified Jesus.[245]

His participation with us, and our participation with him, he says, is 'no transcendental experience'. "Participation in the death of Christ does not take the bhakta to the serene heights of philosophy or ecstasy but keeps him in this world with its temptations and trials, its obligations and duties".[246]

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[241] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 117-118.
[242] Lott states that, worse than the unreality of Śaṅkara's universe, Rāmānuja "was even more alarmed by *Bhedabheda's* account of *Brahma-parinama*. To say that *Brahman* at the time of creation engages in a process of self-transformation under the limiting instruments of finitude, is to teach *Brahman's* essential mutability; it is to say that this Perfect Being really suffers all the imperfections of the cosmic process, or at least the miseries of embodied souls. It is like speaking of a Lord divided in Himself, or like Devadatta having 'one hand anointed with sandal-paste and adorned with bracelets and rings, and his other hand hit by a hammer and burning with hell-fire". He is citing van Buitenen.Lott, "God and the Universe in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja: A Study in His Use of the Self-Body Analogy." 30
[243] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 118.
[244] Ibid. 119.
[245] Ibid. 120-121.
[246] Ibid. 122.

Appasamy's views on divine passibility are interesting, and in some ways anticipate later twentieth century theology. Richard Bauckham cites H. M. Relton who, at the tail end of the First World War in 1917, made the prediction that: "There are many indications that the doctrine of the suffering God is going to play a very prominent part in the theology of the age in which we live".[247] Bauckham goes on to state that it was English theology that actually led the way in pioneering this 'major theological development'. Ramsey, too, has identified the doctrine of divine passibility as a distinctly early twentieth century Anglican doctrine. C.F. D'Arcy, Archbishop of Dublin, was among the leading contributors to this with his volume, *God in the Struggle for Existence,* a volume to which Appasamy's supervisor, B.H. Streeter, had also been a contributor.[248] But it was Appasamy's later mentor, William Temple, who, according to Ramsey, had produced "the most prominent teaching on these lines" with his *Christus Veritas.* Yet another connection can be made in this regard to Baron von Hügel, who although not an Anglican, had influenced Anglican scholarship significantly. "[t]he influence was there", says Ramsey, "and not least in the essay on 'Suffering and God' which became well known in Anglican circles". It was an influence, Ramsey suggests, that was due to the fact that "his teaching was congruous with that unity of theology and worship always latent in our tradition".[249] There are three positive matches here to connect Appasamy's views on the suffering of God with his tradition, and yet, strangely, Appasamy cites none of these in his explanation.

Writing in the 1920's and early 1930's, he was certainly ahead of German passibility proponents such as Emil Brunner, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and its later but most

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[247] Richard Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God Can Help': Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9.3, no. April (1984). 6.
[248] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 58.
[249] Ibid. 59.

focused and mature form, Jürgen Moltmann's *The Crucified God*.[250] It seems as though, concurrent with the above cited Anglican scholarship, a trend towards divine passibility was also taking place in 1920's India. The single influence that he references in this regard, in fact, comes from a fellow Indian Christian Theologian, C.S. Paul, whose essay "Interpreting the Cross" contributed to a slim volume entitled *The God Who Suffers,*[251] edited appropriately by an Indian Christian scholar named Job.

According to C.S. Paul the idea of a 'vicarious suffering' is a significant advance over the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu idea that 'suffering is essentially evil'.[252] The true scandal, in fact, the 'only difficulty' "is in seeing God Himself as the chief sufferer in a world of sin. If God is to redeem man to His perfection and joy, the fact of sin must be overcome". Because the cross was 'foolishness' to the 'philosophically minded', C.S. Paul claims that "[t]he early Christian Fathers met this need for a philosophic exposition of the Cross by Helenizing [*sic*] Christianity".[253] Very much like Appasamy, Paul continues, "[t]he nexus that binds God and man... is the moral life. God is the moral archetype and man the prototype who will have to approximate more and more to the archetypal perfection of God".[254] Again, the similarities are striking. In vivid language Paul makes the case that in a world of free-moral agents and the possibility to resist the will of God "the only course open to God is to follow man through all his sinful wanderings, share the suffering and sorrow that men may inflict on Him and appeal to Him throughout as the vicarious sufferer".[255] The 'Cross of Christ' is the 'Cross of God', the realization within nature and Creation of what is the suffering of God in heaven. Neither of these, says Paul, can be abstracted from the

[250] Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God Can Help': Divine Passibility in Modern Theology." 170.
[251] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 289.
[252] Paul, "Interpreting the Cross." 15.
[253] Ibid. 17.
[254] Ibid. 18.
[255] Ibid. 22.

other.[256] The scriptures do not describe God as 'law' but as 'love', and when the Christian:

> …looks at the Cross form the standpoint of God as law he gets a distorted view of it. The Cross is not, as is sometimes supposed, a penalty paid by Jesus for all men...a righteous God or an angry God to appease His estranged majesty.[257]

Thus far would Appasamy, and indeed Gore, probably agree; the atonement is not penal in nature. But C.S. Paul goes perhaps a step too far in his next statement that "[a] God of love needs neither a propitiation nor a substitution". Propitiation possibly, for that corresponds to his notion of appeasement. But the denial of a substitution altogether is difficult for Appasamy's Anglican tradition to countenance, for certainly that denies the need for any sort of exchange or transaction. Since love is the 'law of God and life', Paul continues, "the Cross is the inevitable symbol of the world drama... the central fact of all genuine religious experience", and now "challenges us to be co-workers with God in the regeneration of the world".[258] It is not an exact match, but given the Bishop's endorsement of Paul, it would seem to be the likeliest source of his passibility doctrine. In any case, Appasamy makes the very clear claim that it is "God [who] endured the utmost suffering" and that "[n]owhere but in the Gospels do we read of the suffering and shame which God endures with the purpose of making clear His love to men".[259]

3.2.6 The Incarnation and the *avatāra*

One final aspect to his doctrine of the Incarnation that must be considered is his proposal for an Indian Christian use of the term *avatāra* ('descent').[260]

'Fundamentally', Appasamy says, "the doctrine of the Avatāra is akin to the Christian

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[256] Ibid. 24.
[257] Ibid. 25.
[258] Ibid. 27-28.
[259] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 207.
[260] This was, and continues to be, a controversial topic among Indian Christians. Boyd points out that Appasamy was at odds with influential Christian thinkers such as Keshub Chunder Sen and Brahmabandhab Upandhyaya on this. Both of these thinkers, it must be pointed out, were siginficantly influenced by *Advaita*, so they come with an intact structure of the *Isvara* as a "lower manifestation of the Supreme Brahman". See, Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 301

doctrine of Incarnation".[261] In a very rare reference to the resurrection Appasamy says that the purpose of the resurrection of Christ 'is not to prove the immortality of the soul', but rather to vindicate claims to both 'the Messiahship and divinity of Christ',[262] the basis for the legitimacy of his calling for men's absolute devotion and complete surrender.[263] The resurrection of Jesus, he says:

> …gives a completely new perspective to the life and death of Jesus. In the light of the Resurrection we must believe that Jesus was no mere man but the Avatar of God who had come down to the world to redeem us from our sins and to take us into fellowship with God.[264]

Given his claims for the absolute uniqueness of the Incarnation, his proposal that the word *avatāra* should be applied to Christ is somewhat surprising.[265] Because of its many connotations and implications Appasamy must take care in making the necessary *provisos* and disclaimers. First, he makes it clear that "an incarnation is born", it is not a meritorious title given for 'supreme spiritual advance'.[266] It is a 'descent'. Second, he is uncomfortable with the *bhakti* concept of *lila* ('sport' or 'play'). The Incarnation, in the Christian sense, should not be considered as anything like an actor putting on a disguise. Some of the Hindu traditions he says, by contrast, "do not think that the incarnations are a part of the real life of God. They think that God takes on human bodies as an actor puts on different disguises". His reason for pointing this out is rooted in the previously discussed passibility doctrine. "These disguises", he says:

> …do not really affect the actor; his inner self remains the same. God likewise is not really affected by His incarnations. This is not Christian teaching. God

[261] Ibid. 302.
[262] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 245.
[263] Ibid. 248-249.
[264] Ibid. 246.
[265] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 34.
[266] Ibid. 34.

> Himself suffers for us. He enters into our deepest grief. He bears our heaviest sorrow. He experiences our most terrible anguish. Such is His love.[267]

His third disclaimer is that, in the Christian use of the term, there has been and only ever will be one *avatāra.* There is no such thing as a Christian *dasavatāra* ('ten descents'). "We firmly hold that Jesus was the one and only Avatāra".[268] No Christian, he says, will allow Jesus to be equated with any of the Hindu incarnations:

> In India the claim is frequently made that Jesus is only one among many incarnations. The devout Christian is never able to understand this claim. To put Jesus on a level with Rama, Krishna, or Buddha is impossible.[269]

Neither can Christians accept the idea of Christ is *aṁśa*, a 'part' of God. The notion of half of God being incarnate in Ram, a quarter in Bharata, while only an eighth each in Lakshmana and Satrughna is entirely inimical to the Christian notion of the Incarnation. Similarly the Śrīvaiṣṇava and Gaudiya belief in Kṛṣṇa as a full incarnation, the *pūrṇa avatāra* cannot be countenanced by the Christian *bhakta*. Jesus is neither a partial *avatāra*, nor a full one among many partial ones. He is the "Incarnation of the whole Being of God. As a New Testament writer says: 'the fullness of God had dwelt in him bodily'".[270] Similarly, concerning the mission of the incarnation, even Kṛṣṇa's:

> ...noblest declaration of the purpose of an Incarnation falls short of the object for which Jesus declared that he came to the world. He was born on this earth in order to redeem sinners and not to destroy them. [Christ] clearly said that His purpose was not to call the righteous for they needed no help, but to call sinners to repentance". [271]

And finally, neither will there be any incarnations after him. Only the Spirit of truth will guide men into all truth.[272]

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[267] Ibid. 44. Again, this ties in with his previous discussion on the passibility of God. Christ is no theophany.
[268] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 259.
[269] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 45.
[270] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 257.
[271] Ibid. 257-258.
[272] Ibid. 260.

In closing this section on Appasamy's doctrine of the Incarnation we return, once again, to his Body of God analogy. Boyd has noted that the embodiment analogy concerning Christ "might break down if pressed too far in either of two directions". If pressed towards an Apollinarian perspective in which the 'soul' of Christ is the Logos, then the Incarnation is "not fully human". On the other hand, if pressed too far in a 'humanist direction' in which Christ is not actually different from all men, "for all are indwelt by the Logos",[273] we have something that looks more like what some have called a 'degree Christology',[274] in which Christ is different to the rest of humanity only by degrees of submission and holiness. And yet, in my view, Appasamy seems to be holding the space between these in tension. As Boyd summarizes it, "The Logos is immanent in all men: He is incarnate only in Christ".[275] Jesus, says Appasamy, is quite unequivocally, the "Incarnation of the whole Being of God...the fullness of God had dwelt in him bodily'".[276] As he has said from the start, "it is he who is the eternal Christ, who was before all time and who made all things. He is the life that animates the whole world, the light which enlightens every man. The Jesus whom we know and love and adore is the plenitude of Being".[277] "He is the one who exists from eternity to eternity, the Creator of the worlds, the Life of men".[278] The mystery of the Incarnation is that it is this God that "took, as it were, a second body, the fleshly organism of Jesus".[279]

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[273] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 350.
[274] …as opposed to a 'substance Christology'... Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction*. 184.
[275] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 350.
[276] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 257.
[277] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 187.
[278] Ibid. 102.
[279] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 207.

Chapter 4. 1933-1950: The Body of God in the Eucharist and the Church

4.1 The shift from 'mysticism' to 'tradition'

In the first two of Appasamy's divine embodiments, the Universe and the Incarnation, developed mainly in the late 1920's and early 30's, Appasamy's language was still very much tinged with the emphases of his earliest academic training under Otto, Heiler and Von Hügel - 'immanence', 'mysticism', and 'religious experience'. In the opening sentences of *Bhakti Marga* he declares himself openly on this. If Christianity is "to relate itself in the coming years to Indian thought and become a living force in the country, I am inclined to think that it will lay much emphasis on mystic experience."[1] The 'burden' of the *bhakta's* thought is that of 'mystic union', for in the *bhakti* literature "There is scarcely a page which does not speak of mystic union". Reflecting the assumptions of what MacIntyre has called 'Encyclopaedia' he claims:

> At present, it is theology which very largely produces experience: that is, the experience is moulded in the religious belief accepted from outside. But if experience could precede theology, then not being trammelled by any preconceived notions of what ought to be felt and done, it would grow spontaneously, enriching itself in innumerable ways.[2]

He will go so far as to claim in this early context that "the Christianity of the future in India will be largely mystical... [a] type of religious life which emphasizes the communion of the human soul with a personal God. So stated, the word Mysticism might seem to indicate the heart of all religious experience…"[3]

Some of Appasamy's critics have made heavy meal of this sort of language. Hivner, for example, identifying the influence of Otto's *mysterium tremendum* on Appasamy's thinking, cites Appasamy as saying: "He [Otto] has shown us that the essential element in all religion is the awareness of the majesty and awfulness of God.

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[1] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings* (London: Macmillan, 1927). 1.
[2] Ibid. 4-5.
[3] Ibid. 7-8.

In more primitive forms of religion this awareness is a crude type of fear. As religion becomes refined this essential element becomes refined too."[4] The Otto influence is uncontroversial, for Appasamy admits as much. But the exaggerated language of Hivner's next statement is, in my view, quite unwarranted:

> … although Appasamy appealed to rationality and history for his position, his deepest foundation for religion was finally experiential. The "essential element" is an awareness of God that can be experienced as fear although it later goes beyond this. In discussing the eternity of God in another paper Appasamy appealed to intuition as the only authority.

In support of this claim Hivner cites a 1944 article in which he finds Appasamy saying:

> The eternity of God is one of those profound spiritual intuitions which cannot be demonstrated on logical grounds or in practical experience....The eternal nature of God is a profound intuition which the prophets of the human race have felt in some of the clearest moments of their spiritual insight and we accept it because of the noble character of the prophets who uttered it and also because it falls in line with our own other spiritual convictions...[5]

Hivner's comment on this is that "Appasamy appealed to intuition as the *only authority* (emphasis mine)". The passage in question needs to be understood in the context of his discussion on *pramāṇas*, epistemological 'evidences'. What Appasamy is saying quite clearly in this context is that, because practical experience (*pratyaksa pramāṇa*) and logical inference (*yukti pramāṇa*) cannot be proven, we *must* turn to the testimony of the Prophets (*Śabda pramāṇa*), which then accords with 'other spiritual convictions' (*sabhā pramāṇa*). *Śabda* and *sabhā* are necessary *precisely because* of the limitations of both *yukti* and *pratyaksa*. In my view the citation itself seems to argue quite to the opposite of what Hivner is claiming. It is true that in a number of contexts he appeals to his readers by employing his *pratyaksa pramāṇa* (later what he calls '*anubhava'*) for justification. But surely this is not the same thing as appealing to an experiential essentialism as his 'only authority' or as his 'deepest foundation'.

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[4] Richard L. Hivner, "The Christian Society for the Study of Hinduism, 1940-1956: Interreligious Engagement in Mid-Twentieth Century India" (University of South Africa, 2011). 201.
[5] Ibid. 201.

Chenchiah's nephew, V.C. Rajasekaran, seems to share Hivner's view in characterizing Appasamy as saying: "[i]t is direct religious experience, which gives us true knowledge of God, but scriptures provide the necessary preliminary help and hence authoritative".[6] This sounds more like Śaṅkara's approach to the Vedāntic texts. I would argue that the Scriptures were much more than 'preliminary', and so, propaedeutic to Appasamy. Although it *might* be argued that this is his starting place in his training under Otto, and even this I would say is an unfair generalization, it is certainly not where he ended up. For by the end of his career, in 1971, his epistemological priorities have entirely subverted this. In *What Shall We Believe: A Study of the Christian Pramāṇas,* he prioritizes his epistemology as *Śruti, Sabhā, Yukti and Anubhava* - Text,[7] Tradition,[8] Reason[9] and Experience,[10] and he argues specifically for this order. Text and tradition precede reason and experience, rather than the other way around. Put differently, in light of the second chapter's discussion on the 'three rival versions', although Appasamy began in the individualist assumptions of 'Encyclopaedia', he ended up in the textually and communally inscribed realities of 'Tradition'.

Wagner, to my knowledge, is the only one who has adequately acknowledged anything resembling this shift towards tradition and corporate identity. Even here,

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[6] V. C. Rajasekaran, *Reflections on Indian Christian Theology* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1993). 190.

[7] The Scriptures are, to him, "first and foremost pramāṇa, the highest court of appeal". A. J. Appasamy, *What Shall We Believe? : A Study of the Christian Pramanas* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1971). 13.

[8] He means by this both contemporary worshipping communities, as well as historical exegetical and commentarial traditions. For his full discussion on this see Ibid. 74-75, 79, 85-87.

[9] In which he includes 'religious studies' the "scientific study of religion", 'philosophical systems' and analogical reasoning. Ibid. 41-43. It should also be noted that his four *pramāṇas* sound an awful lot like the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, another study for another time.

[10] In his many earlier descriptions of 'religious experience', more or less just as Schleiermacher meant when he coined the phrase, he has emphasized various facets of what that a supra-traditional experience might look like. Although we still find the vestiges of his early 'creature consciousness' and Ottovian language, such as his notion of a 'sense of awe', his mature pramanic proposal seems very much in agreement with Lindbeck that it is text and tradition that shape experience and not the other way around. Ibid. 43, 51-53.

however, as usual Appasamy's detractors want to find some sort of extra-biblical and extra-traditional influence that is motivating him. Appasamy's views on ecclesiology and the Sacraments, says Wagner, are evidence of an 'ambiguous philosophical position' "between mysticism and the text respectively".[11] This is fair comment. But further to this Wagner makes the improbable leap that this is evidence of the influence of 'sociology', 'group psychology', and a trend in 'modern psychology' emphasizing the 'power of suggestion'.[12] Perhaps this was a going concern in trying to understand the national psyche of post-war Germany, but I would argue that this is actually far from Appasamy's thinking.

What I intend to prove in this chapter is that from the early 1930's onward we find an increasing trend towards a much more traditionally accountable, and traditionally mediated sort of *bhakti*. Indeed it is in the context of an extended discussion on Church and Sacrament that we find him developing our central passage on the four-fold 'Body of God' doctrine. As I have demonstrated already, there are clear parallels in his early work to both the *Lux Mundi* and *Foundations* scholars. What is notable about his later writing is his willingness to name and explicitly rely on his Anglican sources. There are a handful of names that emerge with increasing frequency, namely, Gore, Temple and Quick.

Two developments seem to have precipitated these changes. First, according to his memoirs, we read that in 1930 he offered himself 'for Ordination in the Diocese of Madras'. Bishop Waller, he recalls, required him to write two essays for the ordination process, "The Development of Christian Theology in the Early Christian Church" and "The Meaning of the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion", both of which

[11] "zwischen Philosophie bzw. Mystik und Schrift". Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 91.
[12] 'Gruppenpsychologie'... "Auß dem zeigt die moderne Psychologie die Macht gegenseitiger Beeinflussung durch Suggestion". Ibid. 92

were later published as essays in "the Madras Diocesan Magazine".[13] Although these could not be located for this present research his titles are explanation enough of his newly focused subject matter. The second precipitant was his appointment in 1932 to a teaching position in 'Philosophy of Religion' and 'History of Religions' at Bishop's College, Calcutta. In the process of undergoing both of these he has, of necessity, had to become increasingly accountable to his Anglican tradition, entrusted not only with priestly ministry, but also with the instruction of young ordinands for the same in the Anglican Church in the Provinces and Dioceses of India. It is this accountability to the devotional tradition that has led to the subordination of earlier commitments to academic orthodoxies, as evidenced in his more focused epistemological thinking in his Christian *pramāṇas*. Before we can consider the final two aspects of Appasamy's Body of God doctrine, Eucharist and Church, what follows presently is an exploration of their necessary theological foundation in his doctrines of the Spirit and Trinity.

4.2 Doctrinal developments in the 1930's and 40's

4.2.1 The 'new fact' of Appasamy's pneumatology

As was evident in the previous chapter, Appasamy's earliest focus is on Christ as the Logos, both the immanent and revealing *Antaryāmīn* within the universe as well as the Incarnating *avatāra* who is both the full and complete enfleshment of the divine. As fully man he also becomes the true pattern for a new humanity, the model *bhakta*. In short, Christ is both the object of devotion as well as the objective of that devotion. Because he has not articulated the Person of Christ in familiar Nicene and Chalcedonian language or the work of Christ with more conservative views of the Atonement, we have also seen how Appasamy's detractors have rushed to find him guilty of various

[13] Ibid. 47.

heterodox theological positions. While I have found these to be largely baseless, more name-calling than academic interaction, it must be said that the Bishop has certainly not made it easy for us. In his efforts to formulate Christian theology in *bhakti* terms, especially in his earliest writing, he seems also to have gone out of his way to avoid more familiar western theological forms and conventions.

One conspicuous absence in his early writing is any sort of pneumatology of which to speak. This lacuna, due to what is perhaps an over-emphasis on the Logos, it seems has once again thrown off the scent of Appasamy's critics. The Gurukul group, for example, has said that, "Dr. Appasamy is mostly using the term 'immanence' as synonymous with 'indwelling'. It would be better, for the sake of clarity, consistently to distinguish between the two terms".[14] Their chief concern here is that:

> The 'indwelling' of the Holy Spirit (or of God or Christ), of which the New Testament speaks, indicates that He *comes* to us and takes His abode in our hearts. He is *not* there from the beginning; He is not a possession of man by his natural birth; the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ) is 'sent', is 'given' as a gift; He does not belong to man's endowment as a natural being.[15]

I will argue below that Appasamy does in fact reconsider his earlier more general term 'immanence' with special reference to the Spirit's 'indwelling', and that he does indeed make the distinction that they claim he fails to make. The problem lies, yet again, in the fact that he does not feel the need to articulate it in *their* language.

Herwig Wagner has found what he calls 'three layers' to Appasamy's doctrine of the Spirit: first, a substrative Idealist, illuminating *Geist;*[16] second, the 'Indian understanding' of the *Antaryāmīn*[17] and finally, an outer filigree of the biblical doctrine

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[14] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*. 13.
[15] Ibid. 13.
[16] Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 62.
[17] "Die zweite Schicht des Geistverständnisses ist die indische des Antaryāmīn..". Ibid. 63.

of the *Spiritus Sanctus.*[18] His point here and *passim* is that "an idealistic concept of spirit is behind many of his theological statements".[19] Is this true? Is Idealist thought really 'der Geist primär' of Appasamy's theology more generally, and his pneumatology more specifically? In an article entitled "Who is Jesus?", ostensibly a response to his Madras Trio colleague, Chenchiah, Appasamy makes it plain that he has little time for a Hegelian *Geist*, a 'growing and developing God' that expresses itself in the dialectical movements of civilizations.[20] Its accompanying view that 'the creative process takes place of itself', he continues, is not 'the biblical doctrine of creation':

> This doctrine of the developing God which is found in some modern European philosophers is entirely against the firm belief of all religions in the perfection of God. It is quite true that the incarnate Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man… It is quite scriptural to maintain this development in the consciousness of Jesus… This brings Him very close to us. To say that Jesus the Incarnate God grew is one thing; to say that God Himself grew is another".[21]

Appasamy's challenge here is to Chenchiah's emphasis, not unlike Teilhard de Chardin's, of 'understanding the spiritual growth of humanity in terms of the evolutionary process'. Spiritual growth in humanity is one thing, says Appasamy, for even an 'orthodox theologian like Bishop Gore' is prepared to accept that "the prophets of mankind in all the religions have had flashes of spiritual insight which have been granted to them directly by God, often without any references to the creative process".[22] But surely this does not require our acquiescence to the Process 'doctrine of a growing God'.[23] In conclusion, says Appasamy, "Our main channels for an understanding of God is found in the words and acts of Jesus and not in the creative process, though

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[18] Wagner only reluctantly concedes here that "[a]n einem Punkte ist sein Geistverständnis jedoch neutestamentlich geprägt". Ibid. 64.
[19] "Nichtsdestoweniger steht ein idealistisher Geistbegriff hinter vielen seiner Theologischen Ausführungen". Ibid. 62.
[20] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 73.
[21] Ibid. 74.
[22] Ibid. 75.
[23] Ibid. 74.

Jesus Himself emerges from it".[24] Unless Appasamy is being entirely disingenuous here, it would seem as though *he understands himself* to be wholly at odds with an Idealist version of the *Geist.* As before, it is the *Śabda* and *sabhā pramāṇas* that trump *yukti.*

It is, of course, possible that Appasamy has taken in some Idealism 'by osmosis' as it were, sublated (to borrow Hegel's word, *aufhebung*) already within his Anglican tradition. Michael Ramsey has identified a possible Idealist influence within the Anglican tradition beginning with T.H. Green, and later Holland and Illingworth.[25] The *Lux Mundi* scholars,[26] says Ramsey, 'owed not a little to the background of Green's teaching'. Illingworth, Ramsey says, was the "nearest of the school to idealistic philosophy", while "Gore was the least affected by it".[27] Gore certainly seems to be no friend of Idealist philosophy for, two decades later, at least part of Gore's opposition to the younger Modernists such as Rashdall, Inge and indeed Streeter,[28] was due to their 'rejection of the miraculous' rooted in "a distinctive philosophy which, derived from idealism or other types of immanentism, identified the natures of God and Man in such a way as to blur the distinction between Creator and creature".[29] I am in agreement with Ramsey in saying that the idealist influence on the *Lux Mundi* scholars and their disciples is 'greatly exaggerated'.[30] But another one of Appasamy's sources, O.C. Quick, in the preface to *The Christian Sacraments,* admits to an appreciation of Idealist thought acknowledging the value of the 'religious vision' in F.H. Bradley's and A.N.

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[24] Ibid. 76.
[25] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 9-10.
[26] Ibid. 9.
[27] Interestingly, the only place where Ramsey finds immanentist tendencies in Gore is in his views on the Eucharist, his treatment of the 'Real Presence' in *Body of Christ.* Ibid. 10.
[28] Ibid. 80.
[29] Ibid. 68.
[30] Ibid. 2.

Whitehead.[31] Although Quick ranges in his thinking through some of these themes, in the end he proves that he is yet very much rooted in a devotional tradition that keeps him coming back to the importance and centrality of Creeds and Sacraments. Ramsey rightly characterizes Quick as being, like Gore, an exponent of 'liberal orthodoxy'.[32] Also noted is what appears to be a 'Hegelian strain' in Temple's early work, such as in 1924's *Christus Victor*.[33] All of this considered then, there may already be an Idealist influence on some of Appasamy's named sources, but as far as he is concerned, he is being faithful to and now appealing to his devotional tradition. I am giving Wagner's claim more consideration than is warranted, however, for it must be noted that although Wagner has authoritatively applied the label, he has failed to follow it up with an actual argument. One begins to wonder whether, like the words 'Hindu' and 'pantheist' to Oosthuizen and the Gurukul reverends, 'Idealism' to Wagner is more of a pejorative label than a position to be interacted with. It is far easier to call Appasamy names and have done with it than to interact with what he is actually saying.

Appasamy's critics are correct, however, in noting that there is now a distinct pneumatological overlap, perhaps even a confusing conflation, within his use of the *Antaryāmīn* epithet. Where in the early work it more or less exclusively denotes the work and presence of the Logos, with 1935's *Christ in the Indian Church* and 1942's *Gospel and India's Heritage*, we find him applying it more consistently to the present work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In *Gospel* he asks somewhat provocatively, "[w]as the Spirit of God at work only in Palestine or did He also guide the minds of men in other countries?" Because he cannot assume that his Christian readers will take this as a rhetorical question to be answered in the affirmative, he cites the Book of

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[31] Oliver Chase Quick, *The Christian Sacraments*, 2nd ed. (London: Nisbet, 1932). viii.
[32] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*.107. Quick was not so liberal as to allow for the equal validity of all Christian communions. He would argue strongly for the necessity of an apostolic succession. 123.
[33] Ibid. 149.

