

The Presence of the Living God Amidst the Cultural Revolution of a People

The word "culture" defies definition. To the Asians, culture is the total fabric of social, religious, and economic living. It is the overall dynamic factor which is in a process of radical change and unpredictable turmoil. It must be stated that this all-inclusive cultural structure manifests itself in various countries and situations in changing patterns.

In Ceylon, among the Sinhala people, our indigenous culture takes three forms. We possess a vast treasure of what I would term "nonreligious cultural activity." Here we participate, both in our daily living and in the observance of festive occasions, in cultural experiences which are deeply socially embedded and traditionally hallowed. They come to light in songs; in dance; in reverence to parents, teachers, and elders; in the festivals of seed time and harvest.

On the opposite end is the purely religious cultural pattern which has grown out of Buddhism, around the Dhamma, the Priest, and the Temple and expresses itself in the life of society in rites, ceremonies, and forms of worship. This aspect of culture has gradually lost its pristine purity and is increasingly syncretistic, magical, superstitious, and popular.

There is also "the controversial area of culture," which borders both on the social and the religious. This is the area with which the gospel has to contend intelligently and with sympathetic understanding.

The answers to questions as to what extent the Christian can

THE PRESENCE OF THE LIVING GOD

ally himself with this controversial aspect of culture in the observance of auspicious and inauspicious times, or to what extent the church can use the methods of Buddhist and Hindu architectural designing in the erection of buildings for Christian worship, are yet at the stage of debate. These and a host of other questions command the attention of Christian thinking in this controversial area of culture. The demand, on the one hand, is to avoid syncretism which will definitely have an adverse affect on the gospel, and, on the other hand, to release the church from "the scandal of foreignness" which leads the indigenous population to label the church a foreign accretion.

I believe it is right to state that these three culture patterns are common to all the countries in Asia. The differences and variations in each situation are relative to that situation because of the emphasis and circumstances prevalent in each country.

The Depth of the Cultural Revolution

Its Unique Expense. In the immediate postwar period an unprecedented event occurred on the Asian scene. Within a period of a few years in the late forties, a large number of countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia obtained political independence. This was unique in that it was the first time in human history such a large land mass with teeming millions of people came into their own. Throughout the villages, towns, and cities, throughout the fields, factories, schools, and colleges, the trumpet of freedom was sounded. Words in our languages which were dormant sprang to life overnight. Equivalents in our languages for "freedom," "liberty," and "deliverance" became the martial cry of the Asian peoples. Freedom fighters were bestowed honors, and those who had laid down their lives in the struggle were posthumously awarded. National anthems in which the country was portrayed as the Mother whose children pay to her loving obeisance were sung by full-throated choirs and assemblies at every function. Books, newspapers, and pamphlets streamed out of the presses in national languages which boasted of the pristine purity of the culture of the newly independent peoples of Asia.

Its Explosive Nature. The depth of the Asian cultural revolution becomes more astonishing when we witness and help others to recognize that as never before in history there was a radical uprooting of long accepted institutions and practices. People in

Asia were not only on the march, they were fearlessly questioning the institutions which by age-old customs had negated their self-identity. Two of the institutions which experienced the revolutionary winds of change and uprooting were the hierarchical social structure and the caste system.

The breakdown of the hierarchical social structure is evidenced in the abolition of the absolutist monarchical structure symbolized in the emperor or the maharaja. This process of democratization had its impact on the family system and called for legal reform in this realm. New constitutions brought many great changes in family life and especially in the life of women. The most important of these has been the abolition of the old patriarchal family system; women were granted the right to own and inherit property, the freedom to marry and divorce, and the privilege to work outside their homes and thus to participate in and contribute to the life of society.

The caste lines which held the people in thralldom from birth to death are steadily weakening under the necessities created by independence and modern transportation and industry, the impact of education, the laws against untouchability, the rebellion of women against the ancient bonds of their inferior status.

The Search for Selfhood and Its Problems. When the Asian peoples stepped into political independence they found that the search for selfhood and nationhood had to contend with forces which seemed almost insuperable. The essential weapon for setting about this enormous task was for brave legislation and undimmed vision. The moment called for a modernizing of the existing structures so that they might best serve the ideals of selfhood and nationhood. There was also the absolute need to recognize fearlessly that by the time of gaining independence, there had permanently settled in the countries groups of people other than one's own. The essential need to educate people to live in harmony in a multi-cultural society became a crying want and a matter of top priority.