Wisdom 7.27, reminding us that the Spirit of God is "…from generation to generation passing into holy souls, she maketh men friends of God and prophets".[34] Here he has also very deliberately moved away from his earlier 'immanence' language, now employing more consistently the language of the Spirit's 'indwelling'. Citing the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.2-4 Appasamy says that the Spirit, the 'Indwelling God':

> Containing all works, containing all desires, containing all odours, containing all tastes, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned – this is the soul of mine within the heart, this is Brahma [*sic*]. Into him I shall enter on departing hence.[35]

As with the Logos, however, the Spirit is not merely 'divine principle', 'idea' or 'Reason', but undoubtedly Person, and he claims the Johannine personal pronouns as biblical warrant for this. "He is the life of our life, the soul of our soul. He is bound up with our inmost being". Writing, as he says, 'in the vein of the Hindu bhaktas' he waxes poetic of the Spirit's work: "We are the temple; He is the God within. We are the fruit; He is its juice. We are the milk; He is its cream".[36]

In *Gospel's* chapter on "The teaching of Jesus on the Holy Spirit" Appasamy finds other explanatory references from the *Upaniṣads*, the dweller in the 'cave' of the human heart passage from *Kaṭha Upanishad* 2.12, and in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.12:

> Thou art the Soul of all, the Lord of all, the Indweller of all beings. What then shall I speak unto Thee who art seated in my heart, and knowest my inmost thoughts? O Thou, the Soul of all beings, the Sovereign Lord of all creation, the Source of all that exists, Thou knowest all creatures as well as their desires.[37]

Once again it is to Rāmānuja that he finally appeals:

> These are not ideas occurring merely here and there. The thought of the Indwelling God is of supreme importance in the religious life of India. The central place it occupies in Hindu thought and experience may be illustrated from Rāmānuja.[38]

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[34] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 82.
[35] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 49.
[36] Ibid. 50.
[37] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 74.
[38] Ibid. 75.

Notable in this context is his consideration of the Ācārya, not as a philosopher this time, but as a theologian. The 'two most vital questions *in theology*' (emphasis mine), says Appasamy, are first, "what is the relation of God to the world?;[39] and second, "what is the relation of God to man?"[40] Rāmānuja has answered these two cardinal theological questions with his Body of God analogy, says Appasamy, and follows his claim up with what is probably his fullest outline of the Ācārya's analogy:

> …with his doctrine of the Indwelling God (Antaryāmīn). God is the soul and the world is His body. Just as the human body is entirely dependent on the soul within, so the world is wholly dependent on the God within...By itself the body can do nothing; it is the soul within which animates it and rules it. In the same way, the inner Ruler, God, has the world as His body and controls it. He has the souls of men also as His own body; for they are moved and inspired by Him from within. He is the soul of their souls. But for His indwelling Presence, they are helpless and are of no great worth. Thus with the doctrine of the Indwelling God, Rāmānuja makes clear God's relation to the world and His relation to man...[41]

The problem arises, however, in that here we find him 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' as it were, borrowing from his earlier Logos doctrine, applying the *Antaryāmīn* now as the 'indwelling Presence' to the Spirit. Has he simply conflated the Logos and the Spirit as P.V. Joseph has claimed?[42] Oosthuizen thinks so: "Appasamy stands on the Hindu philosophical and theological principles" 'overaccentuating' the immanence of God...'the Spirit of God, or the *Logos'*, which he says 'is the same' and 'already in man as a spiritual fact'.[43] So too, the Gurukul group: "Dr Appasamy time and again in his books maintains that God, or the Logos, or the Spirit of God – which in this context mean the same – 'is already immanent in man as a spiritual fact'".[44] While their observations are valid, and again Appasamy has not made it easy for us, I would

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[39] Included within this he asks: "Did He create it? And having created it, how does He rule over it?"
[40] "Did He create man and how does He continue to exert His sway over Him?" Ibid. 75.
[41] Ibid. 75.
[42] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 44.
[43] Oosthuizen, "Theological Discussions and Confessional Developments in the Churches of Asia and Africa". 36.
[44] Estborn, *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism: Being Studies in the Theology of A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai and P. Chenchiah*. 21.

suggest that it is not quite so simple as this, and would rather say, in agreement with Boyd, that: "in Appasamy's theology it is not easy to distinguish the separate 'works' of the three Persons of the Trinity".[45] This need not mean, however, that he has uncritically conflated them.

In a paper from that same year entitled "The Indwelling God" Appasamy tells us: "There is a new fact about the Christian experience of the indwelling God. It is this. The indwelling God, whom we call the Holy Spirit, carries on the work of Christ…"[46] His focus is still undoubtedly on the Incarnate Logos for "Christ is the bed-rock of Christian experience. We are built on Him. His life is our great example…" What is new here is his acknowledgement that because "the process of reaching Him with the help of the historical imagination is indeed very difficult", it is not to an imagination of the Jesus of history that we relate, but rather to the 'Living Christ'. "He lives with us now. He teaches us as He taught the disciples of old… That is what our Lord means when He says that after He goes away the Father will send a Comforter".[47] His emphasis on the 'new' and 'now' fact of the Holy Spirit is an eschatological one that he gets from the text itself, a development that the secondary sources cited above seem to have missed.

In contrast to some of his earlier statements on the direct mystical experience of the *bhakta*, with the beginnings of his pneumatology we also find the beginnings of his more mature understanding of the primacy of Revelation in 'text' and 'tradition', his *Śruti* and *sabhā pramāṇas.* "This truth needs to be impressed clearly in our minds – that God can be known only through His revelation. We cannot attain Him, however hard

[45] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 328.
[46] Much of the content for this paper would find its way into *Christ in the Indian Church.* Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 24.
[47] Ibid. 25.

we may try".[48] What he seems to be getting at here with regards to the Spirit is that this divine revelation is not frozen in time, in first century Palestine, but continues in unbroken flow through the Church in history. It is supremely and in an incarnate sense only in Christ, but "He [the Spirit] is continuing to teach us from age to age… the revelation of God to men was not closed when the incarnate Lord left the earth. But there has been a continual manifestation of God through the ages".[49]

What is also notable here is his accompanying suggestion that the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, is behind even the more recent scientific discoveries that many of his more conservative co-religionists were wont to deny and disavow: "By these discoveries [modern science] we are attaining new reaches of knowledge. Our idea of the universe around us is daily becoming enlarged and our understanding of the way in which God works is steadily becoming clearer". This too, he says, is evidence of the Spirit.[50] Wagner, no doubt, will want to use this as further evidence towards his Idealism thesis, but I would suggest that Appasamy is simply taking his exegesis of the Prologue to its logical end, this time incorporating the *Paráklētos* references of the 'farewell discourse'. He is connecting up the narrative of his text. If the universe is created, divinely indwelt, on a trajectory towards its ultimate fulfilment in Christ, and the express purpose of the Spirit is to continue to reveal Christ and to lead the *bhaktas* into 'all truth', then why should this not be case? We already know that Appasamy does not subscribe to a physical/spiritual divide, so why should not scientific discovery also be evidence of the Spirit's revelation of God? If to him, the purpose of science is to figure out the mysteries of the handiwork of the Logos, and "[T]he Spirit of God

[48] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 53.
[49] Ibid. 53-54.
[50] Ibid. 54.

Himself reveals God", [51] the selfsame Spirit that reveals Christ also reveals the mysteries of his universe to modern man. "We may be perfectly sincere and earnest and may strive... [b]ut we can know Him only through His own spirit manifesting Him to us".[52]

He is walking a fine line here between wanting to emphasize the fullness and sufficiency of the revelation of God in Christ while, at the same time, to state that "the Holy Spirit... is continuing to teach us from age to age…[53] This also hearkens back to his pedagogical approach to the Scriptures as discussed in Chapter Three. Unlike with the Islamic doctrine of *tanzil,* the belief in a 'once and for all' handed down divine revelation, he says, there is more of an interchange between divine revelation and human understanding in the biblical texts.[54] "...in the Bible, we see how God led men slowly teaching them great truths. Our human capacity is so limited that we cannot receive and digest all the truths at once". Although Jesus is the complete revelation of God in Christ, Jesus' hearers were unable to bear 'all truth'. And so, he says, "[t]he Holy Spirit is continually at work guiding us. He was at work when the Bible was written. He has been at work in the Church through the centuries. And He is at work now".[55] "Our feet must be firmly planted on a historic revelation as on solid earth… [for] the Holy Spirit… not only interprets the ancient Scriptures but leads us to unexplored realms of thought, enabling us to deal with new problems in new ways..".[56] The open ended-ness here may be unsettling to some, and as Boyd aptly puts it: "We

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[51] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 26.
[52] Ibid. 27.
[53] Ibid. 27.
[54] This is not unlike what Charles Gore says in *Lux Mundi: "*It is a revelation continuously renewed in men's hearts by an organized and systematic operation of the Spirit in the Church, while at the same time it finds its guarantee and security in certain Divine acts of historic occurrence". Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 248.
[55] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 28.
[56] *Ibid*., 170.

are left asking, 'What is to be the criterion of such new revelation?' Is it simply the *testimonium internum Spiritus sancti?"*[57] This is a fair question to which Appasamy has not given an answer.

The 'Spirit of God' is the 'Spirit of Christ', and so, says Appasamy, to encounter the Holy Spirit is to encounter the 'Living Christ', for the Spirit continues the works of Christ in the world after the Cross and Resurrection.[58] While Appasamy's detractors might want to interject that the Living Christ is, more precisely, to be understood as the interceding one at the right hand of the Father, I would suggest that this is to unnecessarily require of him more systematic concepts that rely on an overall New Testament understanding. It may be found, for example, in the 'Great High Priest' passages in the epistle to the Hebrews, but this is not his text. A Johannine doctrine of the Spirit and the Living Christ is not quite so neat and tidy as that. In 14.17, for example, we are told that "the Spirit of truth... abides with you and ... will be in you". Then a few verses later we are told that concerning "those who love me and keep my word... the Father will love them, and *we* will come to them and make our home with them". Is it the Spirit, the Son or the Father that will dwell within and in the midst of the *bhaktas*? The answer, it would seem, is that all three are to be understood as the 'indwelling God'. The Gospel text itself is about as imprecise as Appasamy is being here. Gore, in *Lux Mundi,* frames this in more *perichoretic* language, as he speaks of a 'mutual inclusion' as opposed to a 'mutual exclusion':

> Wherever the Father works, He works essentially and inevitably through the Son and the Spirit; whenever the Son acts, He acts from the Father by the Holy

[57] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 337.
[58] Ramsey notes in his appendix that K.E. Kirk and L. S. Thornton had been asking similar questions in Anglican circles. Concerning "the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Risen Christ... Does the New Testament invariably distinguish them? Are we to understand the Spirit to be personal in the sense in which Christ is personal?" Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939.* 180.

> Spirit; whenever the Holy Spirit comes, he brings with Him in His coming the Son and the Father.[59]

In what is probably his clearest summary on the subject Appasamy states that:

> [t]he Holy Spirit will continue to interpret Jesus to the world... The depth of meaning in His life and in His teaching may not be quite evident at once. He Himself was not able to say all that he wanted to say because His immediate hearers were not mature enough to receive the fullness of His teaching and His own time was limited. So the Holy Spirit will, from age to age, keep alive in men's hearts and minds the wonderful life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus… He will carry them forward to meet new problems and give them fresh interpretations as new situations arise.[60]

Jesus remains the watershed. On the one side of that watershed the immanent Logos of the Prologue is the pre-Incarnate Christ, the revelation of God who 'having created [the world] then entered the same'. On the other side of the Christ Event it is the Holy Spirit as the *paráklētos* of the farewell discourse and High Priestly prayer who is uniquely and in an eschatologically 'new' and 'now' sense that continues to reveal Christ both immanently in the world and through the Christian *bhakta* and Church.

4.2.2 A new Spirit Christology

Because the 'Spirit of God' is also the 'Spirit of Christ' that presently reveals the 'Living Christ', I would suggest that what we have here are the main contours of a 'Spirit Christology'[61] that, in the main, has replaced his earlier 'Logos Christology'. In his book entitled *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai,* P. V. Joseph has also found in Appasamy, as in Chakkarai of the Rethinking Group, a view of the Spirit that he says is "close to the 'Spirit Christology' of the ante-Nicene Christian doctrine in which the

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[59] Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 246.
[60] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 92.
[61] Kirsteen Kim agrees: "Otherwise [Appasamy's] pneumatology is conventional and chiefly Christological". Kirsteen Kim, *Mission in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Indian Christian Theologies* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003). 5.

Holy Spirit is often equated with Christ".[62] With an emphasis in the first two centuries that was 'predominantly Christological', Joseph describes an early 'marginalization' of the Spirit[63] in the writings of the second century Apologists. This is perhaps best represented in Justin Martyr's 'subordination' of the Spirit to the Son, as indeed the Son to the Father. Is this closer to an emanationist[64] view as found in Neo-Platonism?[65] With Tatian, says Joseph, we find a 'more orthodox view of the Holy Spirit' as also with Theophilus of Antioch. The most clearly articulated early pneumatology he finds in Athenagoras who "demonstrates a more advanced view of the Holy Spirit. He clearly relates the Holy Spirit to the other members of the Trinity and underlines the inspirational role of the Spirit".[66] The pneumatological development that Joseph has outlined, I would say, in many ways also mirrors the development that we find in comparison of an 'earlier' and 'later' reading of Appasamy. Here, the 'later' Appasamy has found the Spirit and Christ to be co-agents in the world, from creation to the present. The more mature Appasamy, in fact, begins increasingly to resemble Irenaeus' view, "particularly the Spirit's place in creation, the Old Testament prophecy, incarnation, regeneration, continued activity and the charismata of the Spirit in the church".[67] Perhaps his *Antaryāmīn* doctrine ought rather to be considered not as the confusion of ontologically distinct persons, but rather as descriptive of the complex inter-relational agency of the Son and the Spirit. Framed as such it would not be too far

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[62] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 3.
[63] Ibid. 5.
[64] Weinandy has argued that both the Eastern and Western views of the Trinity have some lingering 'Neo-Platonic emanationist sequentialism'. In the West it is a "logical or conceptual priority of the Father over the Son and the Son over the Holy Spirit". In the East it is seen in that "The Godhead resides in the Father alone, and he shares his divinity with the Son and the Holy Spirit and as they emanate out from him in a sequential pattern..." Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). 10.
[65] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 7.
[66] Ibid. 7.
[67] Ibid. 8.

off from Irenaeus' 'two hands of the Father' in Creation and the ongoing sustenance of the world. The *Antaryāmīn* is an ambidextrous God.[68]

> In any case, there is truth, I believe, to Joseph's analysis that:
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> > In his interpretation of both christology and pneumatology Appasamy uses the terms, *Antaryāmīn*, "Immanent God" and "Indwelling God", interchangeably. He seems to be using these terms to refer to the indwelling nature of God as Spirit and not specifically to the Holy Spirit as a distinct person of the Trinity.[69]

Given Appasamy's insistence on using the Johannine personal pronouns, and with his demonstration of the Spirit's volitional agency, I have found significant grounds for disagreement with Joseph's further claim that "[i]n spite of his personalist emphasis, the Holy Spirit is some how sub-personal".[70] For as we have seen he does indeed refer to the Holy Spirit as being both distinct from Father and Son and unmistakably as 'personal'. There is perhaps more credence to Joseph's further observation that:

> > Appasamy's understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit is close to the concept of "anonymous Christianity", which Karl Rahner develops. Similarly, Samartha speaks of the "unbaptized koinonia" and Jürgen Moltmann speaks of the Spirit emigrating from the church to "the spontaneous groups and personal experience.[71]

As representative of the Bishop's fulfilment theology, a view that would later be called 'inclusivist', this too is a fair comment. In his final summation Joseph respectfully says that although "we are indebted to Appasamy for the insights and challenges he placed before us to reflect upon", by attempting "to put Christian pneumatology within the framework of the Hindu *bhakti* tradition" his view on the Spirit is 'reductionistic'.[72]

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[68] Weinandy has argued that Irenaeus' view stands out from among the ante-Nicene Fathers in this regard. Where most of them still had an emanationist aspect to their thinking through 'reliance on Middle Platonic thought', in Irenaeus we see a new development as he "pushed the economic expression of the Trinity well into the nature of God". The 'economic' and 'immanent' aspects of the Godhead shall be discussed further below with regards to Appasamy's Trinity. Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity*. 134-135.
[69] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 44.
[70] Ibid. 58.
[71] Ibid. 60-61.
[72] Ibid. 64.

Perhaps this might be reconsidered following our discussion on the Church and its Sacraments.

4.2.3 Appasamy's version of the Trinity

With the introduction of the Spirit we are now able to consider his views on the Trinity. Although he has avoided the subject thus far, at least as far as his terminology is concerned, with 1935's *Christ and the Indian Church*, he is ready to commit himself to some form of Trinitarian thinking. But the passage cannot be read in isolation. It must also be considered against the backdrop of all that he has already said concerning the agency of Father, Son and Spirit. In his earlier writing we have found that the Logos is the immanent God, the divine revelation already in the universe. The 'only begotten' Son is the Logos incarnate who uniquely reveals the glory of the Father. The Father is greater than the Son and yet the Son is one with the Father. Although he has been clear that the 'I and the Father are one' passage should not be read in a metaphysical sense, but a moral one, he has been equally clear that the Son is uniquely God. He is the *Monogenēs* of the Prologue, as opposed to those who are begotten through *bhakti*. With reference to the unique relationship between the Son and the Father at John 14.9 Appasamy says: "In Christ Jesus we see God reflected with a perfection and a clearness which we see nowhere else",[73] so fully, in fact, that Jesus can say to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father".[74] And now we have to figure in this 'new fact' of the Spirit, again with the personal pronoun 'he', that reveals the 'Living Christ' to successive generations and continues the work of Christ, both 'without' but especially 'within' the Church.

Does the sum of what Appasamy has said thus far add up to the traditionally articulated doctrine of the Trinity, however, the one God eternally existent in the three

[73] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 24.
[74] Ibid. 26.

Persons of Father, Son and Spirit? It seems to me that he would probably be at odds with the language that has come down to us from Tertullian through Nicea of oneness in 'substance' and threeness in 'Persons'. An overemphasis on the plurality of Persons, perhaps especially in a Hindu context, will very quickly become tritheism. A perfectly reasonable Hindu response might be: why stop at three? Why not describe a whole pantheon of deities as personifications and attributes of the One? Perhaps this is why, when he comes to speaking directly of the Trinity, his first point of clarification for his readers is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not three gods. "God is but one. We cannot impress the truth too strongly in our minds. There is but one Supreme Being who is the Lord of the universe".[75] A few pages later he repeats himself for emphasis: "When we speak of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, let us remember that they are not three gods but that we speak of them in this way to make clear the manifold impress of God upon human life". The latter phrase reveals perhaps that he is thinking of the Trinity as almost more of an explanatory tool, 'we speak of them in this way', a manner of speaking to explain oneness yet difference of agency in divine manifestation. Thus the explanation that follows is more one of function than of 'substance':

> God the Father is God as He is in Himself, the source of all power and goodness. God the Son is God as He has appeared in human history so as to show Himself more clearly to us. God the Holy Spirit is God as the indwelling Presence, residing in the core of human life. And yet all these are not different gods but one God. They are but the varied activities of the one Eternal Spirit who is the author of all life".[76]

In his effort to distance himself from tritheism, however, has he erred more on the side of modalism?[77] In agreement with Wagner, I too would characterize Appasamy's description here as being 'mild modalism'.[78] Wagner does not leave it

[75] Ibid. 58.
[76] Ibid. 59.
[77] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007). 21.
[78] 'milder Modalismus', Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 65.

there, however. His three layer theory to Appasamy's pneumatology with an Idealist *Geist* at the bottom of it all requires him to carry on to the rather uncharitable conclusion that any connections Appasamy does make in regards to the biblical *Spiritus Sanctus* are 'accidental' (*verunglückte*), exceptions that prove the rule that he "has absolutely no place for a Trinity doctrine... in the context of his whole theology".[79] One begins to get the very clear sense that Appasamy cannot win here. When he does make more explicit connections to a New Testament theology on the Spirit that his detractors might recognize and affirm, they are brushed aside as 'accidental'.

In an ambitious book entitled, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives,* Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes that throughout the two thousand years of Christian doctrinal development 'tritheism' and 'modalism' "are the two extreme contours that have guided Christian theology".[80] Appasamy is clearly bent towards the latter of these. But it is worth considering briefly exactly what sort of modalist Appasamy really is. On the one hand, while his explanation of the Trinity might sound more 'Sabellian' in that the 'Father', 'Son', and 'Spirit' are 'manifestations' and 'varied activities' of the one and undifferentiated Godhead, he still wants to maintain throughout the very Johannine relational dynamic between Father and Son and, more recently, Spirit. These are not seen as successive manifestations but as relationship, as communion. In this sense he is very much in line with what Ramsey calls the 'social analogy' of the Trinity that has its starting place in the Gospels rather than in systematic theology.[81] And neither, as we have seen in his discussion on passibility, do we find a *patripassianism* that is often a common corollary of modalism.[82] On the other hand, although we never find Appasamy

[79] "aber im Zusammenhang der ganzen Theologie Appasamys beweist diese verunglückte Formulierung nur, daß er für Trinitätslehre überhaupt keinen Platz hat". Ibid. 65
[80] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. 27.
[81] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 181.
[82] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. 29.

shying away from using 'person' language about God - indeed he is emphatic in his 'personalist' vision that God is the *Puruṣottama*, the 'Supreme Person' - importantly, however this is never in the plural. That is to say, we never find him in the plural sense supporting the familiar language of 'one God in three Persons'. Perhaps in his zeal to distance himself from tritheism, for good reason I might add if he wants to clarify that Jesus is not simply a member of a *puranic* pantheon or *Trimūrti* ('three images' of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Siva), he is in actual fact reflecting some of the very same concerns that have led some significant theologians of the last century to question the language of classical formulation. Barth, for example would prefer to speak of the Three as *Seinsweise* ('ways of being/existence') rather than as 'Persons'.[83] Kärkkäinen has noted that this nuanced German term often gets translated into English as 'modes of being', a term that has led some to believe that Barth had modalist tendencies as well. There is also the fact that Appasamy has framed his Trinity doctrine here with very deliberate reference to Revelation. The divine purpose for the Son's advent is 'to show Himself more clearly to us'. While the more direct influence here is to be found in the *Lux Mundi* emphasis on "the revelation of the Trinity through history and experience",[84] perhaps, as well, this is not too far off from Barth's language and emphasis about God as 'Revealer, Revelation and Revealedness'.[85]

Related to this is the question of the distinction between an 'economic' and an 'immanent' Trinity. Appasamy seems to have plenty to say about an 'economic Trinity' (although of course he never uses the term), the 'being-in-relation-to-us-of-God'. But he has nothing at all to say about an 'immanent Trinity', the 'being-in-himself-of-God'. He does not use these terms, or analogues, because he does not have such a distinction

[83] Ibid. 71.
[84] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 179.
[85] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. 69.

in his thinking. Perhaps the distinction is a helpful one,[86] however, especially in drawing out an implicit dynamic that Appasamy seems to have missed in the opening verses of the Prologue. He has already identified 'love' as divine attribute, *the* divine attribute, citing for his authority the first Johannine Epistle's 'God is love'.[87] In the same publication with his discussion on the Trinity we find him developing his earlier conviction that "[l]ove is at the heart of the universe".[88] What he has not explored here, however, is the conception that not only is God 'love' for the world *because there is a world*, but that the Godhead is a loving communion *before there was a world*. "God exists as Father, Son, and Spirit, that is, God-in-Himself, even without reference to us since the Triune God exists in his freedom and love".[89] Kärkkäinen has identified this as being one of Barth's overarching concerns, "...both the inner-Trinitarian love and the desire of the Triune God to create fellowship with humans", from *CD* II/1.285.[90] Perhaps had Appasamy not felt the need to defend himself against the onslaught of 'crisis theology' in India he might even have found something of an ally in Barth's Trinitarian meditations, both with regards to reservations over the use of 'Person' language in the plural as well as in his 'love at the heart of the universe' maxim.[91]

In response to Appasamy I would argue that there is more to be considered in the first verse of the Prologue than his early work has uncovered. Before there was any such thing as a Creation "...the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God". Here is

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[86] Rahner wants to emphasize the unity of these two trinitarian visions. As Kärkkäinen puts it, 'Rahner's rule' is that "*The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity".* He wants to emphasize that relationship in the Trinity is inseparable from the context of history and salvation. Ibid. 78.

[87] He has spoken of the love between Father and Son in his discussion on Christ as 'model *bhakta*', but in this sense he was developing the idea of what ideal human response to the divine initiative.

[88] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 24.

[89] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*. 70.

[90] Ibid. 72.

[91] He might also have benefited from Zizioulas: "Love is not an emanation or 'property' of the substance of God... but is *constitutive* of His substance, i.e., it is that which makes God what He is, the one God. Thus love ceases to be a qualifying - i.e., secondary - property of being and becomes *the supreme ontological predicate.* Love as God's mode of existence 'hypostasizes' God, *constitutes* His being". John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). 17.

the hinge point between the pure Hebrew monotheism of the *Shema* and what would later become the uniquely Christian doctrine of the Trinity. 'With' and 'was' are the two operative words here, each needing the other for a properly Johannine basis of understanding of the Godhead. 'With' without 'was' would mean that the pre-existent Logos could well be a first principle or divine intermediary through whom the world was made, but who was still ultimately nothing more than creature himself; 'was' without 'with' would have to imply some form of modalism, denying the Son distinction in any sort of pre-existent sense, personhood *as the result of* rather than the basis of the Incarnation. The first verse of the Prologue is clearly intended to lead the Johannine reader to an understanding of an intrinsic and original relationality within the Godhead, and that this intrinsic relationality existed before there was any such thing as a creation or a world. There is both difference and relationship within the mystery of the One. Christ is both in relationship to and yet still in very nature and being God. There is no simpler or clearer way to express this than the author of the Prologue has already done: 'the Word was *with* God, and the Word *was* God'.

Appasamy's notion of 'love at the centre of the universe', I am saying, is missing out on some important Johannine concepts. If God were a single divine Monad from whom all things emanate and into whom all things return, then God could not rightly even be defined as 'love', for surely love requires an object. A divine monad can indeed be *sat* ('truth'), *cit* ('consciousness') and *ananda* ('bliss'), but it can only *become* love as soon as a created 'other' comes into existence. As much as Appasamy wants to steer clear of tritheistic assumptions in his readers, he should also exercise caution in not aligning himself with the sort of emanationism that we shall find in Rāmānuja's *vyuha* cosmology. Just as tritheism is not the Prologue's vision, neither is an emanationist 'pouring forth' from a single divine Monad. God is already loving in

and of Godself, already love 'in the beginning'. The seeds of this are initially planted in the first few verses of the Prologue, and they will grow into fruition with the three-ness of the *paráklētos* teachings of the 'farewell discourse'. In my view this is the only way that one can make sense of the otherwise imprecise teaching on the Father and Son with reference to the *paráklētos.* When he, the Spirit, comes he will 'indwell' the *bhaktas,* and so both Father and Son will dwell 'with' and 'in' them. Here is also the basis for what would become known as the doctrine of *perichoresis* ('envelopment' or 'encircle') that Moltmann and others have recently picked up on with regards to the Church in the 'dwelling' language of the High Priestly Prayer.[92] Moltmann has connected the Johannine passages with what he finds in the classical Greek formulation of the doctrine in Gregory of Nazianzus.[93] This again would have helped Appasamy out considerably particularly in outlining the relationship between the Spirit, Christ and the Church.

Before leaving this it must also be pointed out that there was an Anglican scholar equally well read in the Fathers, Charles Gore who, anticipating these developments in twentieth century theology, states in *The Mission of the Church:*

> [w]e cannot think of an independent, eternal, spiritual life in God, if the being of God is blank and monotonous unity. The life of the spirit, the life of will and knowledge and love, involves relationship. For love there must be a lover and a loved... And it is thus the doctrine of the Trinity... because it shows us God not in isolation, but in perpetual fellowship within Himself.[94]

In sum, the Godhead is already loving communion. The purpose of creation is to draw an 'other' into that communion, so that creation itself can also participate in the loving

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[92] See especially Jurgen Moltmann, "God in the World – the World in God: Perichoresis in Trinity and Eschatology," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008).
[93] Ibid. 373. In the Latin, *circumincessio*, we might also turn to Hilary of Poitiers *Concerning the Trinity* 3.1. The Persons of the Trinity "reciprocally contain one another, so that one permanently envelopes and is permanently enveloped by, the other whom he yet envelopes".
[94] Gore, *The Mission of the Church: Four Lectures Delivered in June, 1892, in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph*. 106-107.

communion of the Godhead. With these developments outlined, Appasamy's new emphasis on the Spirit, his incorporation of a pneumatology into his earlier Logos Christology and his resultant considerations of the Trinity, we turn now to consider his remaining two divine embodiments: the Eucharist and the Church.

4.3 The Eucharist as Body of God

Although there is increasing reference to them in his post-ordination writings, the Sacraments are nothing new to Appasamy's thinking. Consideration of the Eucharist and its meaning has, in fact, been with him from the start. What is new in his post-ordination writing, evidenced in the papers he prepared for Bishop Waller, is the more Anglican shape it has taken. It is worth first considering some of his earlier thinking on the matter, especially in *Bhakti Marga,* for his exegesis of the Johannine text, in my view, is in some ways quite insightful.

4.3.1 Christ the 'heavenly food of the *bhaktas'*

If Appasamy's early views on sacrament can be given a summary it is simply that Jesus in John's Gospel has declared himself to be the elemental source of life itself. He finds this for example, in 4.14, as he speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well of 'living water', and later in 7.37 the invitation to 'all who are thirsty'. This is followed by the very deliberate connection between Christ, the source and fount of that living water, and the promised flow and outpouring of the Spirit (again, Spirit Christology) in the *bhakta* at 7.38. That God is 'Living Water', Appasamy says, is well attested in the Prophets, as in Jer. 2.13, 17.13, Isa. 55.1, Zech 14.8, Ezek 17.1.[95] In John Jesus is explicitly invoking such passages to declare himself to be their fulfilment. This is taken

[95] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 133-134.

even further, he says, in the 'bread of life discourse', where Jesus declares himself also to be sustenance itself. He is not simply *like* the manna in the Exodus story, but uniquely the gracious provision of the Father who was its source. The same Father who fed the children of Israel has now sent the Son into the world to be its sustenance.

He is well aware of the issues involved here in rushing into a Eucharistic reading of John 6, and notes as well that there is no institution passage in John's Gospel. As with so many Anglican scholars, however, this is explicitly the connection he wants to make. There is something to be learned, he says, in comparing the 'bread of life discourse' with the other New Testament Eucharist passages, Mark 14.22-24, Luke 22.17-20, Matt. 26.26-28 and 1 Cor. 11.24-26,[96] the most obvious difference being that there is no Johannine reference to the body and blood as 'remission of sins'.[97] The Eucharistic sense in John's Gospel is that before and after he is the remedy of sin he is the source of life itself, "[T]he body and blood of Christ are taught as being the source of life". John, he says, has deliberately placed his bread of life passage here and not in the context of the last supper because:

> Spoken at the last supper the words would seem to be closely related to the sacrifice which was to take place immediately on Calvary but spoken after the feeding of the five thousand, they would appear naturally enough as an exposition of the importance of spiritual food in human life. [98]

John, he feels, must have understood the Eucharist more in this sense, as sustenance rather than remission.[99] "Christ is the heavenly food of His bhaktas". Although much of his earlier writing is about individual *bhakti* experience, here we find the beginnings of his communal emphasis, as it is the community of *bhaktas* that has "partaken of a new

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[96] Ibid. 135.
[97] As Boyd has also noticed, Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 316.
[98] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 135.
[99] Although he does not make the connection, such a view of the Eucharist would coincide nicely with the earliest known Eucharistic prayer in the earliest known Christian liturgy, the *Didache.* The *Didache* too does not make any 'remission of sins' reference, but rather like John 15 speaks of "the holy vine of David Thy servant, which Thou madest known to us through Jesus Thy Servant'... Even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom…"

spiritual energy in this act of exalted communion".[100] I would add to Appasamy's thinking here that a Eucharistic reading of the 'bread of life discourse' is also notably framed in the present sense. What I mean by this is that, whereas in Corinthians and the Synoptics the partakers are both commemorating the past ('do this in remembrance of me') as well as looking forward to a *parousia* ('you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'), the emphasis in John 6 is uniquely upon the present consumption of the Living Christ ('I am the bread of life'). In the understanding of all of these sources combined, the *bhakta* can partake of the Eucharist in a 'past', 'present' and 'future' sense.

Returning to the Bishop's reading on the elements and sustenance, Appasamy finds a very interesting Upaniṣadic connection that, to my knowledge, is quite unique to him. In the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* 3.2 the ancient *ṛṣis* say: "Food is Brahman: for from food these creatures are born; by food the creatures thus born live; and into food they enter and perish".[101] The divine is intimately related to the body and its consumption of divine sustenance. Boyd's summary of Appasamy's thinking here is quite correct: "matter or the body - here seen as food - may become a vehicle or effective symbol of divine power and grace".[102] Integral to his understanding here, once again, is his denial of a dichotomy between the spirit and the body, for both the body and food are not to be seen as 'polluted' or 'evil'. "John seems to have no such distinction in mind. Life to him is all one. It is we who are in the habit of marking off physical from spiritual life. But he regards them as cohering in a larger unity".[103] This precisely is why the Jesus of John's Gospel has declared himself to be the elemental source of life itself, to show that 'the physical and spiritual lie close to each other',[104] and that "[t]here is then no chasm

[100] Ibid. 135-136.
[101] Ibid. 133.
[102] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 342.
[103] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 140.
[104] He finds some similar line of reasoning in the distinction between the Johannine and the Synoptic resurrection accounts. The Fourth Evangelist, he says, is more clear than the Synoptic writers in

between the physical and the spiritual".[105] To the 'keenly spiritual mind of John', says Appasamy, bodily appetites are not to be despised but "were indicative of certain vital needs which held as true of the soul as of the body. In fact he conceived of life springing from these appetites as one". All of this he understands to be both sourced and fulfilled in the one who calls himself the 'living Water' and the 'Bread of Life'.[106] And here, again, it is the 'living Christ' that is being sacramentally mediated, the divine agency of which he will later connect with the Spirit. "[T]he living Christ enters into us and forms a part of our inmost self in the same organic way in which food and drink become a part of our being".[107]

There is significance as well, he says, in noting just how elemental the Christian sacramental materials are. Citing from the *Bhagavad Gītā* 15.14, Appasamy claims that when Hindu *bhakti* speaks of tasting of the Lord it is in ambrosial language. "He is milk, sugar-cane, nectar, luscious fruit, the finest of delicacies".[108] The Fourth Evangelist, he says, "speaks of the Christ within as water, bread, the staple of human food". His distinction here is between the sort of *bhakti* represented in *amṛta* ('ambrosial nectar'), of "rapture, ecstasy – flights of emotion reserved for the few and that in extraordinary hours", and the more elemental Johannine *bhakti* of 'bread and water' that provides "the moral strength which all men and women need to exercise every day of their lives".[109] The emphasis in John, he says, is that the mystery is hidden

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emphasizing that the resurrection body of Jesus 'was at once physical and hyperphysical'. In John 20.19-29 he finds that "the boundary line between the physical and the spiritual became obliterated. This record of the resurrection experience shows us that it would not have been as hard for the Fourth Evangelist as for the modern man to make the transition in thought from the physical to the spiritual". Ibid. 142.

[105] Ibid. 141.

[106] Ibid. 143.

[107] Here again we find what Ramsey refers to as the 'Tractarian spirit': "The sense of the moral significance of every Christian dogma, the feeling for the mysterious in religion and for the unity of sacrament and Incarnation". Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 2.

[108] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 145.

[109] Ibid. 146.

within the mundane, not in the ecstatic: "[t]he indwelling Christ means enhanced energy for ordinary tasks, increased vitality for daily work".

What, according to Appasamy, is exactly happening in the Eucharistic meal? It is clear that his position is a sacramental one throughout. By this I mean that there is no evidence in any of his writings that he has a Zwinglian understanding of the meal being nothing more than a 'symbolic remembrance'. But he is equally clear that it is a mystery, and so does not even begin to try to explain the mechanics by which the elements are consecrated.[110] Every age has its own interpretation of these, says Appasamy, and:

> …every national Church offers its own fragmentary doctrine. Beyond these interpretations lies the important fact that the Sacraments were instituted for our benefit by our Lord and for that reason they have, whatever our private interpretations may be, a special importance.[111]

As Boyd notes, "[r]ather than going into the controversies of western sacramental theology with their discussion of the real presence, transubstantiation ,'in, with and under' and so on, Appasamy returns to Rāmānuja's idea that all created beings are 'the body of God'."[112] His focus, rather, is on the result of the sacramental transaction: "Christ enters into our being to energise all the activities which take place in it..."[113] Although he does refer to a consecration of the elements, there is no mention of any sort of substantial change that takes place in them.[114] Staying close to his text he wants to make the case that it is Christ himself, the 'bread of life' that is present in the Eucharist:

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[110] Immanuel expresses admiration for Appasamy's recovery of a symbolic view of the Eucharist in the Body of God analogy: "This idea of symbols gives a new line of interpretation to the doctrine of the Eucharist. Viewed from this point of view, the difficulties of transubstantiation and consubstantiation are transcended. Nor do the elements merely signify as a symbol would to the Western mind. For to the Indian the symbol is a category *sui generis.* It has more than significance. It has a life and is continuous with reality. Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians*. 78.
[111] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 84.
[112] Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*. 139.
[113] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 148.
[114] Canon Quick's summary in his preface comes closest, in my opinion, to Appasamy's perspective on this: "Clearly the relation is spiritual, not physical. The bread is the Body spiritually and not physically. Our Lord was physically related to His earthly flesh and blood in the days of His Incarnation. He is

> It is not because the Christian kneels reverently along with other devout persons in a place and in a manner that are hallowed by every means devised by the piety of man that the bread and wine have a different value from ordinary bread and wine. But it is because Christ himself comes into our souls through the elements and abiding in us endows us with His spiritual energy.[115]

Neither does he seem to have anything particularly sacerdotal in mind as well. Some, he says, 'at the one extreme' have insisted on the "importance in the consecration of the elements by the accredited priests of the Church", but the Johannine 'bread of life' teaching "has nothing to say about these but lays all the stress on the Lord's gift of Himself in direct response to the love and faith of the bhakta", and so, he feels, "[t]he value of the common meal is not due to priestly mediation".[116] It is, in the final summation, a mystery. As to why God chooses this act over another to fulfil the divine purposes, he does not say. All he knows and claims from his own experience is that "Christ imparts Himself to His followers in a special measure while they participate in the act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood".[117]

For the most part Appasamy's discussion on the Sacraments is confined to the Eucharist, with a conspicuous absence of teaching on Baptism. He does not attempt to connect Baptism with Jesus' teaching on being 'born of water and spirit' in the encounter with Nicodemus in John 3.[118] It would have been an intuitive move to do so, to read it sacramentally in much the same way as he has in John 6. Perhaps also here is evidence of cultural sensitivity as Baptism would almost certainly be perceived in Hindu contexts as being an initiatory rite into a new communal identity. Whereas partaking of a sacred meal or *prasād* offering is a more common practice that happens

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spiritually related to the Eucharistic bread and wine. But both relations are real; and since both earthly flesh and Eucharistic bread are really means of His self-expression and action, the term *body* is properly applied to both". Quick, *The Christian Sacraments*. Xix

[115] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 148.

[116] Ibid. 149.

[117] Ibid. 149.

[118] …as Scott Hahn has done. Hahn reads both John 3 and John 6 as being 'mystagogical catechesis', Jesus teaching the mysteries of the kingdom in advance "continuing in the sacramental signs of the Church, which themselves point to the work of the Spirit". Scott W. Hahn, "Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John," *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008). 120.

across devotional tradition. We do, however, find a rare reference to Baptism in an article entitled "Inner Life", and his explanation of it is notably quite Pauline, following St. Paul's reasoning in Romans 6:

> [I]n our baptism we die to our old man. Just as Christ died on the cross, we die. But just as He rose from the dead, so we also rise again to a new life. So complete, so marked is the change that we can only speak of it as death followed by life... Our experience gains a new significance. It is, on a small scale, like the Death and Resurrection of Christ – the two supreme events in the religious history of mankind.[119]

Another reference to Baptism can be found in *Indian Church,* in which he repeats his reasoning from *Bhatki Marga*. "We are not pure spirits. If we were, He would speak to us only in spiritual ways. But we have a body… It is, therefore, necessary... for deepening our life with God". In this context he includes both ordinances, claiming that "all these have been provided with the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. In these Sacraments, water, bread, and wine bring us into the very Presence of God. They unite us with Him".[120] Again, the 'mystery in the mundane': "We may not understand *how* the body helps the spirit but we must agree that the body *does help* the spirit".[121] Perhaps it is because the Eucharist is consumed and transformed in the human body as opposed to an external ritual of washing that he keeps on returning to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a more intimate devotional transaction as opposed to a more positional one in Baptism. Of the former he says:

> Now in the goodness of God, the Sacrament of Holy Communion has been given to us so that we may come to Him with all that we have – body, mind and soul. We receive our Lord's life and partake of it. He enters us and sustains us from day to day.[122]

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[119] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 33-34.
[120] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 77.
[121] Ibid. 78.
[122] Ibid. 79.

4.3.2 The 'sacramental principle': a 'God-filled Universe'

The more important development to be found in *Indian Church,* however, is his extension of Eucharistic thinking to sacramental thinking more generally. Because the Incarnation has assumed full bodily form, he has 'elevated' all flesh. This, again, is another familiar Cambridge Trio and *Lux Mundi* emphasis. As Ramsey puts it the emphasis among liberal Anglican scholars of the day was the "social corollaries of the doctrine of the Incarnation" and that "the taking of manhood into God implied the consecration of the entire life of man".[123] The former we shall find below in Appasamy's discussion on the Church, but the latter seems to be the blueprint for what Appasamy is saying at this point. In the Incarnation God has reclaimed all the elements of creation and declared himself to be elemental to the very life of the new creation. Gore calls this the "principle of the Incarnation - the dignity which the Incarnation gives to material things".[124] The Incarnation, as Appasamy reasons it, is the basis for the physical reality that mediates the spiritual, the 'supreme Sacrament' that, through *bhakti,* now makes all else sacramental - the sacramental principle. Not only bread, wine and water but "[t]he whole world indeed is a Sacrament".[125] In his earlier work he has argued for the recognition of a 'God-filled universe' because it is indwelt by the Logos or the *Antaryāmīn.* Here Appasamy adds to this a sacramental logic:

> All the experiences of life are aflame with God, not merely because they suggest to us the thought of God but also because they help us to draw nigh to God. We see the movements of the stars, the ripening of the harvest, the growth of children, the progress of nations. All these speak to us of the wonder and mystery of God and we are led to adore and worship Him.[126]

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[123] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 1.
[124] Gore, *The Mission of the Church: Four Lectures Delivered in June, 1892, in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph*. 68.
[125] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 79.
[126] Ibid. 79.

Anticipating his readers' objections he asks the pre-emptive question: if all the world is sacrament, then why are baptism and communion set apart? If the *bhakta* is so consecrated then it can be said that "[a]ll life and all that we do from hour to hour is sacramental. This inference, which is sometimes drawn, needs to be carefully considered". Christian *bhakti* is a sacramental existence. To the pure all things are pure.

Concerning Appasamy's statement that he finds "die ganze Welt ein Sakrament" Wagner finds, once again, nothing more than "natural knowledge of God or the mystical religious experience".[127] I would argue that, more likely, he is getting this straight out of his Anglican tradition, and in particular, in O.C. Quick, since Appasamy has specifically cited him. Quick argues that because the 'outward and inward are inseparably linked' and that we 'are souls or minds in bodies, when we speak of 'a sacramental world' we mean that "… any rigid line drawn between what is inward and what is outward in our experience is bound to be more or less arbitrary, that we cannot classify the objects of our experience into some things which are purely inward and others which are purely outward".[128]He then outlines two approaches - one emphasizing 'transcendence', the other 'immanence':

> He who inclines to think of the world rather as God's "artificial" instrument (after the analogy of a piece of machinery) tends to deism, and therefore exaggerates the divine transcendence. He who thinks of the world as God's "natural" instrument (after the analogy of the human body) finds God acting everywhere in the process of nature, and therefore conceives Him as immanent.[129]

Appasamy clearly belongs to the latter of these categories, although not, as evident in his opposition to Hegel's *Geist*, at the expense of divine transcendence. In Quick's

[127] "natürlichen Gotterskenntnis bzw. der mystischen Religions-Erfahrung". Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 94-95.
[128] Quick, *The Christian Sacraments*. 4.
[129] Ibid. 16.

summation the first of these groups "tends rather to value sacraments, the second to value sacramentalism".[130]

4.3.3 The 'selective principle' and 'general principle'

There are two principles at work here, says Appasamy, and this too he seems to get from Quick, a 'selective principle' and a 'general principle'.[131] What he means by this is that although there are many prophets, "[t]he selective principle has made it necessary for us to behold in Christ the supreme manifestation of the Divine. He stands above all prophets and seers. He has been so fully indwelt by God that we are led to identify Him with God".[132] Similarly, while the pluralist would have us believe that "all religions are equal and that all men have been prepared to receive God's love and grace", 'God has chosen' that salvation would come 'through Christ' and that before this it was 'Israel through which Christ would come'. Returning to his distinction between 'kinship' and 'union' from the earlier writing this time he frames it in his 'general' and 'selective' principles. All people, he says, are on some level 'God's children' and yet only some are *bhaktas*. Some have union with God while others do not, again, the selective principle at work.[133] The 'sacramental principle', that the whole world, all meals and flesh are sacramental through consecration, should never be at the expense of simple sacramental observance in obedience to the Scriptures. Inference does not replace the injunction:

> It is perfectly true that all life is a Sacrament. It may be quite logical to infer from this general principle that every meal is a Sacrament. But let us recognize that while every meal is a Sacrament, the supreme Sacrament is Holy Communion.[134]

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[130] Ibid. 17.
[131] For his full argument see Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 79-84.
[132] Ibid. 80.
[133] Ibid. 81.
[134] Ibid. 82.

Regular partaking of the Eucharistic meal in communal context is to be considered normative to the Christian *bhakta*.

Appasamy's reasoning here, in the main, seems to have taken a number of pages from Quick's book. "The life of Jesus Christ is seen at once as the perfect sacrament,"[135] thus making the Sacraments of the Church the "extension of the Incarnation".[136] As such, through these "we may continue to apply the term incarnation also to the created universe as a fulfilled whole".[137] Quick's reasoning takes him a step further than Appasamy, however, in saying that because "Jesus Christ himself is the perfect sacrament of created being, so in the light of that one sacrament the Church appears as the sacrament of human society".[138] As the Church is the specific subject of the next section more will not be said on this presently.

Appasamy's views are also quite consonant with Gore's ideas concerning the sacramental Presence of the Holy Spirit in his *Lux Mundi* essay. First, there is a social emphasis in the Sacraments: "Sacraments are the ordained instruments of grace, and sacraments are in one of their aspects *social* ceremonies – of incorporation, or restoration, or bestowal of authority, of fraternal sharing of the bread of life".[139] Second, even while knitting people into community, the Spirit yet 'nourishes individuality'. As with varieties in nature, so too, do we find a diversity of approach in the early church.[140] In Appasamy's words, the *bhakta's* 'abiding in Christ' "in work, worship and love with other bhaktas",[141] is never at the expense of individuality.[142] Thirdly, and probably the closest connecting point:

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[135] Quick, *The Christian Sacraments*. 105.
[136] Ibid. 102.
[137] Ibid. 103.
[138] Ibid. 106.
[139] Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 235.
[140] Ibid. 236-237.
[141] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 124.

> [T]he Spirit claims for His own, and *consecrates the whole of nature*...It is only sin which has produced the appearance of antagonism between the Divine operation and human freedom, or between the spiritual and material. Thus the humanity of Christ, which is the Spirit's perfect work, exhibits in its perfection how every faculty of human nature, spiritual and physical, is enriched and vitalized, not annihilated, by the closest conceivable interaction of the Divine Energy.[143]

Appasamy's emphasis is quite the same as Gore's here. For the latter says with added authority from the Fathers:

> That everything in Christianity is realized 'in flesh as in spirit' is the constantly reiterated cry of S. Ignatius who of all men was most 'spiritual'. That the spiritual is not immaterial, that we become spiritual not by any change or curtailment of nature, not by any depreciation or ignoring of the body, is the constantly asserted principle of S. Irenaeus.[144]

The Church is thus, in its Sacraments, sacramental thinking and sacramental community called to restore the unity of both the spiritual and physical, in "*the gradualness of the Spirit's method in recovery*".[145] We also find in Gore a close association between the Spirit and the Living Christ. It is the Spirit, according to Gore, that is the 'Vicar of Christ', "in whose presence Christ Himself is with them. He is the consecrator of every sacrament, and the substance of His own sacramental gifts".[146]

Concluding Appasamy's discussion on the Sacraments and on the Eucharist more specifically we return again to our four-fold Body of God context in *Gospel.* Fellowship with Christ is uniquely to be found in "[t]he bread and wine which He blessed"[147] in the *bhakta's* communal act of "eating the flesh, and drinking the

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[142] Appasamy brings Rāmānuja into the discussion: "What becomes of the bhakta's self? Does it continue to exist at all? If God is all in all, the natural inference is that the human self has disappeared, has become the Divine Self".Ibid. 85-86.
[143] Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 239.
[144] Ibid. 240.
[145] Ibid. 240.
[146] Ibid. 243-244.
[147] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 207.

blood".[148] What is new here is that he adds to his earlier 'elemental' reasoning a more explicit connection to the Atonement. The Eucharistic elements:

> ...reveal to man His utter love for them leading to the complete sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. The institution of this sacrament immediately before His death on the cross is deeply significant: it shows the ultimate connection between this sacrament and the sacrifice on the cross. The bread and wine were to become a new body of our Lord. In tasting them we taste His love. In seeing them we see Him yearning for mankind and ready to suffer to the utmost for them. This sacrament deepens our love for Him and unites us with Him. Truly the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord because through them, he fulfils His end of making known His love to man and gathering them into the intimacy and closeness of fellowship with Him.[149]

In *Bhakti Marga* he told us that John has deliberately not placed the 'bread of life discourse' in the context of the final Passover, but rather in the second Passover context of the multiplication of the fish and the loaves because he wants to associate Christ with the elements, as sustenance itself. In *Gospel,* however, we find that he wants now to explicitly make the connection between the meal and the Cross, and in doing so comes on side with more traditionally expressed views on the Eucharist. At least Wagner has noticed this development. In his previous discussion on John 6 Wagner says that in Appasamy's sacrament of the Eucharist he has lost the sense of 'the suffering and dying Lord' for he "seeks its meaning outside of the salvation event on the Cross".[150] To his credit Wagner at least acknowledges that in this present context, Appasamy has *tried* to take "the New Testament witness of communion and sacrifice of Christ on the cross into account".[151] Wagner will even go so far as to say, more charitably, that in terms of the Eucharist Appasamy "shows that he is in fact closer to the witness of Scripture",

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[148] Ibid. 214.
[149] Ibid. 208.
[150] "...löst Appasamy das Sakrament des Abendmahls vom leidenden und sterbenden Herrn und sucht seine Bedeutung außerhalb des Heilsgeschehens am Kreuz". Wagner, *Erstgestalten Einer Einheimischen Theologie in Südindien*. 96.
[151] '... versucht er... das neutestamentliche Zeugnis von Abendmahl und Opfertod Christi am Kreuz zu berücksichtigen". Ibid. 97.

than the rest of his 'systematic theology' (presumably in context he means the four-fold Body of God) allows.[152]

This completes our summary of Appasamy's understanding of the Sacraments, the 'sacramental principle' and the Eucharist more specifically. We are now in a position to understand all that he means with the articulation of his third body of God. "God took yet another body – the bread and wine which He blessed on the eve of His crucifixion. The Lord of the Universe selected bread and wine and made them the instrument for fulfilling His purpose".[153] Boyd summarizes Appasamy's Spirit Christology at work here well: "still there is no mention of 'accident or substance, or even of sign or symbol. Yet God chooses *this* 'body', of bread and wine, and in receiving it we receive the "Spirit" behind it, Christ Himself".[154] In closing we note that Appasamy has explicitly identified his source with an extensive quotation from William Temple's *Christus Veritas:*

> No doubt Christ is always and everywhere accessible; and He is always the same... Our minds are greatly affected by our bodies. When with our very bodies we repeat the sacrificial act by which the Lord interpreted His death, we find ourselves empowered to intend with fuller resolve our union with Him in His obedience to God. The consecrated elements are quite truly and certainly a vehicle of Christ's Presence to our souls.[155]

It is in this sense, says Appasamy, that God 'took yet another body'.

4.4 The Church as Body of God

In the later writing the Bishop returns to some, by now, familiar passages, but this time with greater emphasis upon the 'farewell discourse' than on the Prologue. His emphasis is still Johannine, but he writes:

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[152] "In ihnen zeigt Appasamy, daß er in Wirklichkeit näher am Zeugnis der Schrift steht, als es siene theologische Systematik erlaubt". Ibid. 98.
[153] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 207.
[154] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 343.
[155] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 208. The Temple quote is from *Christus Veritas*, p. 241.

> Many devout Christians in India regard the Gospel of St. John, chapters 14 to 17, as the starting point as well as the climax of Christian experience. If the Christian thinkers of the West would rather begin with the Epistle to the Romans, they should remember that the Gospel of St John belongs also to the very heart of the Christian religion, and not merely the Epistle to the Romans.[156]

We have seen the beginnings of his communal *bhakti* emphasis in *Mokṣa*: "The individual soul does not seek God in solitude. It is in the presence of other men that our experience of God really attains fullness".[157] This is in contrast, he says, to the *sannyasi* ideal that has "erroneously been held in India all through the centuries that freedom is wrought only when the ties which bind us with our fellows are cut off". 'Such an idea', says Appasamy, "is altogether opposed to the deepest and finest elements in Christian teaching. Our fellow men are not so many clogs [*sic*] on the wheels of our progress to God; they are the very wheels with which we move and advance towards Him".[158] It is only in the 'corporate experience' that we "attain the heights of God's love".

4.4.1 Vine and branches: the Church as sacramental community

Although individual ecstatic experience is both valid and valuable to the *bhakta* it is "not the norm in the Christian faith", but rather what John 15 describes as the corporate union of the 'vine and the branches',[159] the 'silent, gradual spread of life through a plant quickening it into fruit', the 'penetrating, pervasive influence' of the Vine on its Branches.[160] John 15 is also developed in a Eucharistic context indicating that, by extension, Appasamy considers the *bhakta's* community to be a sacramental

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[156] Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 72.
[157] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 5.
[158] Ibid. 5-6.
[159] Duraisingh refers to this as Appasamy's 'organic model'. "on the one hand it avoids any notion of mystical identity where individuation is totally lost, and on the other hand it negates notions of mere individualistic-subjectivistic inwardness, for example that of Bultmannian existentialists". Duraisingh and Hargreaves, *India's Search for Reality and the Relevance of the Gospel of John: Papers from a Conference Held in Pune in February 1974*. 50. M.M. Thomas also rightly notes that Appasamy's view is rooted in "the Gospel of John…[where] God, Christ and the *bhaktas* are knit together in a fellowship which is 'profoundly organic' in character. Christianity also demands concern for 'life, rich, full and abounding', in the human ties of family and society". M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969). 142
[160] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 38.

one.[161] In similar language to what we have already seen with regards to the Eucharist, John 15 "teaches us that we must abide in Christ and that He will abide in us. We must live with Christ as closely united with Him as the branches are united with the vine. His life must flow through us; His energy must course in our being; His sap must circulate in our veins".[162] Herein lies the indispensable nature of the Church. The Living Christ indwells it. "The Christian Church is composed of Christ's believers and in this living organism Christ indwells as a spirit animates a body".[163] The branches are always dependent on the Vine, although he also expresses some sort of reciprocity in the relationship as well. In *Indian Church* he says: "In fact, we cannot do anything in the world without using our body. The church is to Christ what the body is to man. He continually needs it for doing His work in the world".[164] Christian *bhakti*, says Appasamy, "must include fellowship with the weakest twigs on the vine, not just other fruit bearing branches. Unlike Hindu bhakti that often sticks to fellowship with other mystics and adoration of the saints".[165] Such is the condescension of Christ in allowing the branches to become the means through which the Vine's fruit is borne.