It was here that tragedy overtook the Asian peoples and seemed almost to undermine this stupendous cultural revolution. The Asian peoples had little opportunity to adjust themselves to the new multi-cultural situation. Along with this there was the onrush of technology and the introduction of the structures of the nation-state, new social values and secular ethos which brought in their wake issues of very grave magnitude. But the

fact remained that not only had the entire people of each country obtained a new dignity, but each group—language, race, religion—became deliberately assertive of its own selfhood.

It is here that the demon of "communalism" raises its head—where one group fears being submerged or considered inferior by another, where democracy is defined as rule by the majority, where at some points even genocide cannot be ruled out.

But amidst all this helter-skelter of happenings, the peoples of Asia have one set purpose—to grasp their true selfhood and through it to bring themselves to the fruition of nationhood so that they may fulfill their destiny for Asia and for the world.

The Dynamic of the Cultural Revolution and the Imperiling Forces

We have recognized that revolutionary change is the greatest reality of modern times. However controversial the subject of nationalism, we have to recognize that this factor remains the only instrument for the developing nations to achieve planned revolutionary progress in their search for authentic nationhood. The spirit of nationalism has even burst the bonds of purely ideological commitment, for those who are Communists in Asian lands are first Indians, Chinese, or Burmese.

The spirit and fervor of nationalism is double-pronged. It courageously withstands and resists outside interference and baneful influence. Being grimly aware of the past history of economic exploitation, the Asian peoples are assiduously working out programs to meet the economic problems of investment, production, and just distribution of national products. This resistance is not only in the political and economic realms, but the struggle is for the removal of every vestige of racial discrimination. The Asian peoples seek for a true internationalism in the firm trust that it is as they find their rightful place in the comity of nations will they be able to find their genuine selfhood and nationhood.

Nationalism remains the lever of the cultural revolution, for not only is it resistant against pressure forces, it is also vitally engaged in working out a constructive front for the peoples. Every effort is made to create a growing sense of national consciousness. Developments in the fields of education, agriculture, and industry give a powerful impetus to this. The far-reaching

welfare measures that have been taken by many countries in the nationalization of transport, schools, hospitals, and insurance form one of the vital moves to help forward the spirit of nationalism. This movement has been often misunderstood and spuriously dubbed, but at the heart of it is the serious intent of making available to every person the amenities of modern living so that greater equity may be created for the well-being of all.

Nationalism is not without its conflicts—the virulence of the past projecting itself into the present. True, the fruits of a technological revolution resulting in a higher and enhanced national power are generally desired. But its course is met with serious resistance when it discerns a threat to established cultures, religious traditions, and cherished values. Inertia, conservatism, and a passionate clinging to the status quo often have strong votaries. No argument from such is forthcoming. They cling to the past simply because it is the past. In such a situation the definition of a country's goals and values enters into conflict—one version derived from the past and the other beckoned by a vision of the future. Will this conflict be an ever-present threat to the onward sweep of the cultural revolution, with the possibility of turning it into its opposite headed by reactionaries and obscurantists? Although this conflict which seeks to dam the national spirit is a present reality, we can conclude that this is a phase through which the cultural revolution has to pass. It is through such conflicts that victories of true nationalism will be assured.

The growing cancer of communalism, whether racial, linguistic, or religious, is the mortal enemy of the national spirit of the people of the countries of Asia. An unceasing battle goes on throughout these lands to achieve a positive conviction of national consciousness by redefining and reevaluating the meaning of such basic concepts as freedom, human rights, and justice. It is constructive, broad-based nationalism in the Asian cultural scene that can effectively and adequately forestall factional groups from dividing the nation.

It is a paradox, but nevertheless true, that the Christian gospel in the Asian scene has been viewed as suppressive and divisive of indigenous culture. But it is the gospel that has in actual fact proved to be the great liberator. This needs a word of explanation. During the pre-independence era, the real mission of the gospel in Asia was clouded by factors which had nothing in

common with the gospel. But with independence and with the new demands made on the people and with ever new responsibilities laid on them, it was the men and women influenced by the gospel who triggered liberation and emancipation in almost every field.

Some Dimensions of the Cultural Revolution

Although it is not possible to do full justice to the total breakthrough of the cultural revolution, yet we cannot pass by without noting the new vitality revealed in three fields. These I shall briefly record.