4.4.2 'That they may be one': a new *mahāvākya*

Another familiar line of reasoning he returns to is that of the oneness of the *bhakta* with Christ. According to the High Priestly Prayer in John 17, the ideal is for a community of *bhaktas* so "that they may come together into a fellowship as close and as intimate as the fellowship between Himself and God [the Son and the Father]".[166] Here is the further development of his conviction that 'love is at the heart of the

[161] In 1935's *Christ in the Indian Church*, he takes this further. Equating it with St. Paul's language of being included and incorporated 'in Christ'. Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 8.
[162] Ibid. 9.
[163] Appasamy, *Church Union: An Indian View*. 4.
[164] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 68.
[165] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 129-130.
[166] Ibid. 131.

universe'. Because the Father, Son and Spirit are in loving communion, so must the *bhaktas* be formed as well. "It begins as love and must end as love. Beginning as love to God it naturally and really flows out as love to men and seeks even in its highest moments of exaltation to experience the fellowship with God along with other men".[167] On the initiative of divine love the *bhakta* responds in love, first individually, but inevitably corporately. In summary, Christ indwells the Church sacramentally, the Eucharistic Presence being the sap that flows from the Vine to the individual branches that comprise the corporate organism of the Church, all of which sounds very Irenaean.

The Bishop also returns with a more mature reflection on his *mahāvākya* discussion in *Gospel and India's Heritage,* this time conscripting the statement in the High Priestly prayer at John 17.22, 'that they may be one, as we are one'. How can the disciples all be one, he asks, if 10.30 is speaking about an ontological/metaphysical reality? An *advaitin* reading, he says, rather more forcefully this time, goes "against all Christian doctrine".[168] Oneness in John's Gospel, is *bhakti*, "a union in love and work and not an identity in their essential nature". Appasamy's point is a good one, and one that nearly all of his critics, uneasy about his non-Nicene reading of 10.30, seem to have missed. The exegete needs always to pay attention to how an author uses certain words and phrases. Especially applicable is the hermeneutical 'law of first mention'. Quite apart from an *advaitin* interpretation, if the first mention of 'oneness' is to be found in 10.30's 'I and the Father are one', and if the author means something incipiently Nicene in its initial context, then we must, as a matter of consistency, carry this over to our interpretation of 17.22 as well. If so, then Jesus in John 17.22's 'that they may be one *as we are one'* must also be declaring the disciples and subsequent Church to be *homoousios* as well, of the same substance of both Son and Father!

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[167] Ibid. 134.
[168] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 38.

Appasamy's interpretation is a better one, and quite intuitive. As the Son and the Father are one, in the same pattern of devoted relationship, so now is the Church one *with* both Father and Son *through* the Spirit, in the same recursive shape as Christ. As Boyd rightly points out with reference to these two *Mahāvākyas*, "for Appasamy the question of the relation of Christ to the Father cannot be divorced from that of his relation to the believer".[169] The moral union between Son and Father in 10.30's is now to be replicated in the *bhaktas* Christ prays for in 17.22, a "completeness of harmony... in thought and purpose".[170] He is substantially approaching perichoretic language at this stage.

With his inclusion of 17.22 as his third *mahāvākya* we can now get a sense of the full trajectory of his thought. 10.30 reveals the original intimacy of union between Father and Son, not in the sense of identity but relationship, what archetypal *bhakti* looks like. Then in 14.28, the *bhakta's* posture is one of absolute dependence, *prapatti*, 'the Father is greater than I'. Now here in 17.22 he wants to emphasize that although the individual *bhakta* can indeed be an imitator of Christ, communion is only complete and fulfilled in communal context, 'that they may be one as we are one'. The communion of *bhaktas* is neither an added extra nor a necessary evil. It is the goal of Christian *bhakti*, the life of Christ flowing from vine to fruitful branches. Even as the *bhakta* was dependent on the Father in 14.28, to some extent, here in 17.22 it is Christ who now condescends to become dependent on the *bhakta.*[171] Such has been his Johannine reasoning throughout.

4.4.3 The Church and the Kingdom

On occasion he steps out of the Johannine text and considers some of the Old Testament passages that have contributed to the Gospel narratives. He comments, for

[169] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 294.
[170] Ibid. 293.
[171] He might also have made the connection here to Rāmānuja's discussion around Kṛṣṇa's declared condescension and dependence on the *bhaktas* in the *Gītā Bhāṣya* but he does not.

example, on the significance of 12 thrones and 12 apostles, that there is an intended continuity between the Old and New. Rejecting a supercessionist replacement sort of approach that makes the New Testament Church something that is entirely 'new', he states that the divine purpose "was to give a new lease of life to Israel and to give it an opportunity to exercise aright its vocation in the future".[172] He is actually quite Pauline in this regard, in consonance with the analogy of the natural olive tree with the grafted on Gentile branches in Romans 11. It is to Israel that was given the 'special vocation'. The 'new Israel' is a renewed Israel not a replaced Israel, the continuation of the original vocation but with a newly constituted people of God comprised of the natural Jewish remnant and grafted in Gentiles such as himself. This 'new Israel', Appasamy says, "would arise to give to the world the knowledge of God as He is and of His power to help and redeem His people from their sin and suffering and to bring them into close, unbroken fellowship with Himself".[173]

There is also overlap between his descriptions of the Church as a Johannine 'communion of *bhaktas'* and his explanations in the more Synoptic language of the 'Kingdom of God'. His definition of the Kingdom is decidedly this-worldly. In Appasamy's words: "He does not merely seek to guide our individual relations one with the other, but wishes to bring in a new world-order".[174] The Church is instrumental in ushering in the Kingdom but it is not synonymous, acting in more of a priestly and mediating role between Creator and creation, between God and the nations. With what seems to be a return to Dodd's 'realized eschatology' he claims that the judgment of which Christ and the Prophets speak "is not assigned to another age but is regarded as having begun and as being in full progress".[175] If 'heaven' is the Presence of God,

[172] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 185.
[173] Ibid. 185.
[174] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 138.
[175] Ibid. 170.

reasons Appasamy, and "the significant characteristic of the future life is that in it we shall see God",[176] then "Heaven is not a place but a state, a state of mind and soul. Heaven is the bliss of the man who knows God and lives with Him… Heaven, then, is the joy of living with God. And Hell is the pain and torment of living away from God".[177] The 'all-pervasive and enduring' joys of the *bhakta* are to be contrasted with the unfavourable judgment of those 'without God' who "are filled with disappointment and sorrow".[178] Because the Kingdom is now and judgment happening before our very eyes, the Church, he says, has finally woken up to a 'remarkable' state of 'social consciousness'. Again, here is evidence of the Spirit still teaching the Church, for according to Appasamy, "It has taken us twenty centuries to realize the social implications of our Lord's teaching".[179] But it is a social service that is rooted in the Spirit's life flowing through the Church. P.V. Joseph has aptly pointed out that it is Appasamy's pneumatology that:

> ... brings out a very significant insight about the sense of justice and morality when he refers to the sanctifying work of the Holy spirit. He goes beyond the traditional interpretation of righteousness and brings out its social implications. Traditional theology has often relegated the work of the Holy Spirit to individual piety... Appasamy rightly emphasized the need to discover the work of the Spirit beyond the parameters of Christian piety... in the spheres of moral transformation and social reformation.[180]

Although the Spirit is at work throughout society, the Church must lead the way for the Kingdom acts that give:

> ...to social work a sense of proportion. In human life some of the highest values get neglected. The strong man flourishes; women and children are exploited; the poor and the aged go to the wall. But social work with a religious background attaches to people their due importance.[181]

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[176] Ibid. 171.
[177] Ibid. 172.
[178] Ibid. 172.
[179] Ibid. 139.
[180] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 62.
[181] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Churc : A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 139-140.

The last shall be first and the first last. Appasamy's social justice emphasis, says Joseph, "is of paramount importance in our contemporary world situations of violence, oppression and exploitation perpetrated particularly on the weak and vulnerable". This he attributes, once again, to Appasamy's pneumatology.[182] I am saying it belongs also to his vision of Church.

4.4.4 Ethics: the Church as Body of God in Modern India

In a chapter dedicated to "the teaching of Jesus on ethics" in *Gospel* he outlines what he believes ought to be the priorities of the social action of the Indian Church. His top priority is an appropriate one, given the context of his writing in the midst of the Second World War and in the final years of the British Raj, the 'duty of forgiveness'. Although this begins with inter-personal relationships,[183] this must also be extended to 'social relationships' between communities. He envisions a church that advocates a restorative sort of justice as opposed to the more familiar retributive kind. Indeed the latter, he says, is the reason why the Second World War has happened in the first place. The Treaty of Versailles was all about retribution, humiliation and 'punishment', leading to national bitterness.

> We must forgive not only in our personal dealings but also in the political dealings of one nation with another. Only then His Spirit will permeate the world and the Kingdom of God, in which love is the supreme principle of life, will become a reality among men.[184]

The Church stands in a prophetic and mediating sort of role in this process of ushering in progress of the gradual growth of the Kingdom of God:

> The fact is, the Kingdom of God is come and yet because it is growing, it is also an affair of the future. The new era does not break upon this world suddenly, but this era gradually becomes new. The kingdom of the world passes by a slow

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[182] Joseph, *Indian Interpretation of the Holy Spirit: An Appraisal of the Pneumatology of Appasamy, Chenchiah, and Chakkarai*. 62.
[183] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 158.
[184] Ibid. 160.

> transition into the Kingdom of God. This life does not yield to a new life in the future. This life itself gradually shades off into the eternal life.[185]

In India itself, he says, there must be significant progress in terms of gender relations. Jesus' attitude toward women in John 8[186] and 4 must be applied to the Indian setting as he comes down strongly against the traditional practices of dowry and arranged marriage.[187] More than this, "Jesus associated women with Himself in His ministry" and so must Indian Christians work to end the seclusion and confinement of women. "If... they enter the professions, mix freely with men and co-operate with them the old idea that marriage is the only goal for a woman ceases to dominate".[188] His reference here is to his Archbishop, William Temple, who highlights the John 4 passage for this purpose in *Readings in St. John's Gospel.* Appasamy's argument is substantially the same as Temple's in saying that Christ is at odds with the 'contempt for women' common in his day, and that their elevation to the 'best of exchange', "is a Christian and not an ancient Jewish sentiment".[189]

His third ethical priority is in the Church's recovery of a non-violent ethic, "that one's enemies should be loved and that evil should not be resisted by violence".[190] Christ is the Church's pattern, and throughout his ministry, at his arrest and crucifixion he "forgave his enemies fully and prayed to God on their behalf that he might extend them to His complete forgiveness".[191] Although he demonstrated righteous anger against the 'formal and hypocritical', as against 'all those who desecrated the temple of God':

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[185] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 170.
[186] Acknowledging that John 8's story of the woman caught in adultery, is not found in the ancient manuscripts, he nonetheless is of the opinion that it is an authentic Jesus tradition. "It is certainly characteristic of Jesus... His method of helping sinners was not by rebuking them but by sympathizing with them deeply and urging them not to sin again". His tenderness towards her is noted even as he also "taught clearly the sacredness of marriage". Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 164.
[187] Ibid. 165.
[188] Ibid. 165.
[189] Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel: (First and Second Series)*. 59.
[190] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 166.
[191] Ibid. 166-167.

> [s]uch was His devotion and love to the Father that He felt justified in dealing sternly with those who were the enemies of true religion. For a person of His loving and tender disposition such rigour was not natural or easy. But He felt it necessary to practise it because of His devotion to God".[192]

Jesus' teaching on non-violent resistance, he says, is 'in line with some of the best traditions in India'. Few European Christians, he says, have adequately acknowledged this, one exception being Albert Schweitzer, of whom the Bishop says he admires his 'call to service', and his vision for a 'simple ethical humanity'.[193] Also acknowledged, of course, is Mahatma Gandhi who "has courageously taught the wide implications of the duty of non-violence", and in whom he has seen more than in his fellow Christians "the true spirit of the teaching of Jesus and the implications of this teaching for our modern life".[194] In application, he says, the Indian Church needs to recover Jesus' ethic of non-violent resistance both in 'personal dealings' as well as in the 'realm of international politics'.[195] In the same way as Christians had to be on the leading edge of the abolition of slavery, so too must they lead the way in a new and vigorous movement "to abolish wars as a means of settling disputes between different nations".[196] The Indian *bhakta's* ethic needs to be Christ-shaped, not 'Christianity-shaped'. Non-violent resistance must be cruciform. "Just as Jesus followed the way of the Cross in order to redeem men from their sin and suffering, so His followers must be prepared to suffer in order to end wars".[197]

Appasamy's fourth ethical priority is what he calls the 'race problem'. Writing in the midst of the Second World War, he mentions the 'cruel persecution' of Jews in Germany. But he also mentions the mistreatment in first world nations of 'Asiatic immigrants', and the Arab resentment of the 'return of the Jews to Palestine'. Closer to

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[192] Ibid. 167.
[193] Ibid. 169.
[194] Ibid. 170-171.
[195] Ibid. 171.
[196] Ibid. 172.
[197] Ibid. 173.

home, however, he sees the subjugation of what he calls the 'Harijans' (Gandhi's term)[198] as being primarily a racial problem that has been aggravated by economic exploitation of groups of people trapped in hereditary professions. But he must ask the most immediate question: how is this any different than the present colonial policy "of nations owning colonies and governing them primarily in their own interests"?[199] Again, it is the Church that must lead the way, for the "Christian Church is the salt of the earth; it has to set up a high ideal before men and to persuade them to follow it courageously and to the utmost limits".[200] Writing two decades before the Civil Rights Movement in the United States he notes that "[o]ne of the biggest racial problems in the world is in the United States of America where the negroes are treated very differently in many of the states from their European settlers". It is time, he says, that British and American Christians followed their own scriptures, and following the ethic Jesus taught in the Lukan story of the Samaritan start practicing the 'real love' that is "not confined to the limits of one's own country, race, language and customs".[201] The Christian Church, he says, again rather hopefully, "has now woke[n] up to the tremendous importance of the racial problem".[202]

Appasamy's fifth and final ethical priority for the Indian Church is in radically rethinking the 'distribution of wealth'. The Christian Church, recovering its prophetic voice, needs to, in his words, "preach that all wealth which is in the world should be distributed evenly and justly".[203] The Church, he notes, has for too long been blamed for 'being on the side of the rich', and it is for this reason that "most modern Communists and Socialists have nothing to do with the Church". As before, the

[198] Ibid. 173.
[199] Ibid. 174.
[200] Ibid. 174.
[201] Ibid. 175.
[202] Ibid. 176.
[203] Ibid. 177.

communion of *bhaktas* must be Christ-shaped, not Christianity-shaped: "Jesus Himself was a poor man, born in the working class". The community of *bhaktas* that he gathered around himself met "only their most urgent needs such as plain food and simple clothes... not wasting their money on comforts and luxuries. To understand the teaching of Jesus about wealth we must keep clearly in mind His own mode of life".[204] Jesus' "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" ethic, ought now to be applied everywhere, in the factories "where thousands of workers are employed". He is not against difference in salary, commensurate to skill level and training.[205] He is, however, quite strongly, and I would add quite presciently in an age of multi-national corporations, against the modern practice of share-holders taking away 'large profits'. These, he says, need to be "reduced considerably so that all the workers in the factory are paid better wages, eat better food, live in cleaner homes... and are able to give their children the education they need".[206] Again, it must be the Church's prophetic voice that ushers in the Kingdom of God 'which Christ came to establish in the world'. For "such differences in opportunities and in enjoyments cannot be regarded as just".[207] Jesus' ethic on wealth, he says, speaks to both the anxieties of the rich as well as the poor, and will be a remedy for both. He even suggests that the Indian Church might benefit in learning something from the *sannyasi* ideal. Although he has already stated that a quietist and individual solipsism is not to be emulated, in this context he considers the value of those, like Sādhu Sundar Singh, as "ascetics (*Sannyasis*) [who] have given up everything and followed [Jesus]".[208] "Jesus did not believe in class-war", says Appasamy, and so associated with both the rich and the poor. The Church, thus, must

[204] Ibid. 177.
[205] Ibid. 179.
[206] Ibid. 179.
[207] Ibid. 179.
[208] Ibid. 181.

also be able to loving relate to both rich and poor, while at the same time providing a radical critique of the idolatry of wealth, and so needs to be free of the latter.

4.4.5 A Johannine great commission: continuing Christ's vocations

In all of these fronts Appasamy sees the Church as playing an important role in terms of advocacy and mediation as well as in being a prophetic voice to political structures, as Prophet to the King in Old Testament polity. While many were advocating a more quietist response, Appasamy makes it clear in a booklet immediately post-Independence that Christians should be involved at all levels of society including in political positions. Despite the efforts of groups such as the R.S.S. and the Hindu Maha Sabhā at making India a 'Hindu Raj', says Appasamy, the Indian Church must remain committed to Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of a 'secular democratic state'.[209] So Christians should be politically involved, and yet they have not called for a 'separate electorate' or 'reserved seats' in the Assembly.[210] On the other hand, he says, due to their socio-economic disadvantage, seats should still be reserved for 'harijans'. Again he is quite prescient here, because he also makes it clear that the reservation system should continue for no more than ten years. If it becomes a more permanent arrangement then the structure intended to help them will lead to their further isolation.[211] Similarly, he says, reservation on the grounds of religious identity will be nothing but detrimental in the long run.[212]

I would argue that, as with his focus on the Incarnation and Sacrament as its extension, this too he is getting his views on Church from his Anglican tradition. From among the *Lux Mundi* scholars, for example, Ramsey highlights the 'two prophets' among them, Henry Scott Holland and Charles Gore. Of the former Ramsey notes a

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[209] A. J. Appasamy, *The Christian Task in Independent India* (London: S. P. C. K, 1951). 1.
[210] Ibid. 7-8.
[211] Ibid. 8-9.
[212] Ibid. 12.

'zeal in social reform'.[213] Of the latter he says, "It was an outcome of the *Lux Mundi* appeal to the Logos doctrine that both democracy and socialism were held to be expressions of the working of the divine Spirit". Gore's thinking here is in the lineage of Westcott before him, both of whom, says Ramsey, intended "the repudiation of *laissez-faire,* and the elimination of gross inequality and injustice by the organizing of society for the common good". By 1908's Pan-Anglican Congress Gore had made the appeal that "the Church should identify itself with the basic ideas of the Socialist Movement".[214] One of Gore's favourite sayings, says Ramsey, was that 'Christ had a profound contempt for majorities'. And so must the Church live, "as the society of 'the way', its members disciplined by simplicity and brotherhood, repudiating luxury and exploitation, and shewing the divine community to the world".[215] Appasamy has said as much almost word for word.

Bishop Appasamy's ethical teaching may have been further focused by Gore's slim volume *The Mission of the Church,* in which he outlines the Church's missiology in a distinctly Johannine way. It is well known that the Gospel of John has no 'Great Commission' passage. But as Gore points out, it does have John 20.21-22: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'". Gore then proceeds to outline the three-fold vocational ministry of Christ as 'Prophet', 'Priest' and 'King'. As Prophet he 'discloses God under conditions of our humanity... human justice and love... discloses God to man".[216] As Priest his vocation is to "unite or

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[213] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 12.
[214] Ibid. 14-15.
[215] Ibid. 15.
[216] Gore, *The Mission of the Church: Four Lectures Delivered in June, 1892, in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph*. 4-5.

reconcile man to God... He takes us up into union with Himself".[217] And as King he stakes his 'moral claim' upon mankind and creation, "to redeem and liberate it, to subdue and to govern it, in all its parts and faculties". [218] The remainder of Gore's volume is in outlining how the Church must now continue the three-fold vocational ministry of Christ if it is to be worthy to bear his name. Gore, like Appasamy, has prioritized what he sees as being the Church's ethical focus at the turn of the twentieth century, including what he calls 'commercial morality', 'responsibility of wealth' and the 'position of women', indeed the very concerns that Appasamy has expressed for modern independent India.[219] We also find Gore's thesis of the three-fold vocation of Christ to be extended through the Church to be rooted in what seems like a Spirit Christology:

> Jesus who is 'passed into the heavens'... is yet by the Spirit brought nearer to us than ever He was to the Apostles on earth; the Spirit links the humanity of every member of the Lord's body to Him as He sits... at the right hand of God. The Spirit's presence is the presence of Jesus, as the presence of Jesus is the presence of the Father, for the holy persons of the Trinity are in inseparable unity.[220]

Gore's vision is clear. As the Father sent the Son, now the Son sends the Church, and it is the unbroken presence of the Spirit that connects the contemporary Church up to the Living Christ and his tri-vocational mantle. In both Appasamy and Gore the Church is not simply to acquiesce in 'mission compound' retreat and tacit approval of social forces that perpetuate oppression and poverty. With the zeal of a Hebrew Prophet, the Church Gore envisions is to be "organized and active, so that they can become known

[217] Ibid. 5.
[218] Ibid. 5.
[219] Ibid. 133-137.
[220] Ibid. 146.

and recognized locally, and even, if necessary, feared in municipal life".[221]Appasamy articulates this more irenically, Gore, more polemically:

> …in the name of all those who in these latter days have reinterpreted to us the meaning of the Gospel of the kingdom of God, in the name of all who to-day are distressed and exploited and fail to reach their goal through the pressure of unjust conditions in society or industry...in the Name most of all of Him whose redemptive love is still over us and within us, and whose indignation blazes for ever against all that crushes the weak and injures the little ones... a summons to all believers to arm themselves with the sword of the Divine Warrior to fight for the cause of the kingdom of God.[222]

4.4.6 Appasamy's vision for an independent Indian church

In the above discussion we have moved from Appasamy's theological understanding of a Church Universal towards more of an institutional and localized expression of it.[223] This must necessarily be the case, and unlike some of his Madras Rethinking Group colleagues, Appasamy believes in the necessity of both. Boyd notes that in response to Chenchiah and Chakkarai's *Rethinking Christianity in India,* "Appasamy will not accept the extreme conclusions of the *Rethinking* Group, as for example when they say that 'the place of the visible Church should be taken by the invisible Holy Spirit'".[224] Because, as we have seen, "religion is fully experienced only when it is corporate", and unless the *bhakta* loves God through loving others, it is of no value, incomplete unless shared in a community.[225] While he admits that there has been considerable evil committed in and by the institutional church in history, not least in the colonial legacy, he nonetheless states that its "influence through the ages has been on

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[221] Charles Gore, *Christ and Society*, Halley Stewart Lectures, (New York,: C. Scribner's sons, 1928). 207-208.
[222] Ibid. 209-210.
[223] Immanuel appreciates Appasamy's insistence that "there must be an organized church in India" Immanuel, *The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians*. 40. So too, Sumithra in Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*. 113.
[224] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 339.
[225] Appasamy, *Church Union: An Indian View*. 1-2.

the whole good".[226] Interestingly, while Appasamy was associating himself even more closely with the institutional church in India, his friend and colleague C.F. Andrews was disassociating himself from "his Cambridge Mission to Delhi in 1914 because of what he saw was the Church's complicity in the three evils of our time 'Capitalism, Militarism, and Imperialism'."[227]

It is the 'Living Christ' who indwells the Church, or in his later pneumatological emphasis, "[t]he Holy Spirit... dwells in the fellowship of Christians which we call the Church". It is the selfsame 'Indwelling God' who not only birthed the Church at Pentecost but now continues to work in and through the Church in its multiple traditions to think and rethink its theology in each new generation. The development of doctrine and resultant Ecumenical Creeds are evidence of the Spirit who continues to 'lead them into all truth'. As the result of the 'long toil' of the early Fathers, he sees:

> …certain large conceptions have emerged and these conceptions have been embodied in the historic creeds. These creeds, therefore, are of value to us as they give in a concise form the corporate results of the serious thinking which has been done in the Christian Church.[228]

He continues to honour those ecumenical creeds. But just as the Fathers had to do in their time and place, so now must the Indian Church recognize the present work of the Spirit on the Subcontinent. In 1930's *Church Union: an Indian View*, Appasamy proposed that within fifty years of his writing, in other words, by the early 1980's, an authentically Indian Church would emerge, proud to own its 'double heritage', courageously both 'Indian' and 'Christian'.[229] No longer the 'mimic man' of European counterparts, the Indian church will learn to write its own theology and doctrinal

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[226] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 122.
[227] Coward, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*. 184.
[228] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 30.
[229] A. J. Appasamy, *Church Union : An Indian View* (Madras: Printed for the author at the Christian Literature Society's Press, 1930). 13.

formulations. “It is to be hoped that as years go by the Indian Church will be allowed complete freedom to follow Jesus in her own way”.[230] The western ecumenical creeds, in this sense, will play a much more tentative and provisional role in India. Since the latter were formulated, he reasons, as a response to questions which arose out of ‘Latin and Greek minds,’ “we should, therefore, have Creeds answering the questions thrown out by the Hindu mind”.[231] Only then, he says, “will a Creed, truly Christian and truly Indian, emerge”. But until such a creed is written, he concedes, “we must use these historic creeds of Christendom”.[232]

At the same time, however, although there is a need for the Indian Church to write its own unifying creeds, he expresses the need to safeguard a plurality of theological approaches in the Indian context. In an article entitled “Who is Jesus?” Appasamy also predicts that there will be a diversity in Indian Christian thought, and he points to his own Anglican tradition as a working model:

> There will not be just one school of Christian Theology in India; there will probably be many as in the Anglican Church, for instance, there are several clearly marked schools of thought – Anglo Catholics, Modern Churchmen, Evangelicals and Bible Christians. Even in a highly organized Church like the Anglican Church these wide diversities of belief are possible. I am sure in India too we shall have many approaches to the Christian Gospel which set out from different points but teach the same goal. The supreme standard of our judgement must be the mind of Jesus. As long as different theological views conform to the mind of Jesus they must be welcomed and encouraged.[233]

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[230] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 341.
[231] Ibid. 9-10.
[232] “The Nicene Creed was written against the background of Greek philosophy. In the Indian Church the problems of Greek thought have little or no meaning. But there are many problems of Hindu philosophy. Is God one or many? What is his relationship to the world? Does he rule it as a transcendent or as an immanent Being? If God the Spirit dwells in all beings, what is his relation to the Supreme God on the one hand and to the Incarnate Christ on the other? Is our personality merged in the Divine, or does it continue to exist even in the state of final bliss? To realize our unity with the rest of Christendom we (in the CSI) decided to say the Creeds in all our services, but we acknowledged the need to think afresh our Christian theology. We put it on record that the time may come for the formulation of supplementary creeds dealing with Indian problems”. Appasamy, *A Bishop's Story*. 80.
[233] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 81.

In this he is following on from his Archbishop, William Temple, who in his 1937 report on *Doctrine in the Church of England,* argues for a plurality of approaches to the Incarnation. "[I]t is legitimate to approach the doctrine from either the Alexandrine or the Antiochene standpoints or their modern equivalents".[234] In the agonistic space of the land of multiple *sampradāyas, vādas* and *darśanas,* even so must the Indian Church rise to the challenge now with a multivocal approach to orthodoxy.