Revival in the Living Faiths of Asia. The revival of these faiths, the new vigor they experienced, was chiefly due to the new evangelistic orientation they received. This abounding zeal for the spread of the Dhamma brought in its wake a burning and almost fanatical desire to sharpen the necessary tools. It is upon this wave of revival that the following activities occurred:

- (1) A serious and awakened study of the Dhamma.
- (2) The establishment of Bhikku training centers, Bhikku meditation centers, and the Bhikku University.
- (3) The sense of a World Mission for Buddhism was revealed in participation at world conferences. The establishment of missions (Dhammadutha) for evangelizing of peoples of other lands. The large influx of Bhikkus and students from Europe and Asia come to study Buddhism and allied subjects at the universities of Ceylon. The World Buddhist Fellowship, which was formed in 1950 by delegates from 129 countries, gathered at the Temple of the Tooth, Kandy.
- (4) As never before an interest in Christianity has been aroused. This new awakening is seen in the large number of Bhikku and lay Buddhists who attend study conferences and seminars.
- (5) The efficient use of the press, radio, and advertising is a new aspect of this revival. Every opportunity is put to the fullest use and exploited to the maximum.

Revival in the Languages. The Oriental languages have received a new lease on life. Efforts are on the move to make the languages simpler and more flexible to suit modern needs of communication. New words are being coined with the utmost

urgency. In most countries the indigenous languages have been elevated to the status of official languages. The revival of these languages is considered by the people a hallowed and sacred service. The languages of these countries have achieved a new dignity, so that in conference, press, and publication they have come to wield a commanding position.

Revival in the Fields of Dance, Drama, and Music. With independence the forgotten arts of the people received a new infusion of life. Most of these arts for a long period were hidden in the remote rural areas. The general population, fed on ideas which were opposed to their culture, despised the wealth of art, dance, drama, and music which their countries possessed. But then came independence followed by revival of the indigenous art forms. In every field of art the folk idiom was revived. This move made possible mass participation. The screen and stage have now emerged with greater meaning to the masses of the people.

The Direction and Tragedy of the Cultural Revolution

On every hand in Asia we hear the cry of "Freedom." The breakthrough from traditionalism in the social, economic, and political structures, and in the hierarchical structure of human relations, and the change in the thought patterns of the people is patently clear. The free air of nationalism flowing throughout the lands of Asia is in ceaseless struggle with the blight of communalism, factionalism, sectarianism, and primitivism.

It is in the midst of these victories that tragedy stalks. The peoples are aware that they are on the march—not a day passes without their experiencing rapid social change—but they are not all clear where the cultural revolution is leading them or the goals for which they must strive. In a study of the varied constitutions of the newly independent countries, I have discovered that in certain of them there is no introduction or preamble which sets out goals. In certain other constitutions where genuine attempts have been made to set out goals, the goals sound so pompous that they border on unreality. In still other constitutions, the statements are so vague that they subject themselves to ambiguous interpretations.

Since the Asian leaders have been faced with the demand for making critical decisions with inadequate legal and constitution-

al provision, they have been compelled to work out tentative structures to meet urgent needs—e.g., Sukarno's guided democracy and Ayub Khan's basic democracy. But these temporary creations were not long-lasting, and many countries were plunged into dictatorial forms of government from which even to this moment hardly any have emerged. Certain other countries have been temporarily saved from this awful fate of dictatorship only to find themselves tottering on the brink of it.

Pointers to a Relevant Theology

I have broadly worked out the situation from which the cry of the Asian peoples issue. It is precisely to this situation that the churches of Asia must address a meaningful word. The churches must struggle to convey a theology which is living, vital, and dynamic; which will give hope to the peoples, goals to the nations, and a vision of new life to the millions. Such a theology must seriously take full account of the forces at work in the cultural revolution.

These forces can be summed up as:

- (1) The untarnished vision of the millions for a new selfhood and nationhood. This is no private dream or false illusion. The vision is oftentimes dulled by both internal and external pressures. But the vision can never be erased or lost.
- (2) The spirit of nationalism and revival—factors with which a growing theology has to wrestle in the Asian scene. A steady and courageous awareness of the depth, dynamic, dimension, and direction of the cultural revolution is vitally necessary. This must be recognized as a moment to which the Living God has brought this cultural revolution.
- (3) Political independence and the ensuing cultural revolution—factors that have meant to these new countries a proud but increasingly trying road through the wilderness of hunger, malnutrition, unemployment, poverty, and disease. Sometimes one is driven to conclude that the fight against hunger and development is increasingly being lost.

This state, already prevalent, is aggravated by the divisive and subversive activities of groups striving to achieve their communal independence at the expense of the welfare of the nation.

THE LIVING GOD

This suffering and sin is no less reduced, but is constantly set ablaze, by men and women who, without facing the realities and challenges of the multi-cultural and technological changes, look back to a revival of the glorious past and sing paean to an era which can never be resurrected in the context of catastrophic revolutionary change.

A Relevant Theology

The newly independent peoples are in search of theological patterns which will speak relevantly and pertinently to the complex and confused cultural situation. They look also to a theology which will reveal meaningful directives for future enterprise. It is now my purpose to highlight the forms that theology ought to take if it is to address the people relevantly and meaningfully.

The Vital Presence. Our minds click and our hearts respond when we hear the statement that the presence of the Living God is vitally wrapped up in the total cultural activity of the nations. The Living God is not only the Involved One. He is not merely the Identifying One. He is not simply the Present One. The Living God is "living vital presence in wrapped-upness." He it is who is in confrontation with situations and persons at every level.

The presence of the Living God, or "his vital wrapped-upness" with men and matter, means two things. First it means the active, if unseen, presence of God in Christ in the world of men and matter. Second, it means the presence of men and women, of Christians, in the world of men and matter, where all men, whether they are Christians or not, are the children of God. The two concerns of Christian presence are closely interrelated.

Let us take the first reality. We believe that God is the Creator of the entire cosmos. He created man in his own image, as a person who is free and responsible to God and his neighbor. God is bound up with his creation in infinite love. Man sins against God and alienates himself from God's purposes. But although man strives to establish a false autonomy by rejecting his Creator, God will not give up man. But instead he will give himself up and wrap himself up in man in immeasurable love. Thus, through Christ the Living God binds himself to man in immeasurable love and communicates himself to man—his love, his concern, his approval of the "manness" of man in its entirety.

THE PRESENCE OF THE LIVING GOD

It is in relation to this all-inclusive fact that we realize ourselves.

Christian presence, meaning the presence of the Living God with us, is vitally bound up and essentially wrapped up with the destinies of individuals and nations. The inseparableness of the Living Presence with the destinies of nations is eternal, contemporary, comprehensive, and eschatological.

God is "the Eternal Contemporary." The Living Presence is a contemporary presence. The Living Presence is both contemporary and comprehensive. God has released himself to every aspect of our total living, so that every vestige of limitation and confinement imposed on God by ascribing attributes to him has become irrelevant. The Living God, the Living Presence, is where the farmer ploughs the field and the factory worker sweats among the giant machines. His presence is there in government and business, in the revolutions of our day. He is there where men strike work and undertake fasts. The Living Presence, his wrapped-upness, is universal, contemporary, and comprehensive.

The Living God, in his wrapped-upness in the cultural revolution, is both Lord and Judge of every culture. The Living God has wrapped himself up, not that he may be a victim to any culture or at the mercy of any revolution. The Living God is the cosmic, resurrected, and ascended Lord, who in his very wrapped-upness judges the nations.

The presence of the Living God has also an eschatological dimension. The historical and cultural situation in this post-independence period is confused and frustrating in spite of rapid revival and the spirit of self-consciousness. But since he who is the Vital Presence is in command, we are assured that we can look forward with hope. We now know only what we have been led to know. But the purposes of the Living God will continue to be unfolded to us, and in his appointed time we will realize more fully and see more clearly. The presence of the Living God in our midst today, his wrapped-upness with us in every complex situation, is the guarantee of his fuller presence with us tomorrow.

The presence of the Living God means also his presence in our midst, working through us, working in spite of us, working in all men and in all moments. We live in a context of many religions, many churches within the Christian church, of politics, of revival, of poverty. Each Christian who embodies the presence of the Living God is present right in the midst of all this.

One's commitment to this fact should make him truly open and outgoing. The affirmation that the presence of the Living God is throughout the world means that God in Christ has already wrapped himself up with the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim, and the Communist. He is the Christ incognito. Our commission is not therefore arrogantly to present Christ as our monopoly to the pagan, the heathen, and the non-Christian but to present him with the profound realization that he who is vital presence has already indissolubly wrapped himself up with my brother, to enable him humbly to experience and exercise that presence in his life. If the Living God in Christ is to be manifest, visible, and unveiled in Asia, all traces of exclusiveness and superiority must be erased from the Christian community. "Ghetto Christianity" is a denial of the Incarnation and the community of men. We cannot but be open with the Living God "on our backs."