He is sacramental but not sacerdotal. This is an important distinction, for the former lays emphasis upon the Presence in the Sacraments while the latter upon the authority vested in the officiant. In reference to the 'worship in Spirit and truth' teaching in John 4 Appasamy says: "With one lofty, powerful utterance our Lord here ends all vain controversy arising from sacerdotal prejudices".[235] It is this that allows him not to have to insist on an Episcopalian form of church government. As one of the Anglican representatives on the Joint Committee on Church Union he is at once both rooted in his own tradition while, at the same time, open and in fact insistent on a plurality of approaches. He is thus led to the conviction articulated in an article entitled "Ministry of the Church" that "… the new United Church will accept not only the Episcopal element, but also the Presbyterian and congregational elements".[236] At this point he is at odds with Gore's opposition to "the more lax approach towards intercommunication with the non-episcopal churches..."[237] and rather more like Hensley Henson who, although he did not regard himself as a 'Modernist', nonetheless shared their belief in the "non-necessity of particular ecclesiastical polities - with the corollary

[234] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 90.
[235] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 125.
[236] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 89.
[237] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 68.

of intercommunication with all Protestant Churches".[238] Hoping for a greater openness on the part of his English co-religionists than was evident in the Kikuyu incident in the African churches,[239] Appasamy projects, rather hopefully, that despite his vision for intercommununion and multiple ecclesial approaches in the Indian Church, "[t]he Anglican Church throughout the world will probably accept the United Church of South India as a sister Church, as after the union the ministry of the United Church will be on an Episcopal basis and in the line of succession".[240] Given the sum of this, it seems to me that Appasamy's view most closely resembles Temple's in his endorsement of an Episcopalian 'possession of authority' in the 'historic ministries' and not in the more sacerdotal 'possession of powers'.[241] Temple too, although by conviction Episcopalian, "affirmed the positive significance of the non-episcopal communions".[242]

Although he does not propose anything more specific than this, in "Church Union" he envisions that an authentically Indian Church would likely be characterized by three emphases characteristic of what he calls 'the Hindu mind'. First, a *guru paramparā* ('teacher tradition') in which Bishops were to be recognized in the same way as authoritative *swamis* and *gurus* are in the Hindu traditions; second, a transmission of what he calls the "spiritual ancestry of doctrine", what I have identified in the opening chapters as *sampradāya*, 'tradition'; and third, an intimate inter-relation between body and spirit, the basis, once again, for his overarching sacramental

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[238] Ibid. 83.
[239] Charles Gore was significantly involved in the discussion about the Church of South India, and acknowledges that what Bishop Azariah and others were proposing would indeed put communicants in fellowship who would not otherwise be outside of India. His reference here, of course, is to Kikuyu and the problem of intercommunicating African churches. See Charles Gore, *The Proposed Scheme of Union in South India* (London1929). 4-5.
[240] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 90.
[241] Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939*. 125.
[242] Ibid. 127.

emphasis.[243] Openness and acceptance of multiple ecclesial models, he says, can only be possible with evidence of the Spirit that brings freedom of conscience. "For the 'adequate realisation' of this sort of dream, he says, 'two poles' are required, "tradition and freedom. Where either pole is lacking the religious life becomes woefully inadequate".[244] Both poles are equally necessary if the Indian Church is to be vital, independent and united.[245]

In some ways the Indian Church will resemble, although obviously in different aesthetic forms, its European relations. In other ways, however, it will develop along uniquely Indian devotional lines. In acknowledgment of the Śri and Shaktidevi *bhakti* traditions, for example, he envisages, again quite controversially at the time, that the Indian Church could learn to address the Divine Parent as 'Mother' as well as 'Father'.[246] Without the same sort of clear-cut distinctions between 'Christian' and 'non-Christian religion', the Indian Church will more readily acknowledge all that is true and good as being sourced in the *Antaryāmīn.* As such it would have no misgivings about sitting at the feet of a Hindu *yogi* or guru adept at meditation, and instead of lecturing Hindu neighbours, would "invite them to enter our inner shrine".[247] As proof of the viability of this proposition he identifies some of the 'first fruits' of such a devotion in names such as Pandita Ramabai, N.V. Tilak, H.A. Krishna Pillai, Nehemiah Goreh and, above all, to his friend and mentor Sādhu Sundar Singh. These "have brought to the feet of Christ all the best gifts of India – her intense devotion, her complete self-sacrifice, her great zeal, her clear insight".[248]

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[243] Ibid. 15-18.
[244] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 90.
[245] Ibid. 91.
[246] Appasamy, *Gospel*, 73.
[247] Appasamy, *Johannine Doctrine*, 13.
[248] Ibid. 154.

With his ecclesiology thus outlined we are finally in a position to understand all that is embedded in his statement concerning the last of the four 'bodies that God took' in *Gospel and India's Heritage.* God is embodied in the immanent Presence of both Logos and the Spirit in the Universe, uniquely and centrally in history as the Incarnation, sacramentally and normatively in the 'Vine and the Branches' transaction of communal participation in the Eucharist. And now, finally, we are told that:

> God took yet another body – His Church… So God planted in the world His Church as an instrument by which His rule over men would become real. The Church was to be another medium through which He would make plain His will and render it effective in the world.[249]

This concludes the expository section of our study of Appasamy's four divine embodiments. In the fifth and final chapter I will evaluate how and to what extent Appasamy has used Rāmānuja's text and analogy in his theological reasoning, and do for Rāmānuja as I have attempted to do for the Bishop - connect him up to his devotional tradition.

[249] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 208.

Chapter 5. Recovering Rāmānuja's Tradition

In the previous two chapters I have attempted to 'see through' Appasamy's text by following the leads he has left for us back to the devotional tradition that has shaped him. In doing so we have found that the 'liberal orthodoxy' of Gore's *Lux Mundi* and the 'modernism' of Streeter's *Foundations*-era churchmen are writ large in his pages. I would go so far as to say that, on most points, he comfortably inhabits the space between Anglican 'liberal orthodoxy' and 'modernism'. By locating him within his devotional tradition I have also demonstrated that Appasamy's detractors have entirely misread him. His Body of God is neither 'more Hindu than Christian', a 'synthesis of Christianity and Vedanta', nor 'Hegelian Idealism'. It is a uniquely post-Oxford Movement Anglican combination of an emphasis on the pre-existent and immanent Logos, on the Incarnation more than 'redemption',[1] the Eucharist as 'extension of the Incarnation' and the Church as sacramental community. If we add to this his version of the 'sacramental principle' in which, on the basis of the Incarnation, all meals, life and indeed the whole world becomes sacramental, it would seem as though we have identified all of the major ingredients to his four-fold Body of God doctrine.

In *Bhakti Marga* Appasamy envisions that the 'double heritage' of the Indian Church will produce an "attitude of the Indian Christian to the scriptures of India [that] would be very different. He will learn from them…" with the possibility that a "[n]ew emphasis on different truths of the Christian religion may be suggested by them".[2] In *Mokṣa* he further asks "whether our Christian doctrines should not be thought out again *in relation to"* the doctrines of *bhakti.* "We should rethink our fundamental ideas in

[1] In Ramsey's analysis, the space between Gore and Temple, more or less the thesis of Ramsey, *From Gore to Temple: The Development of Anglican Theology between Lux Mundi and the Second World War, 1889-1939.*
[2] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 167.

relation to them".[3] How successful has Appasamy been in demonstrating this as his approach? Although he has referred to his Body of God analogy as being Rāmānuja's analogy, it would seem as though the Bishop might just as well have taken the analogy straight out of Gore: "Nature is one great body, and there is breath in the body; but this breath is not self-originated life, it is the influence of the Divine Spirit".[4] Even in terms of his later more sacramental approach, through the Incarnation the Divine Spirit:

> …claims for His own, and *consecrates the whole of nature*... Thus the humanity of Christ, which is the Spirit's perfect work, exhibits in its perfection how every faculty of human nature, spiritual and physical, is enriched... by the closest conceivable interaction of the Divine Energy.[5]

As compelling and engaging as Appasamy's four divine embodiments may be, this study needs, finally, to turn the question back on to the Bishop himself: what exactly has he '*learned'* from Rāmānuja? How has he allowed Rāmānuja's tradition to help him 'rethink' his 'fundamental ideas'? He already had a strong teaching on divine immanence in his own tradition. So what, specifically, has Rāmānuja taught him? Following the theological reasoning that has gone into his four divine embodiments, and highlighting along the way where he has made specific reference to Rāmānuja's text, an important observation must now be made. Where his earlier Logos Christology is replete with references to Rāmānuja, in his later emphasis on the Living Christ and the Spirit in the Eucharist and the Church, Rāmānuja is almost entirely and very conspicuously absent. The more tradition-specific and practical his theology has to get, the fewer the analogues he can find between himself and the Ācārya, and for obvious reasons. Rāmānuja did indeed have much to say concerning the nature of the Universe and its relationship to the *Puruṣottama,* the 'Supreme Person' who is both *Antaryāmīn* and *Avatāra.* But he had absolutely nothing to say about a Eucharistic meal, or a Living

[3] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 20.
[4] Gore, *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation*. 232.
[5] Ibid. 239.

Christ that flows from the Vine to its branches, the Church. If the sacramental practice of an Anglican devotional tradition is the practical outworking of Appasamy's Body of God, then what is Rāmānuja's? Just as we have had to situate Appasamy as the Bishop of Coimbatore, so too, must we now find Rāmānuja to be the Śrīkarya[6] of Śrīrangam.

As much as I have argued for the integrity of Appasamy's theology in the context of tradition, the argument itself has led me to more critical conclusions concerning the Bishop's reading of Rāmānuja. I have argued that his detractors have misread him *precisely because* they have missed or ignored his tradition-specific devotional structures. But has Appasamy done the same with Rāmānuja? He has argued strongly against Radhakrishnan's *advaitin* reading of Jesus' oneness statements and been equally critical of Śrī Parananda's *Eastern Exposition of St. John* as essentially making John out to be a Śaiva Siddhantin. But has Appasamy done the same, reading Rāmānuja's *Śārīraka-Mimāṃsā,* as being essentially and 'more or less' like Anglican sacramental theology? Like Radhakrishnan and Sri Parananda, has he simply found himself in Rāmānuja's text?

In this fifth and final chapter I will argue that Appasamy has largely abstracted Rāmānuja from his tradition, reading the *Bhāṣyas* more as a tradition-transcending philosophical theology as opposed to tradition-specific treatises written for and in the context of a temple-based worshipping community.[7] My goal here is not to attempt yet another outline of the Ācārya's *Viśiṣṭādvaitin* system. Others much more adequate to the task such as Carman, Lott, Lipner, Bartley and van Buitenen have already done this. My study is on Appasamy and his *reading* of Rāmānuja. As I have also stated at the

[6] Bhashyacharya tells us that upon hearing of the death of the Jaina Cōla king who had opposed him, Rāmānuja "went to Śrīrangam and reorganised the worship in the great temple there".Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 36.

[7] The *Bhāṣyas* are but two of Rāmānuja's nine traditionally and historically attested texts. The *Gadyatraya* and *Nityagrantha* in particular describe, more specifically, his liturgical and sacramental (*samskaras*) practice. See Ibid. 45.

front of my study, my ‘comparative traditions’ approach wants its engagement to be primarily with the emic voice of the tradition, for the insider’s is a perspectival voice that will reveal to us sources and emphases that are important to the tradition as lived and practiced. What is intended in this final chapter then is, first, to outline how Appasamy’s understanding and characterization of Rāmānuja changes over the course of his career; second, to explore the mature Appasamy’s attempt to read Rāmānuja’s *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* in context, and as a theology; and third, to identify the tradition-specific realities that Appasamy seems to have missed or deliberately ignored in his reading of the Ācārya as well as to consider how these might have enriched his theological project.

5.1 Appasamy’s Rāmānuja: from ‘philosopher’ to ‘theologian’.

5.1.1 Rāmānuja as ‘philosopher *par excellence’*

Beginning with his earliest publication, his 1922 thesis, Appasamy characterizes the Ācārya as being a Vedantin ‘philosopher’, indeed as the ‘philosopher par excellence of bhakti mysticism’. He remains deeply committed to this construction of the Ācārya, as three decades later we still find him, in his controversially entitled essay, proposing a “Christological reconstruction and Rāmānuja’s *philosophy*”. But Appasamy was certainly not alone in casting Rāmānuja as ‘philosopher’, for in many ways he was simply reflecting much of the scholarship concurrent to his writing. Following Neo-Vedantin apologists such as Swami Vivekananda, and later Radhakrishnan, a new generation of Hindu thinkers championed Śaṅkara’s *Advaitin* version of Vedānta as being short hand for ‘normative Hinduism’. Often entirely ignoring any of the other *darśanas* even within Vedānta itself, post-Chicago World’s Parliament of Religions in 1893, ‘*Advaita*’, ‘*Vedānta*’ and ‘Hinduism’ became, to the uninitiated, virtually

synonymous. Seen as such it could also then be successfully re-branded as a 'higher' form of Hinduism, 'philosophy' cast as the rational alternative to the 'religion' and ritualism of image worship. J.B. Carman points out that in this sort of framework Rāmānuja's work was initially crudely cast as being little more than foil and antithesis to Śaṅkara's *Advaita*, his "chief significance as a thinker… his effort to refute Śaṅkara".[8] The early work of Rudolf Otto on the subject can certainly be included as one such proponent of this view.[9]

Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo and others more widely acknowledged in western academic circles worked quite comfortably within this designation. 'Theology' is what Christians do, while 'philosophy' is more of a Hindu endeavour. In this regard the neo-Vedantins were simply reflecting trends we have already seen in the 'Encyclopaedia' approach. Rāmānuja apologists, as well, seemed quite happy to continue to cast Rāmānuja as philosophical antithesis to Śaṅkara. Appasamy's contemporary, Bharatan Kumarappa, writing in 1933, refers to Rāmānuja's writing as being the "loftiest philosophical expression" of Indian thought.[10] A decade later, and a year after Appasamy's *Gospel and India's Heritage*, P.N. Śrīnivasachari published a hefty tome for the Theosophical Society entitled *The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita*.

It would take a later generation of predominantly western scholars to begin to question such categories, recasting Rāmānuja as being better described as a 'theologian'. Carman's title, *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, is a fairly straight forward declaration of this. In explanation of his position Carman acknowledges his own debt to the earlier influence of J.A.B. Van Buitenen who, he says, offered a "… more balanced picture of Rāmānuja's thought to the world of Western scholarship…" as opposed to

[8] John Braisted Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*, Yale Publications in Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974). 199.
[9] Carman notes that in Otto's later work, after a trip to India during which he had met the Śrī Vaiṣṇava scholars of Mysore, he comes to see Rāmānuja in his more tradition-specific theological setting.
[10] Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*. 200.

simply being 'loyal opposition' to Śaṅkara. Both make the case that not only should Rāmānuja be "understood as a theologian, but also that the whole of Vedānta is, in Western terms, 'theology'".[11] In Van Buitenen's words, there is:

> …an unfortunate misunderstanding of the typically theological character of Vedāntic speculation as a whole… On the Western side there is often apparent a certain aversion to theology as such and an inability to keep in mind that the soteriology of Vedānta is not "philosophic" in purpose, but religious, inspired and borne out by scripture and revelation.

Van Buitenen continues by stating that a philosophical reading of Rāmānuja fails to "take into account the importance of the tradition of exegesis, of its method and rules". A.A. Macdonell agrees, noting that, "[Rāmānuja's] chief claim, the reconciliation of the doctrines of the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, with his own religion and philosophy, was theological rather than philosophical".[12] More recently, in his comparative work outlining three very different *Vedāntic Approaches to God*, Eric Lott comprehensively describes not just Rāmānuja, but the whole of Vedānta (including Śaṅkara) as being:

> … essentially a *theological* discipline, and many of the basic questions it raises are those raised in Western theological discussion. The nature of divine transcendence and its relation to cosmic immanence, ways of knowing that transcendent Being, description by way of analogy, the relation of the transcendent Being to human action and the question of divine grace… these are but some of the topics as central to Vedānta as to any theological system".[13]

In agreement with all of these, because the Ācārya is reasoning with reference to revealed text and in the context of a confessional tradition, there is no *good* reason why Rāmānuja's Vedānta should not be considered as theology, or for that matter, even primarily as theology.

The characterization of Rāmānuja as 'philosopher' still seems to persist however. In *Religions, Reasons and Gods* John Clayton attempts to follow up on

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[11] Ibid. 200-201.
[12] Ibid. 201.
[13] Eric J. Lott, *Vedāntic Approaches to God* (London: Macmillan, 1980). Xi-xii.

Wilhelm Halbfass' and later Paul Hacker's proposal for a 'comparative philosophy'. It would be, he envisions, "a new kind of philosophizing, one grounded in an immediate knowledge of both Indian and European sources…" and that such "philosophy would be greatly enriched by immersion in the main texts of a variety of reflective traditions…"[14] Clayton mentions that Halbfass, under a mode of philosophizing that he calls 'dialogic comparison', expressed his desire to see "imaginary conversations between major thinkers of the European and Indian traditions on philosophical topics" such as between Śaṅkara and Descartes or Nagarjuna and Aristotle.[15] In his own context Clayton attempts to do the same between Rāmānuja and Hume. As he starts to dig into the Ācārya's writings, however, he must admit that, unlike with Hume, Rāmānuja is writing within a devotional tradition. The *Śrībhāṣya* is written, he says, through a "system of layering of commentaries and meta-commentaries in the Brahmanic tradition of reflection". More than this, these are in fact considered 'authoritative' to that community because they are the hermeneutical "lens through which the normative Sūtras are read".[16] In short, here we have a commentarial tradition on Scripture, an authoritative text that then becomes the systematic resource for a devotional worshipping community. What about this does not sound like theology?

Rāmānuja's *Śrībhāṣya* is a situated text. The devotional tradition that is its natural habitat will not yield its riches that easily to Hume, Appasamy or anyone else for that matter. It is a text that is supported by other texts. Not only is it expressly a commentary on the *Upaniṣads*, a 'revealed' text in the sense that it is *Śruti* ('heard'), but flowing just beneath the surface of its discourse we find a readily apparent stream of devotional tradition around the Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa narratives of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and

[14] John Powell Clayton, Anne M. Blackburn, and Thomas D. Carroll, *Religions, Reasons and Gods : Essays in Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). 101.
[15] Ibid. 102.
[16] Ibid. 107.

tantric practices of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. There is an attention to devotional detail that is required here that alone can do justice to the strata of meaning in Rāmānuja's text. In my view the term 'philosophy', in the western conventional Plato-Socrates-Hume sense of the word, is simply inadequate for its description precisely because the *vādins* are always working within the realm of revelation, and therefore a textually inscribed and circumscribed universe. Worse, it is downright misleading.

5.1.3 Rāmānuja as 'theologian'

By 1942, although Appasamy is still describing Rāmānuja's system as a 'philosophic exposition of the doctrine of bhakti', the descriptions that follow sound increasingly theological in content. Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* is a:

> …systematic doctrine of God who is regarded as being full of the auspicious qualities of love, goodness, truth, mercy, justice and power. Men are different from Him; they are not identical with Him. They wholly depend upon Him as the body depends upon the soul. They must worship Him with love and devotion. In the future life the highest bliss which is in store for them is the knowledge and enjoyment of God. They are not merged in God; they have their own separate existence but dwell in the bliss of God's Presence and devote themselves to His service.[17]

His ambivalence over whether to call Rāmānuja a 'philosopher' or a 'theologian' is then perfectly encapsulated in his summary statement. "The work of Rāmānuja is important as it gives the teaching about bhakti a great place among the *philosophic systems* of India… The doctrines of Bhakti, when fully worked out, form a complete and elaborate *system of Theology*."

After his Episcopacy, however, very much in line with what van Buitenen had already said, and anticipating both Carman and Lott, it seems that the mature Appasamy has finally come to think of Rāmānuja more consistently as being a theologian. As the title of his penultimate publication would have it, it is the *Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. Despite Appasamy's recognition of Rāmānuja's thought as 'theology' he is,

[17] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 11.

nonetheless, still quite committed to presenting his version of *bhakti* as a philosophical sort of theology somehow that floats above the sectarian traditions. "With infinite toil", Appasamy says, "he expounded his ideas of God, Man, Bhakti and Moksha" through the "study of the accepted Scriptures of the Hindus ... carefully with all the canons of the theological learning of his day".[18] The best we can say, even in this later context, is that to Appasamy Rāmānuja is a philosophical theologian, a 'system builder' that belongs to the wider tradition. *Bhakti,* to Appasamy, seems to incorporate both. Again concerning Rāmānuja: "...here speaks not the philosopher engaged in subtle argument nor the theologian developing careful doctrine but the genuine bhakta with an intimate and vital religious experience".[19] What Appasamy does not seem to want to admit, however, for reasons that shall be examined below, is that the *bhakta's* 'intimate and vital experience' is both temple-based and image-focused.

5.1.2 Rāmānuja as polemic against Śaṅkara and Caitanya

Every apologetic, no matter how irenic, has a polemic of some sort working just beneath its surface. At the back-end of Appasamy's argument for the Ācārya we find a surprisingly sharp argument against Śaṅkara's *advaita*. With the previous citation now in context, Rāmānuja is, to Appasamy, the 'philosopher par excellence of Bhakti mysticism,' *precisely because* "[he] makes it the main aim of his Śrī Bhashya to refute the Advaita doctrine of Śaṅkara".[20] Before going further, it must be said that, in Śaṅkara, deities and devotion, even *saguṇa Brahman,* may be 'provisionally' and 'conventionally' the case even if it is not ultimately so. This is why, although conceptually it is always understood as subordinated to the ultimate knowledge of undifferentiated *nirguṇa Brahman*, Śaṅkara's *Gītā* commentary reads in a surprisingly

[18] A. J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*, Indian Theological Library, (Madras: Published for the Senate of Serampore College, by the Christian Literature Society, 1970). 44.
[19] Ibid. 47.
[20] Ibid. 39.

conventional way. Love, worship and devotion all have their place. This is Śaṅkara as I understand him. When Appasamy describes Śaṅkara's system, however, he always manages to render it in its starkest form. There is no hint of this nuance in Appasamy's potted versions of him, and his descriptions of the Advaitin position border, at times, almost on caricature: "*Brahman* in His own real nature has no love or any other quality, good or evil. It is only a false idea on the part of man to ascribe any quality to *Brahman*".[21] In *Mokṣa* he states that: "[t]o think of God as the Absolute beyond all our categories of knowledge has, when followed to its full extreme, resulted in a cold and barren intellectualism".[22]

He seems also at times to be preaching to certain sectors of Indian Christianity on this point. So strongly does he disagree with the *advaitin* position that he is willing to state quite categorically, and in likely reference to the Bengali Catholic theologian of the previous generation, Brahmbandab Upadhyay, that: "[a] keen Advaitin, for instance who accepts Christianity and sincerely believes that Christianity is Advaita might offer an interpretation loudly proclaiming it to be Indian Christianity. Indian it certainly will be but not Christianity".[23] Although Śaṅkara's *Advaita,* he says, is a system of thought in which "[t]he speculative genius of India reaches its highest flights", [24] far from being a 'higher Hinduism', a philosophical system that transcends 'idolatry', to Appasamy it is quite the opposite. Just as medieval mysticism in Europe developed as a reaction against what he calls 'scholastic obsession', he claims, so too "[i]n India the Bhakti movement gained a new ascendancy in view of the cold impersonal abstraction of thought to which Śaṅkara had reduced religion". Far from his system constituting a

[21] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 45.
[22] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 110.
[23] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 21.
[24] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 45.

'higher Hinduism', to Appasamy, Śaṅkara's system has actually 'reduced' it.[25] One cannot worship a collection of apophatic terms and ideas.

On the opposite side of this, however, there is a second corrective role that Appasamy sees Rāmānuja as playing. To him, the Ācārya's other great contribution was in curbing some of the ecstatic and antinomian excesses of what he calls the more 'extreme *bhakti* sects'.[26] In contrast to their 'puerile mythology',[27] it was Rāmānuja, he says, who "called a halt to this movement [ecstatic bhakti] and gave Bhakti the strength and virility that comes of restraint. He made it more a type of intellectual meditation, accompanied by love, but deprived of the extravagances of rapture and ecstasy."[28] Rāmānuja's more 'restrained' Tamil devotion to Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, therefore, he sets in contradistinction to Caitanya's Bengali Kṛṣṇa devotion. As he frames it: "While Luther was stirring Europe with his powerful teaching, Chaitanya was spreading Vaisnavism in India by his magnetic personality and rapturous Bhakti."[29] Rāmānuja's approach, he claims, is much more consonant with what he describes as the "soberness and restraint… of the Fourth Evangelist".[30]

What exactly does he mean by this? As with Luther, he says, Rāmānuja's brand of *bhakti* is a decidedly moral one. He knows that it is "sheer hypocrisy for a man to creep into a corner and think 'Oh, I will love God…" and then make no moral efforts towards substantiating such a profession. Caitanya's *bhakti*, on the other hand, was of a rather more 'rapturous', and 'ecstatic' kind of expression, prone to what he describes as 'trance-like' states. "He trembled, perspired, wept with joy, stood still, changed colour

[25] Ibid. 227.
[26] Ibid. 58. Unfortunately, hidden in this category, as I will argue in the final chapter, is the true analogue to Appasamy's sacramental practice.
[27] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 6.
[28] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 25.
[29] he seems to be getting this from J.N. Farquhar's *Outline of the Religious Literature of India* Ibid. 62-63.
[30] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 58 and 60.

– now showing remorse, now grief, now stupor, now pride or meekness."[31] This brand of *bhakti*, although rich in emotional and artistic expression, did not, according to Appasamy, share the same sort of moral rigour as could be found in Johannine, Rāmānujan and now, strangely, Lutheran *bhakti*. Of Caitanya's form of *bhakti* Appasamy claims: "Such a method of showing one's love for God is utterly foreign to John." John's *bhakti* is, by contrast, "steady joy which is born of devout action."[32] Appasamy sums up the Ācārya's moral teaching as saying:

> Is God good? So shall we be. Is God just? So shall we be. Is God loving? So shall we be. In fact God is the ocean of all noble qualities and we shall become like Him. Then will there be no difference between God and man? Yes, in one important respect God will be unique – in the matter of ruling the world. Man will never exercise that Divine function. All else He will have.[33]

So Rāmānuja receives Appasamy's approval while Caitanya does not. But this is more than simply the distinction between a 'sobre' and 'ecstatic' form of devotion, however, for fuelling the vehemence behind his distaste for Caitanya there becomes apparent a significant disapproval of what he also calls its 'erotic symbolism'. Caitanya's devotion, he notes rather euphemistically, emerges from what he calls a 'lower form', encouraging the 'base passions' of the sexual and sensual kind. While many writers, Appasamy admits, try to explain this away as not being sensual, but rather metaphorical[34] Appasamy would rather not associate with such connotations. *Bhakti* has failed, according to the Bishop, if it has not purified the devotee.[35]

In 1932's *Temple Bells* he takes even more precise aim at Caitanya's text, at the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa's* more sensual accounts of the youthful dalliances of the Kṛṣṇa *avatāra*. This may, at least in part, account for the fact that he so rarely uses the

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[31] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 62.
[32] Ibid. 63.
[33] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy : A Collection of His Writings*. 128.
[34] Ibid. 198.
[35] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 129, and 133-134.

Bhāgavata in his long pericopes of *bhakti* text. Where he will readily and extensively acknowledge Rāmānuja's use of both the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* as being important and central to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, he is not quite sure what to do with the *Bhāgavata*. The *Bhāgavata,* he initially claims, dates back to the tenth century.[36] With the Śrīrangam community being the centre for Vaiṣṇava learning that it was, the Ācārya would, thus, almost certainly have had access to it. Appasamy, in his early thinking, thus understands the absence of *Bhāgavata* references in Rāmānuja as being a deliberate exclusion. While not giving explanation for this the subtext here is that Rāmānuja has deliberately excluded it *because* it is 'ecstatic' and 'erotic', inimical to his more 'quiet' and 'meditative' approach. In his later writings, however, as he identifies the *Bhāgavata* as being the primary text of the Caitanya sect in Bengal, he starts seeing it as belonging to a very different tradition than Rāmānuja's Śrīvaisnavism. The implication here is that the Ācārya would likely not have wanted to invoke the sectarian texts of another tradition in support of his own albeit another Vaiṣṇava one. By 1970's *Theology of Hindu Bhakti,* however, he has rethought even this. Departing from his earlier position on the *Bhāgavata's* date of writing, he takes the absence of *Bhāgavata* references in Rāmānuja as being evidence that it had not even been written yet.[37] What is at issue here is not the accuracy of Appasamy claims about the *Bhāgavata*, but how the Bishop has cast it in reference to Rāmānuja. It seems he wants to both endorse *bhakti* as well as to circumscribe it by identifying what are his own Christian limitations in that endorsement. Whatever is his view on the *Bhāgavata,* and whatever he means by *bhakti,* what is evident throughout is that he most certainly does *not* want it to be associated with some of the more Kṛṣṇa-centred forms of Gaudiya

[36] A. J. Appasamy, *Temple Bells: Readings from Hindu Religious Literature* (London: Association Press, 1931). 10-11.
[37] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 98. So much for the paucity of *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* references in Appasamy: what are we to make of its conspicuous absense in Rāmānuja's writings? That is indeed a significant question, but one that is well beyond the scope of this study.