A *Theology of "Openness."* Such a theology has to be active on two fronts. On the one hand, the challenge of the Living God is always in terms of our brothers and sisters of other faiths. The way to exercise this challenge is none other than the way of dialogue. Dialogue is no new policy for the propagation of our religion. It is not a self-conscious program of Christian action. Dialogue is the spontaneous meeting on equal terms of men and women who have met the Master with those who, though the Master is already present with them, have yet to meet him. Profound and bold thinking by individuals in seminar and conference has sought to work out the basis and nature of dialogue. The consultation of the World Council of Churches at Kandy, Ceylon, in 1967, produced a statement which gave an enriching direction to ongoing dialogue. The presence of the Living God in this broad area of dialogical activity is well stated by our beloved friend and "Guru," Dr. P. D. Devanandan: "Can Christian faith discern in renewal the inner working of the Spirit of God, guiding men of other faiths than ourselves, as well as men of no faith, into a new understanding of God's ways with the world of men today? If all new creation can only be of God where else could these new aspects of other beliefs in the thinking and living of people have sprung from? There can be sociological and psychological explanations for this phenomenon of the renaissance of other religions. But if religious faith is to be regarded also in terms of response, it would be difficult for the

Christian to deny that these deep inner strivings of the human spirit are of the Holy Spirit."

The other aspect of the summons to openness is the profound change which is occurring within the church. The structures of the church with which we operate at present do not help fulfill the essential calling of the church for mission. The church in the Asian countries is so tragically wrapped up in itself as not to hear the calling of the Living Lord to wrap itself up with the mass of people who are caught in a violent eruption of dynamic change. It is vital in the name of the Lord of the church for those who are profoundly concerned to engage courageously in some iconoclastic activity and enable the Vital Presence to call into being a church for mission. It is important to state some guiding lines which require concern.

- (1) The removal of the one-type ministry and the necessity for a flexible ministry whose gifts will meet the needs of the peoples.
- (2) Laymen and laywomen in full-time service of the church.
- (3) The unifying of the church. The greatest obstacle to the breakthrough of the church in Asia is the scandal of disunity. Denominational distinctions in the midst of the vast Asian upheaval are not only irrelevant but border on the stupid. The enormous waste of manpower in ministry, economic resources, and the energy of lay people in attempting to run separate groups and organizations is a matter of grave concern. The urgency for union is growing rapidly, and churches in several countries are busy at schemes which will enable them to overcome the ignominy of denominationalism. The church, the Body of the Living Lord, will then be released to make visible its true nature and calling in the several lands it serves.

The Summons to a Theology of Modernization

The form that this call takes is very significant in the Asian scene. Today as Asians are able to make political decisions for themselves, they have accepted the need for the modernization of their traditional cultures. It is in this strong developing core of freedom through an assessment of modernization as necessary for the good life and a decision to achieve it, that the battle must be won.

It is this spiritual dimension of self-realization by man of his new humanity, present in the interaction between living cultures, that makes the process of modernization of the Asian societies something other than mere Westernization. Modernization in Asia is not identical with Westernization, although the latter often stimulates modernization. We must find within our own cultural soil the roots for our modernization.

A theology of modernization must take seriously the three areas of rapid change in the Asian scene and study such changes in relation to modernization.

Changes in the Social, Political, and Economic Structure. It is commonplace to say that industrialization is the cause of radical change in Asia. This is true to some extent, but it can be seriously questioned whether the tempo of modernization can be measured by the speed of industrialization.

With independence in 1948, Ceylon sped down the road of industrialization, but the existing structures remained unchanged. It was in 1956 that the great upsurge occurred and the common man found a place in the sun. The benefits of industrialization became no more the monopoly of a few who had enjoyed them these many years, but with far-reaching reforms in the areas of labor, transport, and education, the social, economic, and political structures underwent transformation. But one must confess that for progressive modernization reforms have to proceed still further in Ceylon. In the urgent matter of land reform we have yet to take the initial steps. The benefits that have accrued to Japan and China and certain other countries as a result of implementing bold schemes of land reform, have been the driving force for rapid modernization. By this we do not deny or underrate the fact that what has already happened in India and Ceylon has gone a long way in paving the road for modernization.

Changes in the Hierarchical Structure of Human Relations. I have already dealt in detail with this very rapid area of change. The absolutist monarchical structure, often supported by religious dogma, the family system, and the communal system of the village, has experienced rapid change. It must be noted that when people participate positively in rapid social change, endeavoring to establish the dignity of man, they start with right motives, but often end by breaking all old human relations without being able to create new ones. Thus the ultimate meaning

and purpose of change itself can be lost. It is here that the fellowship of Christ has to engage with the changing society in building a communion which will meet the needs of modernization. It is foolish to believe that the hierarchical structures can be retrieved or resurrected, for in the wake of the birth pangs of modernization the process of uprooting is irreversible.