Vaisnavism. In a revision of its meaning Appasamy describes Rāmānuja's *bhakti* as the more measured and balanced notion of *prapatti*, "complete surrender regardless of joy or sorrow."[38]

His acceptance of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and aversion for the *Bhāgavata* is, in my view, somewhat misplaced and artificial. For although the *Viṣṇu's* telling of the Kṛṣṇa story tends to be more martial in nature, depicting Kṛṣṇa as being the young conquering hero, it must also be pointed out that it is not exclusively so. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 4.13, for example, contains an extended description of Kṛṣṇa's play and dance with the *gopis*, narrative material that found its way into the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* either as its source or as having drawn from a common set of narratives. Appasamy's discrimination between the *Viṣṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇas*, therefore, is not so much one of actual content but of association. Neither is he even consistent in his rejection of the latter, for despite distancing himself from it, he is not averse to quoting it and using it from time to time as and when it happens to fit his apologetic purpose. With these two polemical undertones considered, we turn now to examine how Appasamy positively summarizes Rāmānuja's theology in his penultimate publication, 1970's *Theology of Hindu Bhakti*.

5.2 Appasamy's explanation of Rāmānuja's system

Theology begins with the challenge for 'all students of Christian theism' to undertake a 'careful study' of Rāmānuja's writing, for in doing so, "[t]hey will see how a definitely theistic system arose in Indian soil and how it met the difficulties of Hindu thinkers." This is why, he explains, unapologetically, the majority of his book is focused on "Rāmānuja's central experiences and ideas," and on his "carefully written

[38] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 25.

philosophical and theological treatises."[39] Rāmānuja's writings, he explains, are what finally won for the *bhakti* traditions in general, and for the Śrīvaiṣṇavas more particularly, a measure of 'status and dignity' among the more widely accepted Vedic and Vedāntic ones. The development that is most immediately apparent here is his attempt to understand *bhakti* theology in historic context. In his earlier work he was prone to lifting texts outside of their historic settings, juxtaposing Śrīvaiṣṇava passages alongside Śaiva Siddhānta and Patristic ones to give the impression of a rough parity. In *Theology* he wants to situate Rāmānuja within a genealogy of thought to offer an adequate summary of the Ācārya's system. Although I shall be following Appasamy's version of Rāmānuja's system, I will also be checking it against and supplementing it with Bhashyacharya's explanations of the same in his *Viśiṣṭādvaita* 'catechism'. In order not to confuse the sense of Appasamy's flow of reasoning here, the supplemental statements from the catechism shall be included in the footnotes.

Rāmānuja's Brahman, says Appasamy citing the *SB* 1.1.52 and 54, "...is free from sin, free from old age, free from death, free from grief, free from hunger, free from thirst… These and other Scriptures declare that Brahman, who is self-illumined, has in his very nature good qualities such as the possession of knowledge, and that He is free from all evils".[40] But like Appasamy's Johannine *Theos,* Brahman is also 'love', as he finds in the *SB* 2.1.35. Creation is the proof. "The immediate object of creation is to provide souls with a sphere in which they can work out their karmas"[41] This is not a retributive sort of justice, for "the ultimate aim of Brahman is to increase the happiness of men to the highest degree". Rather, in his paraphrase of *SB* 2.2.3:

> He wants them to enjoy the utmost bliss. If they are to do this the consequences of their deeds stand in the way. Therefore He provides them with a world in which they can work off the consequences. When the fruits of their actions are

[39] Ibid. 3 and 5.
[40] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 56.
[41] Ibid. 58.

> exhausted they are ready for union with Him. Thus the object of creation, though determined immediately by the law of retribution, has as its ultimate goal the joy of the soul. It is thus Brahman's great love which leads him to create the world.

And thus, says Appasamy, not unlike his reasoning in John's Gospel, the only reasonable response to a loving God is in the absolute *bhakti* response of *prapatti,* complete surrender. Because God so loved us, we so love God. With reference to the *GB* 18.66, "Giving up all rites, surrender to me alone... the expiatory rites capable of removing [sins] are of various kinds, innumerable in number and impossible to be carried out by you... Give up, therefore, all rites and seek me alone".[42]

The doctrine of the *avatāra,* he says, is further evidence of divine love. "Here Rāmānuja maintains that God becomes incarnate in response to this deep-felt desire [to know God]. Out of His abundant love He takes human form so that men may satisfy their earnest longing to see God"[43] The *avatāra* takes on a real body. It is not a mere theophany, he says, as a 'shadow or phantom' and yet unlike the real humanity of Christ, it is still *docetic* in that although "...it looks like the body of men, it is formed out of the same substance of which God's body is always formed". Brahman, although Spirit, has a body of 'divine substance',[44] not 'composed of the matter which we know'. "The incarnate body, therefore, is no shadowy thing but a real body. In the category of the divine substance it is as real as Arjuna's body is real in the category of the human substance".[45] And why must this be the case in Rāmānuja's system? Because all human births in physical bodies are karmically conditioned; it is the result of karmic acts, good or evil, none of which can be ascribed to Brahman.[46] "[I]n taking an incarnate body

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[42] Ibid. 58-59.
[43] Ibid. 60.
[44] Bhashyacharya calls this *Suddhasattva,* 'not composed of ordinary matter'. Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 78.
[45] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 60.
[46] "According to Sanskrit lexicography the term guṇas signifies the three qualities of Prakriti - satwa, rajas and tamas. Brahmam is not subject to the qualities of Prakriti and is therefore said to be nirguṇa

Brahman does not give up His sinlessness and all the other good qualities which constitute his divine nature. In the incarnate body His divine purity is maintained intact". Again, with reference to the *nirguṇa* passages of the Upaniṣads, and in contrast to Śaṅkara's interpretation that "Brahman is without any attributes whatever", Rāmānuja insists that this means that "Brahman is without any bad qualities".[47] The six *kalyanaguṇas*[48] of the 'ancient classification of the Purāṇas',[49] require that the *avatāra* could not be tainted by taking on human flesh. It is a logical impossibility. And yet the deity still 'descends' as *avatāra* because he is 'love'.

5.2.1 Appasamy's explanation of Rāmānuja's Body of God

From the *GB* 15.15 Appasamy identifies Rāmānuja's Brahman as "the soul that dwells in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings. I am seated as the soul of all beings who constitute my body. The soul is that which is the entire support, ruler and enjoyer of the body. Thus it is said: I am seated in the heart of all and from me come memory, knowledge and reason."[50] As before, he has found this, classically, in the *BrU* 3.7.15 where we read: "He who dwells in the soul, He who is immanent within the soul, He whom the soul does not know. He whose body is the soul, He who rules the soul from within, He is thy soul, thy immanent being, thy immortal one". These should all be familiar passages by now. In his present usage, however, there are two notable developments. First, we find his fullest treatment of Rāmānuja's doctrine of *prakṛti*[51] and *jivātman*[52] as the *prakāras* ('modes') of Brahman.

(devoid of guṇas)". Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 74.

[47] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 61.

[48] These are fairly consistently applied to the Śrīvaiṣṇava *para* mode, the transcendent form of the deity. See Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 64.

[49] These he identifies as 'exalted wisdom', 'unequalled might', 'complete sovereignty', 'limitless valour', 'supreme power' and 'celestial glory'. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 61.

[50] Ibid. 62.

[51] This should not be understood simply in the materialist sense, for in Rāmānuja's system, in addition to the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and ether, *mahat* ('intellect') and *ahaṃkāra* (the 'ego', literally

And second, for support he makes one of only two references in all of his writings (to my knowledge) to Rāmānuja's *Vedārthasaṃgraha*:[53]

> 'Let me enter into animate creation in the form of soul', shows that the Supreme Soul, in the form of individual souls, enters all animate things to give them individuality and to endow them with name and form. The individual soul, being the body of the Supreme soul, is its mode. Hence it has the Supreme Soul as its soul. And so they are bodies, and hence modes, of the Supreme Soul.[54]

It is because *prakṛti* and *jivātman* are 'modes' of God that Rāmānuja can also argue that:

> ... words such as god, man, demon (whether friend or foe of the gods), domestic animal, wild animal, tree, creeper, dry wood, stone, grass, pot, cloth denote at first the various things having the various forms which are commonly understood as being denoted by them. Then they go on to denote the souls which possess the various forms and still further the Supreme Soul who is immanent in the souls.[55]

The modes can thus, in this qualified sense, be identified with Brahman, whence 'qualified non-duality', *Viśiṣṭādvaita*.[56] This modal connection between Brahman and the body, he says, is a 'simple and yet effective way' for Rāmānuja to continue to maintain that "God and the world are different and yet that the world is wholly dependent upon God. Just as the body can achieve nothing without the soul so the world can achieve nothing without God". Transcendence and immanence are equally maintained:

> The soul is not external to the body. It does not stand outside the body and influence it. It dwells within the body and controls it as its inner ruler. God likewise is not external to the world. He lives within the world, both within the

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the 'I-maker') arise from *prakṛti* as well. Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 84-85.

[52] According to Bhashyacharya the *jivātman* is 'not material'. "It is eternal, not produced by anything else, and different from Achit and Isvara. The Jivātma in each individual is different from that in another". It is Brahman in *anu* ('atomic') form. Ibid. 93.

[53] "The Summary of the Meaning of the Vedas", as Carman says, is "a small work with an impressive title" and probably the earliest of Rāmānuja's works. Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*. 49-50.

[54] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 63.

[55] Ibid. 63.

[56] Bhāṣyacharya identifies these as the *cit* and *acit tattvas,* or in another iteration, the *atma* and *anatma.* "These three, Chit, Achit and Parabrahman, do not exist separately, but, like substance and quality, in inseparable union with one another. Brahman is compared to substance, and Chit and Achit to quality - as colour, dimension, etc..." Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 68.

> world of men and the world of nature. From his dwelling place, within the heart of man and within the heart of nature, God determines what may and what may not happen.[57]

There are a number of connotations, he notes, to the word 'body' in the Indian traditions. First, it can denote 'the means by which Karma and its fruits are experienced'; second, it can refer to 'an aggregate form of the elements'; and third, it can refer to 'the seat of the senses of the means of happiness and grief'. Rāmānuja does not use the word '*śarīra'* for his *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* in any of these senses. According to a key passages in *SB* 2.1.9: "Whichever object can be completely controlled for his own purpose or held by an intelligent being or has its essential nature subordinate to him such an object is the body".[58] Everything, therefore, that:

> ... is completely controlled or held by the Supreme Person for His own purpose or has its essential nature subordinate to Him; all intelligent and non-intelligent creation is His body. The texts 'without body, He lives in body' and so on means to refute the idea that He has a body caused by Karma. Because we hear the Scriptures declare that everything is His body.

It is in the modal sense that Rāmānuja can say that "the souls of men are also the body of God".[59] This is also why he has rendered the *Chāndogya's 'tat tvam asi'* passage as he has.[60] According to the *SB* 1.1.13, as Appasamy paraphrases it:

> …the God immanent in the individual soul (Tvam) is identical with the Brahman who is the author of all creation (Tat). The individual is not identical with the author of creation. For the individual soul can never create. The word of creation is only possible for Brahman. But the God who resides within the individual souls is the same God who creates the universe.[61]

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[57] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 63.
[58] Ibid. 64.
[59] "Though matter is the material basis (upadana Karana) of the universe, it cannot exist without Parabrahman, being its attribute or Śarīra. Thus Parabrhamam may itself be said to be the material basis of matter which is its śarīra itself evolving many forms". It is the 'material cause', but as an attribute of Parabrahman, in a 'dependent or secondary' sense. Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 95.
[60] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 64-65.
[61] Ibid. 65.

Similarly, in the *Chāndogya's* 'may I become many. May I grow forth'. The 'One', *Brahman* has become 'many' in the sense that the individuated selves and matter are its *prakāras*:

> Oh beloved, all these creations have this Being as their cause, this Being as their seat, this Being as their support. All these have this Being as their soul'… "before creation there was no difference in name and form, that for creation of the world the Brahman, who is spoken of as "the Being" did not desire any cause but itself, that at the time of creation it made the unique decision, impossible for any one else, to become many in the form of endless immovable and movable things...[62]

5.2.2 Human agency and divine will

Although subordination and control of the body is integral to Rāmānuja's understanding here, he wants also to maintain two interrelated doctrines - human agency and divine impassibility. Brahman is all and in all, and yet still remains unaffected by karma and evil.[63] The *jivas*, on the other hand, due to 'beginningless karma'[64] are assigned their births according to previous merits or demerits.[65] Concerning present and future acts, however, Appasamy sees in Rāmānuja an appeal to Brahman's 'permissive will' that yet ensures that the divine remains undefiled by the karmic acts of the embodied selves.[66] Divine impassibility and human freedom are thus two sides of the same coin to Rāmānuja. As the Ācārya puts it in *SB* 3.19.20:

> Just as the ether though separately connected with things such as pot, jar, etc., which pass through increase and decrease and just as the sun though seen in lakes etc of different contours is not touched by their increase and decrease, in the same way this Supreme Soul, existing in different inanimate things such as earth and in animate beings, is not touched by their evils of increase or decrease; thus, though present in all, he remains the same everywhere as a mine of noble qualities without even a particle of evil.[67]

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[62] Ibid. 65.
[63] His reference here is to the *Śrībhāṣya* 3.19.20.
[64] He returns to this part of Rāmānuja's argument more critically in a later context, saying that the "doctrine of beginningless Karma mars at its source the effective character of Karma as a moral system". Ibid. 87.
[65] Ibid. 67.
[66] With reference to the Kauṣītāki Upaniṣad 3.9: "Just as the Sun, the eye of the world, is not defiled by outward faults of vision, so the one Inner-Soul of every being is touched not by earth's pain, being outside it". Ibid. 68.
[67] Ibid. 66-67.

The *jiva* is both dependent on Brahman as its essential being, while at the same time *not* morally determined by it. "[T]hey cannot complain that anything external is influencing them. The physical environment has been awarded them by Brahman in return for their deeds and in a sense it is their own doing".[68] In this regard Brahman is simply the *sakshi,* 'the witness',[69] who as:

> …the inner ruler, gives permission…Though the other gives the permission the actual responsibility for the action rests with him who first decided to transfer the property. In the same way whatever is done by man is done by the individual soul. Brahman as the inner ruler only gives His permission.[70]

At this point Appasamy draws an interesting comparison to the parable of the Prodigal, to the Father who watches and waits for the son to decide to return. Sin is always, according to Appasamy's reading of Rāmānuja in the *SB* 2.3.40-41, "because of [the individuals] independence". This must necessarily be the case, for if the individual self were entirely determined and controlled by a divine will then "the scriptures laying down rules, positive as well as negative, would become meaningless. For he only who is able by his own intelligence to begin action or to give it up is fit to receive commands. Therefore the activity of the soul is because of its independence".[71] We have seen similar reasoning in Appasamy's discussion on the *bhakta's* response to the loving initiative of the Logos and the Spirit.

To say that Brahman permits a limited human agency does not mean that there is no divine will. Neither should it mean that Brahman is unable to intervene. "Though the Lord is able to prevent evil deeds, his permitting them may not mean that He has no

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[68] Ibid. 67.
[69] "Iswara is not the individual cause, but the general cause of everything and is therefore, from the individual stand point, perfectly neutral. Every Jivā is, on the other hand, individualised and hence subject to the result of its own actions".Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 122.
[70] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 67.
[71] Ibid. 68.

sympathy".[72] Citing the *Kauṣītāki Upaniṣad* 3.9, "Indeed He alone causes him whom He desires to lead upwards from these worlds to do good deeds. Only He causes him whom He wishes to lead downwards to do evil deeds". It would be wrong to assume from such verses "that the Lord causes a man to do good and bad actions". Freedom is maintained. The human subject makes his or her own decisions. But Rāmānuja seems to be saying that once there is self-determination in a particular direction, this sets the trajectory and the 'Inner Dweller' merely helps them along. In the *SB* 2.3.40-41:

> That man who begins to act with the determination to be wholly on the side of the Supreme Person, the Lord favours him and Himself creates in him a taste for such actions only as are a means of attaining Him and are extremely good. But he disfavours the man who begins to act with the determination to be wholly against him and creates in him a taste for such actions as stand in the way of attaining Him and lead him downwards.[73]

Still from the same *Śrībhāṣya* reference, but commenting on the *Bhagavad Gītā* 10.8.10-11, this is the sense that is intended in Kṛṣṇa's statement: "I throw such into perpetually recurring births and deaths and into the wombs of the demons".[74] As Appasamy summarizes it, "Brahman enables a man to achieve right or wrong according to his own decision. If he once decides, Brahman helps him in whatever path he chooses to tread. In this way Rāmānuja emphasizes the heavy and definite responsibility of the individual soul".[75]

5.2.3 Rāmānuja's soteriology: *bhakti* and *mokṣa*

Bhakti is the supreme choice of the human subject towards union with Brahman. In this regard the *bhakta* increasingly reflects the object of his or her devotion. Because Brahman is bliss, so should the *bhakta's* experience be also. In the second of his rare references to the *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, Appasamy reads Rāmānuja as saying that we become increasingly like what we worship. "He himself is universal Lord, with the

[72] Ibid. 68.
[73] Ibid. 69.
[74] Ibid. 69.
[75] Ibid. 69-70.

individual soul as His subject. On the realization by the individual soul of this mutual relationship the Supreme Soul becomes an object of extreme love and Himself leads the individual soul to reach Itself".[76]

The *Upaniṣads,* he says, more consistently declare that *jñāna* is the way of union with Brahman. In the *Gītā* it is *bhakti*. Rāmānuja's solution, says Appasamy, is to claim that the *jñāna* of the *Upaniṣads* refers properly to the sort of knowledge that the *Gītā* calls '*bhakti' '*not mere knowledge', but meditative, devoted knowledge.[77] It is knowledge through meditation in a specialized sense on the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva*: "Brahman should be meditated on as verily the soul of the one who meditates. This means that he who meditates should meditate on the Supreme Brahman as his own soul, just as he himself is the soul of his body".[78] *Bhakti* is the surest way to *mokṣa* according to the *SB* 4.4.17-22 because it is through such meditative devotion that Brahman "removes the ignorance which is the sum of Karma". In the Ācārya's words: "Because he, longing to unite with me, has taken me as the supreme goal. He who knows at the end of many births that the Lord is everything and takes refuge in me, such a great-souled one is very rare".[79]

Thus *bhakti* itself is soteriological, leading to *mokṣa*. The individual self in *mokṣa* is as it appears "in its essential character. Its real being is now made manifest". As the "glow of a gem is not newly created when the dirt of the gem is washed off, so also the wisdom of the soul is not newly created when the evil of the soul is washed off", so too, according to *SB* 4.4.3, does the wisdom and bliss of the self become apparent. "[t]he bond of karma then perishes".[80] The self in *mokṣa* is still conscious,

[76] Ibid. 81.
[77] Ibid. 74.
[78] Ibid. 75.
[79] Ibid. 89.
[80] Ibid. 89-91.

and still individually distinct,[81] as in *SB* 4.4.17-22. Neither does the 'body' in Rāmānuja's specialized sense as Brahman's *prakāras* ever collapse into simple unity. Even in the *pralaya* state,[82] "[d]uring the period of dissolution, the body becomes subtle and quiescent but wakes up into new life when the age of dissolution comes to an end... it cannot be said that the body is resolved into its original cause..." Just so, says Appasamy, although "it is completely attached to the Divine in a subtle manner... individuality still continues".[83] And finally with regards to *mokṣa*, in *SB* 4.4.4 he reads: "the enjoyment of the qualities of the Supreme Soul by the individual soul whose nature has already been described" means that "the individual soul enjoys thus along with the Supreme Soul, of which it is the mode".[84] The released self enjoys all the divine attributes save one. "Rāmānuja takes great pains to teach that the released soul becomes like Brahman in all respects except one, namely, lordship of the world".[85]

This, then, is Rāmānuja as the mature Appasamy finally understands him, the great 'philosopher', 'theologian', and 'system builder' of *bhakti* 'theism'. As a whistle-stop tour through Rāmānuja's *Bhāṣyas,* and predominantly his *Vedānta Sūtras,* it is by no means complete. He does not even begin to get into any sort of discussion around Rāmānuja's *purvapaksins* and *uttarapaksins,*[86] but neither, for his purposes, does he really need to. As far as summaries go, he seems to cover all of the major points of divergence and convergence between himself and the Ācārya's, and at the very least demonstrates evidence that he does indeed love and actually read Rāmānuja. As we

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[81] Bhashyacharya wants to emphasize here that *mokṣa* is "[e]ntire separation of Jivā from all connection with matter, and complete destruction of Karma whether good or bad". Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 152.
[82] "All gross bodies perish, the only real things are the *sukshma* particles which are uncreated and indestructible and, in that condition, unknowable. That is to say, in Pralaya, the three *guṇas*, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas are inactive... A pot may be broken and the pieces reduced to dust, but the atoms forming the dust cannot be destroyed. In this sense the universe is real". Ibid. 114.
[83] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 91.
[84] Ibid. 92.
[85] Ibid. 93.
[86] I have found Bartley's discussion on these particularly helpful in Bartley, *The Theology of Rāmānuja : Realism and Religion*. Chapter one and *passim*

have followed the ideas concurrently with Bhashyacharya's catechism in the footnotes, we shall give him the final word, particularly since he has some exclusive truth claims to make in response to Appasamy's. The catechumen asks whether *bhakti* may be offered to other deities 'for the purpose of obtaining *Moksha*?'. The Ācārya's answer is unequivocal:

> No. Because these deities are not the Supreme Being, Paramatma (Lord of Souls) or Iswara (Lord). They are only Jivās possessed of certain powers acquired by good Karma, and subordinate to Brahman in every respect. they have not got those attributes and qualities which are essential in what is to be contemplated for the sake of Moksha.[87]

Presumably he would say the same about Appasamy's Jesus as well. Only ideological pluralists raised in the secular traditions of Encyclopaedia and Genealogy hold exclusive truth claims against proponents of Tradition. Fellow *bhaktas* understand the logic of exclusive devotion.

Appasamy has written this in 1970. Where was the particularity of his engagement with the Ācārya in reference to his own views on divine embodiment? As we have seen in the previous two chapters, although Appasamy invokes Rāmānuja on numerous occasions, all he seems to really want to do with it is to use his embodiment language as a cultural marker, even if the actual content he is applying to it is almost entirely a restatement of his own Anglican idiom. I say 'almost' because there is the possibility that he has Rāmānuja's *prakāras* in mind with his problematic exegesis at John 1.11-13. He has told us that the passage means that there is already 'metaphysical' 'kinship between God and men' even if *bhakti* has yet to call them 'children', perfecting them with 'moral union'. Although he does not make the connection to Rāmānuja's doctrine of the *jivātman* as *prakāra* of Brahman, and having found no apparent source within his Anglican influences, it is not unlikely that it has shaped

[87] Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 172.

some of his thinking. Of course the Prologue is not saying anything analogous to this, and in my view Appasamy is much more successful in applying his metaphysical/moral distinction in his discussion around the Johannine *mahāvākyas.* There are also parallels between what he understands the Ācārya to say about the 'love' (a very Johannine term) that leads the Creator to create as well as to incarnate. What he has said earlier in his *bhakti* reading of John, he seems also to have found here in his framing of the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva.* And finally, there is evidence of influence between what he has said concerning a 'realized eschatology' and presently outworked *karmic* causation. Apart from these three points, however, in my view, he has not really engaged much with the actual ontological difference of Rāmānuja's system. What follows presently is an attempt to situate Rāmānuja within his temple practice. In doing so I will identify two avenues of study that Appasamy has missed and that, in my view, would have enriched his sacramental reading of divine embodiment considerably.

5.3 The problem of Rāmānuja's 'idolatry'

Bhakti is, to Appasamy, primarily a tradition of the heart, a devotional practice that, somewhat problematically, he wants to distinguish from what he calls 'ritualism'. From his 1922 thesis right through to 1970's *Theology of Hindu Bhakti* we find this familiar theme, the denial of ritual and ceremony as being formative and *normative* to it. "Religion at its best", he says, "is not doctrines or ceremonies. Doctrines and ceremonies belong to the surface of religion; they are not its heart."[88] What I am arguing in this section is that it is this sort of thinking that has obscured to Appasamy some vitally important aspects of Rāmānuja's tradition – thinking that has allowed him, and indeed *required* him, to keep Rāmānuja's tradition at arm's length.

[88] A. J. Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*, Indian Theological Library, (Madras: Published for the Senate of Serampore College, by the Christian Literature Society, 1970). 3.

Love and devotion *bhakti* may be, but love and devotion to what? He has already argued, against Śaṅkara, that one cannot worship apophatic conceptions. So what, positively speaking, is he expecting the *bhakta* to actually be devoted to? Despite what he calls the Ācārya's "fundamental grip upon the personal character of the ultimate Reality which pervades the universe" Appasamy expresses disappointment that Rāmānuja should have allowed himself "to believe in the usefulness and necessity of images as a means of approach to God". Immediately following the above outline of Rāmānuja's comprehensive system, in fact, in which divine transcendence and immanence are carefully maintained and explained, he goes on to claim that Rāmānuja:

> …went astray in the matter of image worship. With all his lofty conception of God he was devoted to image worship… It is unfortunate that Rāmānuja carried the doctrine of Immanence to this extent. He would have done well if he had recognized the folly of image worship as clearly as he recognized the folly of Pantheism and Monism.[89]

"Even such a clear thinker as Rāmānuja", he states rather incredulously, "combined the highest type of Theism with low ideas of image worship".[90]

This is perhaps not quite as stark as it initially sounds. For similar to St. Paul's reasoning on Mars Hill in Acts 17.30, Appasamy also wants to emphasize that this should not be held against Rāmānuja. In an earlier context he makes the case that 'idol worship' should, in fact, not be held against any of the *bhaktas*, for although it is not to be condoned, it is merely indicative of a certain lower level of spiritual attainment. Revelation is both given and received at the level appropriate to spiritual attainment. The Ācārya's idolatry is thus comparable to earlier stages of the progressive revelation in the biblical text as well. To this end he makes this interesting appeal:

> We do not dismiss the Old Testament because the story of Israel is tainted with idol worship. On the other hand, we find much value in the slow and toilsome growth of Israel towards clearer light about the nature of God and about the

[89] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 70-71.
[90] Appasamy, *The Theology of Hindu Bhakti*. 123.

> method of worshipping Him. The *bhakti* religion of India may be considered to belong to the spiritual level which is represented by the Old Testament. The faith and devotion and love which have been lavished on idols must be directed towards the one true God, especially as we know Him through His Incarnation in Jesus Christ.[91]

He has split Rāmānuja in his thinking. His 'knowledge of Brahman' as a 'personal theistic God' corresponds to the rigourous monotheism of the Prophets, whereas the temple-based sectarian worship of the Śrīrangam community corresponds to the more local and 'tribal' versions of the deity. Here we have yet another iteration of the same strategically placed wedge that he has earlier employed between a 'higher' and 'lower' Hinduism.[92]

Within this structure he also seems to have prioritized certain *avatāras* as being more believable than others. Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*, and Rama of the *Ramayana* are to be respected and considered in devotional interaction, as being revealers of a *saguṇa brahman*. Whereas, of some of the other *avatāras* described in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, we are told:

> … we need not take seriously the idea that of the Incarnations commonly attributed to Viṣṇu, the first three are of animal shape… to believe that God took an animal shape or a semi-animal shape belongs to the early forms of religion.

And he appeals, once again, to his pedagogical approach for justification:

> …all scholars are agreed in thinking that men's beliefs are at first crude and primitive and then only gradually become more spiritual and elevated…no modern Hindu really believes them to-day. The belief in divine Incarnation in animal and semi-animal forms cannot be considered as a part of the working faith of any educated Hindu at present."[93]

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[91] Richard L. Hivner, "The Christian Society for the Study of Hinduism, 1940-1956: Interreligious Engagement in Mid-Twentieth Century India" (University of South Africa, 2011). 216-217.

[92] It should be noted that Christians were not the only ones in Appasamy's day who were disavowing 'idol worship'. As an apologetic strategy on the 'Hindu' side it is, famously, one of the founding principles of Svāmi Dayananda's Arya Samaj, and a number of neo-Vedantin intellectuals had been pressing Śaṅkara into its service as well. Just so has Appasamy problematically distinguished between a 'higher' Rāmānuja and a 'lower' Rāmānuja, corresponding to a 'Vedantin' and 'sectarian' version of him, respectively. So too, says Vekathanam, Raja Rammohan Roy's cause was to "fight polytheism, idolatry and superstition at the popular level and monistic pantheism at the level of the Hindu elite".Vekathanam, *Indian Christology : Perspectives and Challenges*. 375.

[93] Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 256.

Even the more recognizably human forms that he has prioritized above the animal ones do not escape his anti-idolatry polemic, notably even the Puranic Kṛṣṇa. In an article entitled "Weakness of Hindu Bhakti" Appasamy will go so far as to name, disparagingly, some of the most beloved deities of popular devotion:

> Practically all the devotion of the *bhaktas* centres round one or the other of these gods. It is impossible to see how the *bhaktas* could have been stirred to such fervent piety by these gods. Siva is a terrible god who embodies the destructive forces of the universe. In spite of our best efforts to study Krishna with sympathy we fail to appreciate him.[94]

This is Appasamy at his most polemic. Richard Hivner has made the helpful observation that this 1942 article became, in fact, much of the raw material for chapters 13 and 14 of *Theology of Hindu Bhakti,* some of which has been outlined above. Noting the dissonance between the above-cited quotation and Appasamy's generally more 'sympathetic' appreciation for the *bhakti* traditions, he also makes the interesting observation that, in this later context, this particular passage has been removed.[95]

Despite his antipathy for the 'idols' within them, Appasamy knows just how central the temple is to Hindu *bhakti.* On a number of occasions, in fact, he draws positively on temple references in explanation of his Christian version of *bhakti*. In *What is Mokṣa*, for example, we are told that "[a]gain and again God is described as dwelling in the temple of the heart,"[96] Similarly in *Christ in the Indian Church*: "He is the life of our life, the soul of our soul. He is bound up with our inmost being... We are the temple; He is the God within...";[97] In another context the Bishop suggests a more humble approach towards the sharing of Christian faith with his countrymen:

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[94] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy : A Collection of His Writings*. 198.
[95] Hivner, "The Christian Society for the Study of Hinduism, 1940-1956: Interreligious Engagement in Mid-Twentieth Century India". 208. Appasamy was both contributor and editor of the C.S.S.H.'s journal, *The Pilgrim*, the journal in which the "Weakness of Hindu Bhakti" article was first published.
[96] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 81.
[97] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 50.

> Just as we seek to enter their religious sanctum so we ought to invite them to enter our inner shrine. Too long have they stood in the outer courts, listening to our preaching, hearing our denunciation, resenting our criticism and attacking our argument...Would it not be possible to arrange opportunities for common worship? As matters stand at present a Hindu will not find himself at home in a Christian Church service…[98]

In his thinking, the Christian Church service is, thus, the nearest Christian equivalent to what is happening in the Hindu *mandir*.

But he never seems to be able to reconcile, however, his appreciation for the temple as an analogy and his clear disdain for the 'idolatry' that is going on within them. This, I am saying, has seriously limited his understanding of Rāmānuja himself. He is happy to read Rāmānuja's *Bhāṣyas*, but he does not want to see them localized. His *Bhakti* must transcend the temple, says Appasamy, for in his discussion on John 4.21-24's teaching that God is Spirit whose worshippers must 'worship in Spirit and truth' Appasamy says:

> We are here led away from all controversy about temple and ritual into the very heart of religion. Over every church and temple should these words be inscribed in letters of gold. Every man seeking to approach the Divine and to realize his presence must treasure them in his heart. No idolatry of any sort, whether it be that of image or rite or liturgy, is permissible in the holy shrine in which we meet God face to face.[99]

His meaning is clear: temple, ritual, idolatry, image, liturgy - these all belong to the outer shell of religious traditions, their controversial and divisive exteriors. 'Worship in spirit and truth', on the other hand, according to him, is where the individual *bhakta*, quite apart from all those cultic externals, experiences the divine mystery - the 'very heart of religion'. All of this, once again, sounds suspiciously like the assumptions of 'Encyclopaedia'. As representative of 'Tradition', however, I am arguing here that the 'very heart of religion' most certainly *cannot* be abstracted from image, rite and liturgy.

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[98] Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 13-14.
[99] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 153.

These are the very semiotic systems, the language and idiom of ritual that shapes our experience of the divine. *Bhakti* can never be disembodied.

In his doctoral thesis Appasamy notes somewhat disparagingly that: "[t]hey [the *bhaktas*] do not speak of the idols as aids to worship, but really adore them, thus implying that they conceive of them as containing the *real presence of God* (emphasis mine).[100] What is so notable, and indeed fascinating, about his choice of words here is the complete lack of any sort of conceptual connection back to his own Anglican sacramental tradition. What, if not the physical mediation of the 'real presence of God', is believed to be going on in the Anglican Eucharist? Is it the perceived fixity of wood and stone as opposed to the perishable and consumable stuff of bread and wine that makes the one an 'idol' and the other a 'sacrament'? Here is the first important avenue of comparative interaction that he has missed out on. Despite his extended discussion on Sacrament and 'sacramental principle', it is remarkable that he seems entirely unwilling to allow Rāmānuja's devotion to be expressed normatively, and even primarily, in ritual itself – localized in liturgy and communal worship. Why indeed must a tradition's 'doctrines and ceremonies' be in opposition to the 'heart religion' of 'worship in spirit and truth? What if the very ceremonies that he is disavowing *are* the heart of the 'actual experience of men and women who lived with God'? Just as we have done for Appasamy and his Anglican tradition in the previous chapters, it is time to look at the details that Appasamy has been relegating to the footnotes and appendices,[101] to reconnect Rāmānuja's 'philosophy' and 'theology' with the devotional practice of his sectarian tradition. In my view the logic of sacrament and the

[100] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature : Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 54.
[101] The first substantial attempt at doing this is in the appendix on various views of *mokṣa* in Appasamy, *The Johannine Doctrine of Life: A Study of Christian and Indian Thought*. 236-246. Another would be his taxonomy of Hindu theologies in Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*. 6-12.

logic of the *murti* are not too far off, the juxtaposition of which would provide fruitful encounter for future comparative study.

5.4 A temple-based devotion: Rāmānuja in his Śrīrangam context

In his thesis, as Appasamy describes it, Rāmānuja's goal was to give his Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition a certain 'status and dignity', and so, set for himself the task of translating what was essentially a Tamil tradition into Sanskrit.[102] Clooney refers to the Śrīvaiṣṇava linguistic mixture known as *manipravala* as "a splendid but intricate combination of the gem (*mani*) and the coral (*pravala*) of the Tamil and Sanskrit languages taken together".[103] Analogously, Rāmānuja's tradition is also a '*manipravala* of devotion', an 'intricate combination' of Tamil Ālvār devotion and the more Sanskritic Vedāntic, Puranic and Agamic texts. In 1887, concurrent with the three charter documents of Macintyre's three rival versions of moral inquiry, and two years before the publication of *Lux Mundi,* N. Bhashyacharya, published his English translation of a Śrīvaiṣṇava charter document, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Śrī Rāmānuja Acharya.* Bhashyacharaya, as his name suggests, is the quintessentially emic voice:

> Being a Vaishnava Brahmin myself, and a descendent of one of the 74 Vaishnava priests (Acharya Purushas) appointed by Śrī Rāmānuja Charya, I have had opportunities of studying systematically the philosophy under my own learned Guru.[104]

Bhashyacharya has credentials. Interestingly, his catechism begins with an extended section recounting the life of Rāmānuja, revealing the priority that narratives about the Ācārya are just as important as his system and its teachings. Following this, the

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[102] This, arguably, is analogous to what Appasamy is also trying to do for his own Christian tradition in his own South Indian context eight hundred years later. Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature : Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 4.
[103] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 117.
[104] Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. The quotation is from an unnumbered page in the 'Author's Preface'.

catechumen asks: "*Upon what authorities are the writings of Śrī Rāmānujacharya based?"* The answer reveals a further complexity of interwoven narrative and discourse that Appasamy has not even begun to explore:

> On (1) The Vedas... (2) The Smṛtis, especially that of Manu...(3) The Pancharatra Āgamas, so far as they relate to the Vedānta... (4) "Mahābhārata," "Bhagavad Gītā" and "Viṣṇu Purāṇa"... (5) The commentaries on Brahma Sūtras, by Dramidacharya and Bodhayana..."[105]

Only a few questions before this, the Catechumen is also led through an extended section on the importance of the Tamil Ālvār[106] poets and their collected hymns in the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham.* The images of the Ālvārs, the catechumen is told, "are worshipped in the Vaishnava temples of Southern India", with Śrī Satagopa "otherwise called Nammalwar" among these, being 'much revered'.[107] Here again is the *bhakti manipravala*, the 'intricate combination'[108] not only of Tamil and Sanskrit language, but of root traditions as well. Bartley rightly describes the Śrīvaiṣṇava complex of belief as:

> ...the integration of the sectarian Tantric (i.e. non-Vedic) *Pancaratra* temple ritual and theology, the emotional devotionalism (*bhakti*) towards a personal deity with qualities (*saguna*) of the Tamil *Ālvār* poets and classical Vedāntic elements. The ritual life of the sect is structured by the *Pancaratra* scriptures (*Āgama*). There is an emphasis on the immanent presence of the divinity in the world in the temple image (*Arcāvatāra*).[109]

5.4.1 Two Śrīrangam festivals

Turning now to an etic account, in a recent anthropological book by Paul Younger entitled *Playing Host to Deity*, the author describes two Śrīvaiṣṇava festivals based in and around Śrīrangam. The first of these, the *ati* or 'origin' festival, re-enacts

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[105] Ibid. Question 62. Note that because the pages are not numbered, henceforth the numbered references here will be to the questions rather than to pages.
[106] Appasamy has great love for the Ālvārs, citing them frequently, and being Tamil, has even offered his own translations of some of their works, particularly in 1930's *Temple Bells.* But he always seems to keep Rāmānuja separate from these.
[107] Ibid. 57-58.
[108] Flood has offered an excellent summary of the multiple tributaries that comprise the Vaiṣṇava traditions. For his full exposition of these see Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*. 114-127. See especially figure 4 on page 118.
[109] Bartley, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: Realism and Religion*. 1.

the founding myth of the Śrīrangam temple itself and celebrates the narrative of the 'wandering and romance of Lord Raṅkanātan' (Ranganāth). It is the much more Viṣṇu oriented of the two festivals, with the very clear sense that Lord Ranganāth is understood as being none other than the *arcāvatāra* of the Four-Armed One. Younger describes how "[i]n the Śrīrankam temple the deity takes the form of an eight-foot long figure sleeping on the island platform (in the sea of chaos) created for him by the coils of the snake, Śeṣa".[110] All of this, of course, is classic Viṣṇu iconography. Over the course of the festival the image makes four 'hero' trips around the riverine island of Śrīrangam, an enactment in which the *paratva* 'supreme' or transcendent form represented in the inner sanctum of the temple is made *saulabhya,*[111] 'accessible' by procession to the devotee.[112] It is a theo-drama in which, as Younger describes, "[t]he 'wanderings' of the deity during this festival were often interpreted by participants in terms of the classical Tamil concept of 'heroism'".[113] Added to this, there is the subplot of the romantic exploit of Lord Ranganāth and his overtures to the Cōla princess, Kamalādevi, who is "now worshipped as *nācciyār".*[114] But the central figure in the drama, says Younger, is cosmic in proportions:

> …a royal-figure who effortlessly makes the world go around. In the centuries to come, some of the greatest theistic theology in India evolved within the halls of this temple... renowned theologians such as Rāmānuja and Vedānta Desika reflected on what the divine presence experienced here.[115]

One begins to get the very distinct sense that Appasamy would have been quite uncomfortable with this association with Rāmānuja's tradition.

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[110] Paul Younger, *Playing Host to Deity: Festival Religion in the South Indian Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). 52.
[111] J. B. Carman emphasizes these Sanskrit terms rather than the more western 'transcendent' and 'immanent'. See Carman, *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding*. 77-87.
[112] Younger, *Playing Host to Deity: Festival Religion in the South Indian Tradition*. 54.
[113] Ibid. 55.
[114] Ibid. 55.
[115] Ibid. 57.

The second of the festivals is the Adhyayanotsava Festival, that centres around the ritual singing of the "*Nalayira Divya Prabandham,* or the 4,000 hymns of the *ālvārs* or Tamil Vaiṣṇava saints".[116] Probably dating back to the fifteenth century, the festival is later than Rāmānuja, and so, interestingly, he is included within it in ritualized form:

> ...the festival image of the deity is moved each day from his inner sanctum at the heart of the temple to a small room in the second *pirakāram* (surrounding walkway).There, in the presence of images of *ālvārs* (saints) and *ācāryas* (teachers) and a hundred or so priests and worshipers, hymns are sung.[117]

The hall then 'becomes Vaikunta or Heaven', for the central activity of the recitation of the *Divya Prabandham*. Among the company 'brought to hear the recitation' is the ritualized image of "Rāmānuja himself (who in these contexts is always called Utaiyavar or 'the Lord')..."[118] Bhashyacharya confirms that after Rāmānuja "attained Moksha at Śrīrangam... his holy body was interred in a certain place in the temple of Śrī Ranganātha, where his image is now worshipped".[119] Again, one wonders what Appasamy would have to say about his 'philosopher par excellence of bhakti mysticism' now becoming an object of devotion. Rangachar confirms as well that, "[o]f late Śrīvaishnava shrines with Pāñcarātra traditions have the images of Alwars and Acharyas also".[120]

So far the ritual is taking place in the closed company of the priests and in the temple precincts. And as Younger describes it, this "...note of transcendence has always been the primary note in the worship of Śrīrankam". As with the *ati* festival, however, the deity is also made popularly accessible, *saulabhya,* through an interesting ritual involving "the erotic excitement of the young girls, resembling the hymnsinger Aṇtāḷ".

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[116] Ibid. 80.
[117] Ibid. 80-81.
[118] Ibid. 81.
[119] Bhashyacharya, *A Catechism of the Visishtadwaita Philosophy of Sri Rāmānuja Acharya*. 24.
[120] Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras.* 54.

Clearly there is much more going on here than we are able to get into at this stage, but at least in summary, as Younger describes it:

> ...the predominantly female crowd gathers on the stairs leading down to [a] pond, the priests take hours preparing the image of the deity for his bath... Finally the image goes into the water, and hundreds of women hasten to get into the water, which has been made especially sacred by the presence of the deity. As their *saris* mix with the lotus blossoms in the pond, the whole scene demonstrates the deity's *saulabhya*...[121]

On this point as well, we have to question Appasamy's claims that Rāmānuja's *bhakti* 'called a halt' to all that 'ecstatic' 'eroticism'.

I recount these two festivals here to make the case that *this* is the still living tradition of Rāmānuja. This is the tradition into which Bhashyacharya inducts his catechumens, and he does so no less than Appasamy would have done as Bishop of Coimbatore in laying hands on those undergoing confirmation or baptism. Just as Appasamy's detractors do not want to acknowledge his Anglican Eucharistic practice because it would complicate their thesis of him, so too does Appasamy not want to reckon with any of this. What I am saying, however, is that we must. Otherwise we are not dealing with Rāmānuja, but rather a rationalistic and philosophical rendition of him. *Sampradāyas* must be encountered in their integrity, rather than simply with an abstracted commentarial discourse, a practice that also serves as a safeguard against rendering texts and doctrinal systems 'safe' and neutralizing their world-shaping claims. Each tradition inscribes and circumscribes its own 'world'. The world of Śrīrangam is a very different sort of world than Appasamy's Canterbury. And yet both have this one thing in common. They are both enacting and re-enacting narrative. And they are both, undoubtedly, performing text on the body.

[121] Younger, *Playing Host to Deity: Festival Religion in the South Indian Tradition*. 84.

5.4.2 *Avatāra* reconsidered: *arcāvatāra* as temple-deity

In Chapter Three we followed Appasamy's reasoning in proposing an Indian Christian use of the word '*avatāra'* with reference to Christ. And yet his discussion on the matter led immediately to a lengthy list of disclaimers for clarification, leaving one with the honest question as to what the purpose might be in adopting *avatāra* terminology in the first place. Sumithra has summarized Appasamy's disclaimers as four-fold: First, in Hindu *bhakti* the *avatāra* is incomplete; to Appasamy Christ and Christ alone is the *pūrṇa avatāra*. Second, in the Hindu traditions the *avatāra* returns to an original state; the Incarnation in Christ is a permanent one. Third, in the *Bhagavad Gītā* we are told that the purpose for the *avatāra* is for the 'destruction of the wicked'; in Christ it is for their salvation, the 'righteous for the unrighteous'. Fourth, in a number of Hindu conceptions these embodiments are more like theophanies; Christ has a real physical body of the same stuff that any other human beings is made of.[122] All of this leaves the Indian Christian in the intractable situation of being told to use the term *avatāra,* and yet to use it in no sense that a Hindu *bhakta* would recognize or understand. At what point does this cease to become useful for any apologetic purposes? It seems to me that here we have a classic example of the paradox of Theseus' ship.[123] The oars are all new. The planks, timbers and masts have all been replaced. At what point do we have to admit that it is no longer the same ship? I am in substantial disagreement with Appasamy's statement that "the doctrine of the Avatāra is akin to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation".[124] It most certainly is not.

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[122] Sumithra, *Christian Theologies from an Indian Perspective*. 110.
[123] … or in another variation, 'Aristotle's knife'.
[124] Boyd, "An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology". 302.

Appasamy's argument for Christian adoption of the word is that, like *mokṣa,*[125] it is a widely held and readily understood concept in popular and devotional Hinduism. This argument cuts both ways, however, for *precisely because* it is a widely held and readily understood belief in popular piety, the moment any Christian begins to apply the term to Christ and not to Kṛṣṇa, Hindu listeners will simply fill the theological gaps of the Jesus story with the Kṛṣṇa one. In this regard I am very much in agreement with Klostermeier who has argued that certain theological terms are simply too embedded to be appropriated for other systems and contexts.[126] In his fascinating and now-classic exploration entitled *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* Klostermeier makes it clear that he has little sympathy for the sort of approach that Appasamy is espousing. "They introduced Christ as an 'avatāra' - the 'only' and 'exclusive' avatāra", but says Klostermeier, "this, for a Hindu, is sheer nonsense... In Indian theology there must be many avatāras. If Christ is an avatāra, he cannot be the only one!"[127] Rather uncharitably he says, "Even an elementary knowledge of bhakti theology will show at once that the Church's understanding of Christ would exclude the use of a term like avatāra". Appasamy clearly has more than an elementary knowledge of *bhakti* theology. But this is precisely why he knows he has to replace every salient feature of the original doctrine in support of his exclusive claims about Christ.

What I am arguing here is that theological language and idiom have a natural habitat, and considerable violence is done to them when they are extracted from it and pressed into the service of another. Klostermeier is not against casting Christianity as a

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[125] In the appendix to *What is Mokṣa?* he makes a somewhat more cautious argument for use of *bhakti* soteriological terms. "I plead that likewise Christians should use this popular and ancient Hindu term [*mokṣa*] to indicate the distinctively Christian idea of eternal life". He then proceeds, for the next ten pages, to map out six distinct Hindu soteriological systems. Clearly on this word as well, he feels, some significant clarifications are in order. Appasamy, *Johannine Doctrine of Life.* 236-246.

[126] Chapters 9 and 10 of Klostermeier's book contain his collected meditations and conclusions that were the result of his *in situ* comparative engagement with the Krsna communities at Vrindaban, a very valuable resource. Klaus K. Klostermaier and Antonia Fonseca, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1969). 100-118.

[127] Ibid. 115.

bhakti tradition, for he says quite clearly that, "Christianity is a religion of love - a Christbhakti". *Bhakti* in this sense is a more general term, not being owned by a particular tradition. All that he is insisting on is that the particularity of tradition-specific beliefs be respected. "Krishna is the centre of Krishnabhakti and Rama is the centre of the bhakti as practised by devotees of Rama. Christ is not identical with Krishna and Rama - the Hindus, too, know that".[128] But *bhakti* to a deity, he says, is always specific, and generally not overly speculative. It is wrapped up in narrative of deity that becomes involved in human history. No less than Appasamy's Gospel of John, to the Hindu *bhakta*, the "purāṇas are not a collection of legends and myths, but redemptive history - descriptive of the redemptive activity of God in his various advents". Again, I am in full agreement with Klostermeier on this.

5.4.3 The 'five modes' in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*

There is another important aspect to consider, however, in caution of a Christian appropriation of *avatāra* terminology, one that is much more specific to the Śrīvaiṣṇava context that comes straight out of the tantric Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Again, Appasamy is not unaware of these. In his earliest writing, in fact, in his doctoral thesis after describing particular *avatāras* from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, he mentions in passing that the Pāñcarātra Āgamas are an important part of the Śrīvaiṣṇava system.[129] In a later context he even outlines the five "different modes of God in the Vaishnavite system", a system very much sourced in those *Āgamas*: 1) *Para* the 'Transcendent' 2) *Vyūha*, the *Para* 'assumed four forms', Vasudeva, Sankarṣana, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha 'for convenience of worship and for creation'; 3) *Vibhāva*, referring to the more puranic *Dasavatāra*; 4) *Antaryāmīn*... "in which mode he lives in the heart and accompanies

[128] Ibid. 114.
[129] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature : Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 4.

individual souls even when they go to heaven or hell"; and 5) *Arcāvatāra,* 'idols or images set up in the shrine'.[130] Appasamy knows all this. It is not insignificant then that, apart from this early mention, Appasamy never once mentions these again over the more than fifty years of his writing career. What I am suggesting here is that the *Antaryāmīn* and *Avatāra,* particularly in *arca* form, means something much more tradition-specific than Appasamy has presented it, and it would seem as though he knows this.

In Narasiṃhacharya's book, *Contribution of Yāmunācharya to Viśiṣṭādvaita,* the author highlights, quite convincingly, the close conceptual connections between Rāmānuja's system as taught in the *Bhāṣyas,* and the writings of his 'grand-teacher' Yāmunācharya.[131] He notes how Rāmānuja, on a number of occasions even quotes Yāmunā verbatim, while "several others are paraphrased with slight modifications".[132] His claim with specific reference to the Body of God analogy is that:

> The relation subsisting between man and God, the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* and the *Śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva* traced in Yāmunā's works, gained new impetus and stress at the hands of Rāmānuja. The commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* by Rāmānuja is chiefly based on the *Gītārthasangraha* of Yāmunā.[133] 309

To this he also adds that the *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* concept "finds fuller expression and consummation in Rāmānuja's works".

Varadachari has made the similar claim that Rāmānuja's *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* is substantially rooted in the Āgamas.[134] He describes the Āgamas as a "branch of study which serves as a means to realise God and His nature and to worship Him. It is representative of the Vedic principles of practical religion and thus is pro-Vedic, though

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[130] Ibid. 24.
[131] Bartley has a good section on this as well in Bartley, *The Theology of Rāmānuja : Realism and Religion*. 52-56. But this is beyond the scope of our study.
[132] M. Narasimhacharya, *Contribution of Yamunacharya to Visistadvaita* (Hyderabad: Sri Jayalakshmi Publications, 1998). 307.
[133] Ibid. 309.
[134] Rangachar argues that the Āgamas function to the Śrīvaiṣṇava as an *a priori,* "not much discussed, but simply taken for granted".

in its evolution, it reveals certain features which could not be traced to the *Vedas*".[135] Evidently a believer, not only in their authority but also their antiquity,[136] Varadachari claims that the "*Pāñcarātra* system did influence the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* which in its turn exerted a profound influence on Śrī Rāmānuja".[137] This influence he finds most clearly in the five divine modes, "The *Āgama* concept of God as *Para, Vyūha, Vibhāva, Arca* and *Antaryāmīn",*[138] the very ones that Appasamy mentions but does not explore in his doctoral thesis because they deal with "speculative questions".[139]

In addition to this, both Narasimhacharya and Rangachar make quite considerable arguments that the Agamic vision of divine embodiment that Rāmānuja presents in the commentaries is actually rooted in the ancient Vedas themselves. "It is Visnu", says Narasimhacharya, "that supports the entire universe consisting of all beings". This precisely is why he is called the *Purusottama,* the 'supreme Person'. This, he says, is well attested in the scriptures, for "[t]he *puruṣasūkta* and the *Gita* are in full support of this".[140] He is thus both "different from all the individual selves", while at the same time the One in whom all beings 'consist', although these are but an 'infinitesimal part of His unlimited glory'.[141] In hearing how Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians explain their own tradition in relation to Rāmānuja, one begins to get the sense of the whole complex of Śrīvaiṣṇava reasoning here. If I understand it correctly, the claim here is that

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[135] V. Varadachari, "'Agamas' and Sri Rāmānuja's Philosophy," in *Studies in Rāmānuja*, ed. Sri Rāmānuja Vedanta Centre (Sriperumbudur: Sri Rāmānuja Vedanta Centre, 1979). 119.
[136] Rangachar claims that "In fact the Pāñcarātra doctrines are associated with the Purushasukta of the Rigveda. The Rigveda with its Purushasukta is considered the foundation stone of all later Śrīvaishnavaism and Vaishnava philosophy".Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras*. 28
[137] Varadachari, "'Agamas' and Sri Rāmānuja's Philosophy." 121.
[138] Ibid. 125. Rangachar enumerates these as well, but goes so far as to say that this is Vedic and Vedāntic in origin: "Both in Purusha sukta and Narayanopanishad it is expressed that Narayan, the Supreme God Himself desired to be worshipped in his five forms namely Para, Vyūha, Vibhāva, Antaryami and Arca".Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras*. 49-50
[139] Appasamy, "The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature: Considered Especially with Reference to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel". 4.
[140] Narasimhacharya, *Contribution of Yāmunācharya to Viśiṣṭādvaita*. 77.
[141] Rangachar has made similar and even stronger claims, stating that "[i]n fact the Pancaratra doctrines are associated with the Purushasukta of the Rigveda. The Rigveda with its Purushasukta is considered *the foundation stone of all later Srivaishnavism* and Vaishnava philosophy" (emphasis mine). Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras*. 28.

Rāmānuja's *magnum opus*, his *Vedānta Bhāṣyas,* is dependent on Yāmunā and his *Āgamaprāmāṇya,* a defence of the 'authority' of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas,*[142] a body of texts they are also keen to argue can be taken on ancient and Vedic authority. But what exactly is the content of the Āgamas? Rangachar has summarized them thus: "the forte of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas is the installation and consecration of the idols, prescription of details of daily worship and periodical rituals, celebration of festivals, construction of temples and so on and so forth".[143] The emphasis in the Āgamas, he continues is "the worship of a personal God who cannot be bereft of qualities... [who] resides in the hearts of individuals as also in consecrated idols".[144] What all of these insiders seem to be arguing for then is that Rāmānuja's primary devotion is to a temple-based deity and practice,[145] a version of the Ācārya that Appasamy seems to have taken great pains to avoid.

In view of their centrality to the Agamic system, then, it is worth reconsidering the 'five modes' that Appasamy mentioned in his earliest writing and then never returned to again. Rangachar's definition and explanation of them in distinctive Śrīvaiṣṇava analogy is particularly illuminating. The *Para* form, he says, is like a king "an all-powerful Sovereign who has absolute suzerainty over the entire earth". This he calls the *Para-Svarūpa* the 'supreme form'.[146] But this king then "establishes courts of justice to punish the offenders and provide redress to the honest and the good". These

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[142] Rangachar tells us that, "[i]t is called Pāñcarātra as it gives a detailed description of the prescribed rituals and worship five times a day… The Pāñcarātra stipulates five periods of the day"S. Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pāñcarātras*, 1st ed. (Mandya: Sridevi Prakashana, 1993). 51

[143] Ibid. 192.

[144] Ibid. 209.