Change in the Thought Patterns of the People. A new individualism is gripping the mind of Asia. Our people have been so slavish for so long that, being subject to misery and humiliation, they have forgotten even how to be angry about the loss of their human dignity. The slavish mind is afraid of freedom. The spirit of emancipation from slavishness, from unquestioning submission to ruthless masters, from doctrines of fatalism inculcated with vengeance, is on the move.

Mahatma Gandhi with his spinning wheel was one clear instance of an eager search for a way to awaken and renew India and her people. Gandhi's spinning wheel was a symbol of the struggle of the deep desire that the lowest and most ignorant peasant and laborer might be awakened to a sense of freedom and destiny.

The clarion call for new thought patterns is engaged in an increasing battle with the *weltanschauung* of resignation. The basic tenets of religions which interpret history as nonhistorical, as events in time and space having no ultimate meaning, and see true reality and ultimate good as eternal and beyond history, are being seriously questioned by searching minds who are committed to thought patterns that will release Asia. Can Asia accept the view that the salvation of man lies in his rescue from time and from history? Surely the process of modernization can have nothing to do with a faith that holds that there is no salvation of man and society within history. Although in Asia the passive and fatalistic attitude toward life and history is still powerful, the entire philosophy is under fire.

Change alone is not modernization. True modernization occurs with the renewal of thought patterns and the *weltanschauung* of the common people. With the vast upheaval of industrialization and political revolution, if the people involved in these changes meet nature's disasters and social and political complexities in the same spirit of passivity and submission, there will be no genuine renewal. Change must be met with renewal

of thought patterns among both the intellectuals and the common people in the movement toward genuine modernization.

The Church as Existence and Instrument of Modernization

The church in Asia is vitally challenged to be both the existence and instrument in the quest of modernization. To fulfill this call, it needs a new birth of the knowledge that only of its Lord does it still stand and that by him alone is it upheld.

As both existence and instrument in the call for modernization the church's task is clearly set forth in the E.A.C.C. documents prepared at the Kuala Lumpur Conference in 1959 and entitled "Exodus into the Future."

- (1) The church through its liberating Lord is itself being freed to help release Asia for its future.
- (2) By him the church is called to be a participant in this movement of change, to share its sufferings, to commit resources, to reshape its life and institutions for service in a new age.
- (3) Through the Living Lord we are called in all our national goals and aspirations to seek the humanization of men and the building of a new society.
- (4) In his fellowship he creates a forctaste of what that life may be.
- (5) Because of him we are given a hope which can sustain and redirect the fragile, national hopes of men.

At this same Conference a statement was drawn up which gives convincing direction and leadership to those who are set to blaze the trail of modernization.

The process of modernization in our time raises the question of the meaning of God's action in contemporary Asian history seen from the point of view of the leadership of Jesus Christ over the world and the final summing up of all things in Him. The primary theological task of the Church is to discern how God is at work in the modernizing process in a creative providence, in judgement and in redemption, so that the Church may respond to Him within this situation. The task of theology thus becomes the setting forth of a theology of history within which modernization is seen within the revolution of God's purpose for man in Christ. This becomes the framework for Christian participation for enhancing human dignity. It is partly accomplished through a new understanding of the Church as the prototype of a

transformed community which has played a part in the spiritual and social ferment leading to the contemporary change, and which is also able to keep the forces of modernization human.

The Living God is vitally wrapped up in this living Asian concern of modernization. Before his mighty sweep we witness the radical transformation of social, political, and economic structures, so that they may be of service not to the few but to the entire peoples who comprise Asia.

To that same activity of the Living God belong the changes that have occurred in the hierarchical forms of community. The Living God brings men and women out from patriarchy and matriarchy to live and build fellowship as responsible humans in a liberated society. The activity of the Living God is no less vital in the profound recognition that scientific and technological change alone does not work for modernization. A renewal in the thought patterns of the people is a vital ingredient which will open a new chapter for the people.

The Living God has committed the Living Body of Christ, his church, to be the vanguard in the mission of modernization. May it ever be our prayer and concern that the church may be so reconstituted in its structures that it may constantly in the process of renewal bring the gracious message of the gospel to a people who are steadfastly feeling after that which the Living God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ for all men.