[145] The Āgamas also seem to have much to say concerning temple construction as well. Special instructions are given concerning fabrication and positioning of *Kshetra* ('location'), *tirtha* ('sacred tank'), *Mandapam* ('Pavilion'), *Vimanam* ('dome of the sanctum'), *Nadi* ('river'), *Nagara* ('town') and *Aranya* ('forest'). Rangachar also points out that "The temple in its form should *prima facie* represent the Godhead within". Ibid. 219

[146] Concerning God as *Para,* the one he calls Paravasudeva, he says corresponds to what in Vedāntic terms would be called "[t]he ultimate reality namely the Supreme Brahman... always a qualified Brahman. Shadgunya Paripūrṇa, with the Six Great attributes", what Rāmānuja calls the *kalyanaguṇas.*

he compares to the second *Svarūpa,* the *vyūha* mode.[147] That same monarch at times must go on hunting expeditions to protect his subjects from "animals that are the source of menace to the peace-loving denizens". This corresponds to the *Vibhāva Svarūpa,* and refers to the puranic *avatāras,* the "incarnations the Lord has assumed and the form of Rama, Krishna... to annihilate the wicked and provide succour to the good…"[148] That same king goes out "unnoticed amidst his subjects incognito, in disguise just to know for himself their loyalty or otherwise". This refers to the unseen presence of the deity "in each and everyone of the living beings, and primarily in men". Here, of course, is situated Appasamy's *Antaryāmīn*. And finally, "Fulfilling his routine responsibilities of daily administration the king", goes out among his subjects "with his select retinue for purposes of recreation and relaxation", corresponding to the fifth and final mode, the *Arcāvatāra,* "God in the form of idols is often enshrined in famous temples... highly sung in praise by the Alwars of Śrī Vaishnavism".[149] It is a compelling and helpful picture, a theological system that, as I have said all along, is both embedded in narrative and embodied in practice.

Of these five, Appasamy has had something to say about the *Para* form, God in the ultimate and transcendent sense, the *Vibhāva* form, in the *avatāras*[150] discussed above, and of course, his most beloved of all the Rāmānujan epithets, the *Antaryāmīn*. Because Appasamy makes most frequent recourse to the latter of these, it is worth

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[147] "The term Vyūha is made up of the two roots 'uh' and 'vi' – the root 'uh' meaning 'to push out' or 'eject' and the root 'vi' meaning 'apart'. Obviously Vyūha means emergence into distinct many having emitted out or darted forth from the one unitary Divine source". Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras*. 139. See also 140-141 for his fuller description of these.

[148] Ibid. 137.

[149] Ibid. 138.

[150] Although it must be said that the Agamic view of these is far more complex than in the *Purāṇas*. As Rangachar describes it: "It is God's descent into any form of a member of the class of Deva, Tiryak, Manushya or Sthavara. It is God's Avatāra or Incarnation in the form of a super-human, human, animal or any other type of being. It is believed that God's Vibhāva avatars are so numerous that no accurate enumeration is possible." More commonly, however, "They are considered as the principal manifestations, Avatars or descents, that is incarnations of God the Supreme or of His Vyūhas or even of His Sub-Vyūhas…" Ibid. 154

taking a closer look at the insider's description of this. Rangachar defines it as the "Lord being imminent in all and controlling all". Interestingly, his references for this are all Upaniṣadic and Puranic, and indeed passages that Appasamy himself has invoked. The *BrU* 3.7

> He who dwelling in the earth, is within the earth and whose body is the earth – He is the Antaryāmīn. He who is dwelling within the Self, but whom the Self itself does not know, He or whom the Self is the body, who rules the self from within, He is thy real self. He is the ruler within, the immortal, the Antaryāmīn…[151]

In the *TU* 3.24 "he who has entered within, the Ruler of beings, the Self of all", and the *VP* 1.17.20 "The omnipresent ruler of all souls, seated in their hearts". Appasamy, it seems, is not too far off from what Rangachar is saying here: "Finally Brahman Himself entered into these souls according to His wish and thereby He constituted their Inner Self (Antaryāmīn)".[152] At the very least he is reading the same texts for its classical provenance. But Rangachar goes on to say that the *Antaryāmīn* is more than simply 'Divine Pervasiveness'. It is, more specifically, Rāmānuja's idea of the *jivātman* and *prakṛti* as 'modes', *prakāras,* of the *Antaryāmīn.* These are also known as *cit* and *acit,* or as Rangachar says, "divine permeation or imminence in all living and non-living existences (Cetana and Acetana) in the subtlest form".[153] Śrīvaiṣṇava theologians similarly marvel, as Appasamy has done, in the mystery of the *para* become immanent: "The Lord elevated in His all transcendent form, is imminent in the heart of embodied souls for the purpose of enabling them to contemplate Him and be saved…"[154]

The two divine modes about which Appasamy says nothing at all are the *vyūha* and *arca* forms, so these should further be explored if we are going to get a sense of

[151] Ibid. 176.
[152] Ibid. 174.
[153] Ibid. 180.
[154] Ibid. 181.

Rāmānuja's *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* as tradition-specific theology. Concerning the *vyūhas* Varadachari says:

> One important aspect is that creation is to be classified as pure, impure and mixed. Pure creation is needed for the purpose of maintaining the nature of the physical bodies of the four *vyūha* deities as unsullied by matter. Otherwise, these deities should be no better than enlightened mortals.[155]

Incidentally, Varadachari's description of a reality that is 'unsullied by matter' is an integral part of his explanation of the *Vibhāva* forms of the human *avatāra* in real but non-human bodies. These too, he says, belong to a 'pure' and 'unsullied' creation, which is why he insists that "the word, '*vibhāva*', should be rendered by the English equivalent, 'divine descent', in preference to the Christian word, 'incarnation'".[156] Unlike Appasamy, Varadachari does *not* want anyone to get the impression that the 'divine descents' were 'made like us in every way'. The *vyūhas* are emanations from the *Para* form. Rangachar wants to clarify this as well, as evidently to him it is a point of contention:

> The barbed broadside sometimes delivered that the Pāñcarātras advocate a plurality of Gods namely the four Vyūhas of Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha and that this plethora is resented by Badārayāna who believes in one Brahman... is revealing itself of the colossal ignorance about the philosophy of the Pāñcarātras. It is well-known that the Four Vyūhas are successive emanations of the ultimate one and that God Para Vasudeva is the one and the only ultimate reality of the Pāñcarātras.[157]

But the *vibhava* form is not to be separated from the *arca* form, the temple deity. This too is considered as *avatāra,* an emanation from the *para brahman.* As Varadachari explains it:

> Since the *arca* form of God is recommended for worship in both the *Āgamas* [I presume he means here both the Vaikhanasa and the Pāñcarātra, but this is unclear], it is evident that devotion forms the basis for offering worship to God. By *bhakti,* the eight- limbed yogic practice is recommended for worship in both the *Āgamas*. Rāmānuja has adopted all these in full...[158]

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[155] Varadachari, "'Agamas' and Sri Rāmānuja's Philosophy." 125.
[156] Ibid. 125.
[157] Rangachar, *Philosophy of Pancaratras*. 35.
[158] Varadachari, "'Agamas' and Sri Rāmānuja's Philosophy." 126.

Further citations would be superfluous at this point. All that I am arguing for here is the recognition that Rāmānuja's deity is a temple deity, and that the *Āgama* tradition that the insider scholars claim he is drawing his *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* from is a temple-based practice. Vardarchari will go so far as to claims that: "[t]he *Vaiṣṇava Āgamas* deal *mostly* with the construction of temples and icons to be housed there and with the methods of worship" (emphasis mine).[159] Although he admits that "Rāmānuja did not take the opportunity to treat this aspect of the *Āgamas* in any of his works", he is convinced that it is important to him nonetheless. "On the other hand", he says, "the practice of *prapatti* and daily worship of the Lord in one's house are treated by him in the *Gadyatraya* and *Nitya* respectively. Self-surrender as described in the *Gadyatraya,* was practiced by him before Śrī Ranganātha". His thesis is that Rāmānuja's *Nityagrantha,* his 'daily practice', comes straight out of the Āgamas.[160] He finds six other features in Rāmānuja's *Nityagrantha* that are rooted in the Agamic texts, including proscribed forms of worship, objects of worship, yogic *āsanas, mantras* and *mudras* and again, the eight-limbed *ashtanga* 'prostration to God',[161] all of which we heard nothing about from Appasamy.

Just how important these were to Rāmānuja is difficult to say. Rangachar and Narasiṃhacharya and Varadachari all seem to say that they were central. Bhashyacharya's catechism as well acknowledges that they are indeed an integral part of the Śrīvaiṣṇava system, although he seems to want to focus more on Rāmānuja system in the *Bhāṣyas.* Whatever is the case, Rangachar's conclusion on the matter seems uncontroversial: "The Pāñcarātra Āgama has very much influenced the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy and the Vaishnava tradition. In fact it forms the hard core of

[159] Ibid. 128-129.
[160] Ibid. 129.
[161] Ibid. 129.

Śrīvaishnavism". And nowhere is this more clearly found than in the *arca* form of the *avatāra,* "the images of God in temples".[162] In view of this, I find here another avenue of comparative interaction that Appasamy seems to have missed out on. The *Lux Mundi* theological shape of his four divine embodiments would have been greatly enhanced by juxtaposition with the five divine modes of the Śrīvaiṣṇava system. But this, too, at this point in my thesis will have to remain a proposal for future study.

5.4.5 In defence of Rāmānuja's 'idolatry'

Appasamy's aversion to 'idolatry' does not want to go anywhere near this, at least not in his writings. He wants a less messy *bhakti,* a devotion of the heart that somehow transcends the temple. But Rangachar is unapologetic on this point, as I am sure Rāmānuja would have been also, in saying that the "greatest of men, the Saints and particularly the Alwars have rejoiced and reveled in the worship of God in Arcāvatāra – in the form of installed and consecrated images in various temples".[163] Rāmānuja's *Bhāṣya* is about Brahman, who is also the supreme form of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, but his daily worship is to Lord Ranganāth, his *arcāvatāra.* "Idolatry and temple worship", says Rangachar, "are the forte of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas". But how does the image of stone or metal become the Body of God? Rangachar's description sounds remarkably and uncannily like that of a Eucharistic transubstantiation:

> The idol, the image of the deity may be made of stone, metal wood or even mortar – But the material component of the image is not bare Prakṛti or ordinary matter. It is said to obtain 'Suddhasattva' character after consecration by the invisible effect of installation, Pratistha ceremony and also by the presence of the deity in it.[164]

How is this all that different than the scholastics' discussions about 'substance' and 'accident' with regards to the elements of the Roman Catholic Eucharist**?** "The material of a consecrated and installed image", he continues, "is not ordinary matter constituted

[162] Ibid. 54.
[163] Ibid. 54.
[164] Ibid. 55.

by Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, but superior or pure matter called suddhasattva, sattva matter or ethereal matter".[165] Perhaps a Tamil Anglican might have more to say in this regard? Again, there is an obvious proximity between the logic of sacrament and the logic of *murti.*

As with the deity's procession in the above-described Śrīrangam festivals, the *Arcāvatāra* is an extremely important aspect of the *saulabhya* doctrine of 'accessibility'. Rangachar puts it succinctly: "God can no longer keep Himself out of sight from man, can no longer hide Himself in His ivory tower of Paramapada". The inner sanctum of the temple, as was explained in festivals, represents Vaikuntha, the celestial abode. Through the *arca* the deity 'descends' and is "brought to the public forum and is made easily accessible to any petitioner". It is for this very purpose that the *Arcāvatāra*, "the presence of the Holy in the image [is] consecrated".[166] Far from denying or downplaying image worship, Rangachar says, quite unapologetically, that Śrīvaiṣṇava *bhaktas* "extol idolatry and temple worship for the simple reason that God's presence is brought into the idol consecrated and the temple is made the abode of God". Rangachar continues: it is "heaven on earth as it contains within itself the living presence of the Holy as conceived in terms of His avatāra or descent or in terms of His choice revelation to the seers and sages".[167]

According to Rangachar, the *Arcāvatāra* is "the best manifestation of God for the benefit of man..." for it is the humblest of all 'descents' the "descension into worshipful forms, into the visible and tangible forms of idols or images in temples and homes".[168] Appasamy has said that Christ 'depends' on the Church to be his body. So

[165] Ibid. 55.
[166] Ibid. 56.
[167] Ibid. 56.
[168] Ibid. 183.

too, in the *arca* form the deity 'submits himself to the devotees'.[169] Another aspect of the centrality of the *arca* form that Appasamy's anti-idolatry polemic will entirely miss is the sense that where the Puranic *avatāras* are bound in time, appearing only for a lifetime, the "Arcāvatāra has no such time limit... As long as the devotee wants Him in the idol, He stays in it".[170] In language similar to Appasamy's 'mystery in the mundane' in his discussion on the Eucharist, Rangachar argues for the supremacy of the *arca* because "In arcāvatāra the image of God can be made of any material. There is absolutely no 'vastu' niyama. In fact the images, the 'Devata Murtis' may be made of stone, wood, metal or even sand or mud".[171] This is ultimate 'accessibility' the 'Saulabhya-simabhumitvam'":

> It is Arcāvatāra that provides a visible and tangible object for those who want to meditate on His Svarūpa… It is only in Arcāvatāra and not in any of the rest of the four forms of God that Dhyana Soukarya, facility for easy meditation on the Svarūpa of God is provided... to all kinds of souls without any distinctions of high or low, caste or career or even of sex... 'Sarvaloka saranyatvam' is the dominant characteristic of Arcāvatāra.[172]

Rangachar notes another very interesting feature of the *arca.* In the *para* and *Antaryāmīn* state it is the *jivātman* that is the 'mode' and the property of the deity, that which the 'Inner Controller' controls. In the *arcāvatāra* this is actually reversed. "The same God in Arcāvatāra makes Himself of [*sic*] the property of the individual soul and is always associated with the Jivā".[173] In what is probably the clearest encapsulated defence not only of the five modes but also of the *arca* we will give Rangachar the last word on the subject:

> Para is the God of the eternals... like the rain drops in the skies. Vyūha is the Lord of the Milky ocean and is difficult to approach. Vibhāva is the Lord of the Avatars, chiefly Rama and Krishna... Antaryami is like the spring in the earth,

[169] Ibid. 184.
[170] Ibid. 185.
[171] Ibid. 185-186.
[172] Ibid. 187.
[173] Ibid. 189.

> deep inside and difficult to obtain. But Arca is like the water in the tank, very easily and conveniently accessible. It is the true reservoir of Love.[174]

The *Bhāṣyas* to which Appasamy has related are situated texts - *embedded* and *embodied*. Although Appasamy has shifted over the course of his career from reading Rāmānuja primarily as a philosopher to reading him more as a theologian, in my view he has not gone far enough. If this is Rāmānuja in his sectarian context, then clearly this is a very different sort of Rāmānuja than Appasamy has allowed himself to relate to, and I would argue that he is the poorer for it.

5.5 Conclusions

Appasamy's four-fold Body of God is, in my view, a remarkable and courageous theological endeavour, a carefully considered sacramental theology contextualized in culturally appropriate devotional idiom. All of this he has done with the fidelity and commitment to his Anglican tradition. As much as Appasamy was ahead of his time, however, in certain aspects of his comparative engagement, upon reading his work chronologically, it becomes readily apparent that, in many ways, he was also very much a product *of* his time. On the one hand, he attempted to break down the metonymic construction that 'Hindu*ism*' had become for his Christian readership. It is neither to be understood, simplistically, as the philosophical 'pantheism' of Śaṅkara nor the 'polytheism' of popular worship. It is to the theistic strains of *bhakti* that he wants to relate his own devotion to Christ. On the other hand, in so doing he seems to have replaced one 'ism' for another. *Bhakti* is not a tradition-transcending belief system. This too is an outsider's construction. Over the course of the last three chapters I have argued that the devotional conceptions to which Appasamy appeals must, first and foremost, fit within the particularity of traditions.

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[174] Ibid. 225.

This is as true for Appasamy's sacramental version of the 'Body of God' as it is for Rāmānuja's *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva. Bhakti* has always been expressed, defined and, therefore, also experienced in the particular – in localized forms of sectarian text and practice. As surely then as, historically speaking, there is no such thing as a religion called 'Hinduism', there is also no such thing as what he has called the '*bhakti* religion'.[175] There are only Hindu traditions, most of which also happen to be *bhakti* traditions.[176]

The 'comparative traditions' approach that I have developed, and hopefully demonstrated, over the course of this study, has been a conscious attempt to account for both the discursive and the non-discursive aspects of Appasamy and Rāmānuja's traditions. By situating Appasamy in his post-Oxford Movement Anglicanism I have found his four-fold Body of God doctrine to be neither 'Hindu' 'Christian Vedantin' nor 'Idealist'. He was an Anglican situated somewhere between Gore's 'liberal orthodoxy' and Streeter and Temple's 'modernism' attempting to explain his devotion and sacramental practice to his countrymen with the help of some Sanskrit terminology and concepts. He uses the analogy as an explanation of sacrament and the sacramental principle. But this is not 'Rāmānuja's analogy' any more. It is Appasamy's analogy. Just as we have answered Appasamy's critics by locating him in his Anglican sacramental practice, so too have I attempted to locate Rāmānuja in the context of his temple-based Śrīrangam devotion to the temple deity, Ranganāth, the *Arcāvatāra* of Viṣṇu.

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[175] Ibid. 8.

[176] I am in agreement with A. Frank Thompson here, who notes that, the Christian *bhakti* authors represent a narrow range of the total bhakti traditions. "Are the positions they take *vis-à-vis* realities of Indian religion well-supported by the foundational theology of what is, in some way, a centered tradition?"Coward, *Hindu-Christian Dialogue: Perspectives and Encounters*. 177.

5.5.1 Concluding observations

Now that we have done so, some concluding observations can finally be made. Despite Appasamy's best attempts at providing an Indian vocabulary for his tradition, and despite what he has claimed by way of parity between himself and the Ācārya, I have found his use of the Body of God analogy to be fundamentally different than Rāmānuja's *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* in one crucial distinction. In short, it is the distinction between 'analogy' and 'homology'. As Appasamy has been forced to acknowledge over the course of his career, the Ācārya is actually saying something both theologically and ontologically very different than what he is professing. This, precisely, is why in his later 'theological' summary of the Ācārya's system he has abandoned all attempts at trying to fit it into his Christian perspective. He has finally allowed Rāmānuja to speak for himself.

But what do I mean by this distinction between 'analogy' and 'homology'? In the introductory essay to his translation of the *Upaniṣads,* Patrick Olivelle discusses Vedāntic understanding of the nature and meaning of the body. "Although ritual and cosmological speculations abound in the Upaniṣads", says Olivelle, "the focus of their enquiry is the human person - the construction of the body, its vital powers and faculties, the cognitive processes, and the essential core of a human being". As he explains it: "In ancient India... the human body was invested with unparalleled cosmological significance and parts of the body *homologized* with cosmic phenomena" (emphasis mine).[177] By this he means that the body itself is understood as representative of the universe, as microcosm to the macrocosm. Although Olivelle is speaking specifically about the ritual injunctions in the text, the point here is that the body is not

[177] Patrick Olivelle, *Upaniṣads,* World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). xlix.

simply *like* Brahman, it is, in some form, Brahman by fairly direct correlation. It is in this sense that I wish to differentiate between 'analogy' and 'homology'.

In the Oxford dictionary definition, 'analogy' is a "comparison between one thing and another, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification". 'Homology', on the other hand, is about "having the same relation, relative position, or structure". The root word here, '*homo'*, quite obviously, is a statement of interconnected identity, as for example, *homo-ousios* means 'sameness of substance'. It is both different yet 'the same'. Because there is an intimate and indeed ontological relationship between *atman* and Brahman, Vedāntic meditations on the body as pattern, and recursive shape of the universe itself, can very precisely be defined as 'homological' in nature.

There is another aspect to this, however. According to the Śrīvaishnava scholars, as we have also seen above, although Rāmānuja has argued for his 'Body of God' with reference to the Upaniṣads, in actual fact, they claim, it comes straight out of the *Āgamas,* which in turn are sourced in the ancient Vedas, particularly in the *Rg Veda* 10.90's *puruṣasūkta.* With this as a root narrative, at least for the *Āgamas,* the universe can, quite literally, be called the 'Body of God', the deity itself being the sacrificed one in its cosmogony. *Purusa* is none other than the *Purusottama.* If we take the scholars at their word, these are but some of the foundational structures behind Rāmānuja's thinking, and no doubt we are merely scratching the surface on this. Their claim is that what Rāmānuja has done with his *śarīra-śarīri-bhāva* is to translate these Agamic, Puranic and Vedic structures into careful and consistent Vedāntic argument to produce his 'identity-within-difference' thesis. And this he does, more precisely, through his distinctive teaching on the relationship between the *prakāra* and *prakārin,* the 'mode' and 'mode possessor'. In this modal sense and on the syntactic basis of

sāmānādhikaranya, 'correlative predication'[178] the 'self' as *śarīra* can indeed be called 'Brahman', the Body of God.

Appasamy, on the other hand, cannot say the same, for he has told us in no uncertain terms, that "Bhakti arises when man, *who is not God*, but in whom God dwells, seeks with eager love to attain a full experience of that God".[179] Similarly, of the natural world, the Bishop says: "[i]t should be remembered that the mountains and the rivers, the sun and the ocean are created by God. *They are not God*".[180] Not only does this make complete and utter nonsense of the Gurukul group's 'pantheist' accusations of him, it also very clearly requires his Body of God to be understood as nothing more than an analogy, a comparison of two different yet similar realities. God indwells in a way *analogous* to the manner in which the spirit indwells the body. Transposed back into Rāmānuja's terminology, according to the Bishop, the *jivātman* and *prakṛti* can never be called 'God', neither in any literal nor in any correlatively predicated sense. In sum, Appasamy's Body of God is an *analogia fidei,*[181] whereas Rāmānuja's is an ontology - an explanation of *tattvas*, of reality as it is.

5.5.2 A proposal for future study

In closing, I would like to make a proposal for future study, not primarily with reference to Rāmānuja or his tradition, but rather to John's Gospel. Appasamy's call, in 1950, for a 'Christological Reconstruction and Rāmānuja's Philosophy' was never to be. The paper he presented turned out to be merely a restatement of the themes he had been exploring over the previous decades, and his duties as a Bishop prevented him from developing his project any further. In response I would want to say to him, and on

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[178] Again, Lipner, *The Face of Truth: A Study of Meaning and Metaphysics in the Vedāntic Theology of Rāmānuja*. 29.
[179] Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study in the Mysticism of the Johannine Writings*. 49.
[180] Appasamy, *Christ in the Indian Church: A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice*. 22.
[181] …not primarily an *analogia entis* as some might be tempted to caricature him, for his starting place is, throughout, the Logos of the Prologue and the 'bodies' of God explicitly identified by the New Testament writers.

the basis of this research, that a 'Christological Reconstruction' in reference to 'Rāmānuja's philosophy' does not seem to me to be a fruitful endeavour. I would want to take Appasamy up on his call for a "Christological Reconstruction", but I would do so on the basis of a substantially new reading of the Gospel of John.

Appasamy has claimed that a "familiarity with the [Hindu] Scriptures … may help us to understand the Bible better. It will not necessarily give us new ideas, but it will certainly mean new emphases. Ideas which are already inherent in the Christian Scriptures will attain a new significance, will have a new power, when they are viewed in relation to the Eastern environment."[182] This present researcher has indeed ended up with a very different interpretation of John's Gospel than when this research began, and Rāmānuja and his tradition have actually been integral to this process. By 'seeing through' Rāmānuja's texts and into his tradition, I have found that there is both a temple and a temple deity very much at the heart of it, both literally in Śrīrangam as well as conceptually in its texts and theological reasoning. But finding a temple at the heart of Rāmānuja's tradition has eventually brought me back to the 'home text' with the surprising realization that there is also, at the very heart of John's Gospel, both a temple and a temple deity there as well. I assert, in fact, that John's Gospel is best read neither as a 'Logos Christology' drawn mainly from the Prologue, nor as a 'Spirit Christology' from the 'farewell discourse'; it is a 'Temple Christology' that is rooted, programmatically, in John 2 and developed as a narrative theology over the course of the whole text. I am not saying that a Johannine Temple Christology could not have been arrived at without reading Rāmānuja, for indeed, as this research has also uncovered, a growing number of New Testament scholars have begun to explore these very themes. Mary Coloe, Scott Hahn, Alan Kerr, Judith Lieu, Stephen Um and others

[182] Appasamy and Dayanandan Francis, *The Christian Bhakti of A. J. Appasamy: A Collection of His Writings*. 171.

have all recently explored the Temple theme in John. Notably, however, an Indian Christian, Lucius Nereparampil, has been there before them in his ground breaking 1978 study on John 2.[183] What I am asserting, however, is that it is 'comparative traditions' that has brought *me* here. In that sense, in the case of *this present researcher* it has taken a 'Temple Viṣṇology' (has there ever been such a phrase?) to reveal a 'Temple Christology'.

John's Gospel very clearly connects concepts of 'flesh' and 'body' up with the language of 'Temple' and 'Tabernacle'. Appasamy has focused on the 'en-fleshment' of the first phrase of John 1.14a, *'Logos sarx egeneto'*, so much so that the language of embodiment has obscured from him the very Jewish heart of what is actually being said here. I would focus, rather, on the 'indwelling' ('*eskēnōsen*') that the second part of the verse provides. It is for good reason that many commentators have rendered this as, he 'Tabernacled among us'. All of this is of a piece, I am saying, a 'seamless tunic' that, when coupled with the 'glory' reference of the next verse, sets the reader up for the more explicit body/Temple connection in the Temple *logion* of John 2.20 and 21: "But he was speaking of *the temple of his body*" ('*naou tou sōmatos autou'*). On this basis I would argue that Appasamy is missing two crucial (in every sense of the word) passages from his reading of John's Gospel, passages that in my view are both programmatic and integral to correctly understanding the Gospel as a whole - John 2's account of the Temple Cleansing and 19 and 20's account of the Death and Resurrection.

Connecting these up, I would then demonstrate that John's narrative works as an integrated whole, and not as a series of discourses as the Bishop has read them. The Prologue, chapter 3's discussion with Nicodemus, chapter 4's woman at the well, the

[183] Lucius Nereparampil, *Destroy This Temple: An Exegetico-Theological Study on the Meaning of Jesus' Temple-Logion in Jn 2:19* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978).

Bread of Life discourse in chapter 6, and chapters 14 and 17 of the Farewell Discourse; Appasamy has carefully chosen, arranged and interpreted all of these to serve his *bhakti* thesis. In a Temple Christology, however, we would find these not as proof texts to serve an external interpretive system, but rather as important narrative developments of the Temple theme itself, a theology that emerges from the narrative. Connecting these up with Appasamy's two missing passages, the Temple Cleansing and the Resurrection, I would demonstrate that a temple procession is very deliberately written into the narrative of John's Gospel, a procession that is designed to lead the reader from the *agnus dei* pronouncement to the Empty Tomb.

Releasing the central themes of Appasamy's divine embodiments, freeing them, so to speak, from *sarx* and *somatos* language, and rethinking them in the more Jewish Johannine frame of 'temple', I am proposing, will open things up considerably. The God who has always been manifest and mediated in the 'glory' and 'presence' of Tabernacle/Temple, the 'Father's House', is 'now' fully and eschatologically present in the first century Nazarene (John 1), himself the renewal of the Temple. Zeal for the Father's House would indeed 'consume' him (John 2 and 19), but it would consume him in order that place might be prepared in 'the Father's House' (John 14) for the community of a 'new creation', that they, in a sacramental (John 6 and 15) and perichoretic sense (John 17), 'may be one, as we are one'.

In Chapter Two's discussion on the comparativist's heuristic approach, the goal was found to be the development of a 'comparative intertext', a "detailed map of tried and true pathways back and forth, by which to see the texts and see oneself in relation to them, finding one's way, learning what works, what belongs together or doesn't, where one might take a worthwhile step, and the next one after that".[184] In view of the

[184] Clooney, *Seeing through Texts : Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India*. 297.

centrality of the temple that I have found in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, if a ‘Temple Christology’ and ‘Temple procession’ reading of the Fourth Gospel is indeed a viable one, as I suggest that it is, then perhaps here is that ‘worthwhile next step’. Perhaps here we might find further and even deeper structures and idioms by which to rethink our views on divine embodiment, a pathway on which to resume the comparative conversation that Appasamy began over ninety years ago.

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