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Christian Mission in a Pluralistic World

I. Introduction: Historical Analysis

A. Basic Mission Assumptions

The Western missionary enterprise, which had its beginnings in the eighteenth century and came to full flower in the nineteenth, was driven by two assumptions which bear an important relationship to each other: (1) there is no other name under heaven than that of Jesus Christ whereby women and men may be saved; and (2) that western culture is Christian and superior to the heathen cultures of Asia and Africa. Bishop Reginald Heber (1783-1826), brilliant graduate of Oxford, great and prolific hymn-writer, and missionary to India, penned the words to a hymn which succinctly sums up the missionary attitude of that time:

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Africa's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand—
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from *error's chain*.

What though the spicy breezes
Blow soft o'er Ceylon's isle;
Though every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile;

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In vain with lavish kindness,
 The gifts of God are strown,
The heathen in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone!

Shall *we* whose souls are lighted
 With wisdom from on high—
 Shall we to *men* benighted,
 The lamp of life deny?
 Salvation, oh, salvation!
 The joyful sound proclaim,
 Till earth's remotest nation
 Has learned Messiah's name.

Waft, waft, ye winds, his story,
 And you, ye waters roll,
 Till like a sea of glory,
 It spreads from pole to pole;
 Till o'er our ransomed nature
 The lamb for sinner slain,
 Redeemer, King, Creator,
 In bliss returns to reign!¹

The role of the Western missionary movement in the subjugation and subsequent liberation of African and Asian people is the subject of considerable debate. Depending upon to whom one listens, the Western missionary movement has either been the midwife ushering African and Asian peoples into modernity, or the handmaid of colonial powers in the economic, military and cultural subjugation of the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is sufficient evidence to build

¹David R. Breed, *The History and Use of Hymns and Hymn Tunes* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903), 168-169. Italics added.

a strong case for either proposition.

Is it mere coincidence that the poorer, less economically developed areas have traditionally been designated "mission fields"? It seems not. Albert Krass has defined in conventional terms what a mission field is supposed to be: ". . . a mission field is a place where many people still need to hear the gospel for the first time . . . and where people follow heathen customs and worship heathen gods."²

B. Distorted Interpretations

It follows, then, that the conventional understanding of a missionary is one sent by her/his church to preach, teach and proselytize in a foreign country, especially one considered to be "heathen." According to the dictionary, "heathen" means anyone not a Jew, Christian or Muslim, but it also carries the more common connotation of someone who is uncivilized and irreligious.³

From Bishop Heber's hymn, quoted earlier, it is clear that large segments of Asia were seen as heathen, and, for historical reasons of race, slavery, and the bad conscience of Westerners, who had instituted a brutal system of slavery, Africa was pictured as the epitome of heathenism. In the United States Christian leaders justified their holding of Africans in slavery arguing the latter's spiritual degradation, moral turpitude and inferior status in the hierarchy of being. From the vantage point of the present, it is easy to see the

²Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), 71.

³V. E. Okwuosa, *In the Name of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Company, 1977), 5.

shortcomings of this point of view. V. E. Okwuosa, African writer, is right in his observation: "Had missionaries taken time to view the African form of religion from a more friendly perspective, they would have discovered a common ground for cooperation."⁴ He reports that on a certain occasion in Nigeria persons newly converted to Christianity were prompted by missionaries to attack and destroy the shrine and image of Oluwaiye, the village god. After removing the image and all the paraphernalia associated with sacrifice to it, they put these things in a pile, poured kerosene over them and burned them to ashes. When this news spread among the populace, there was a great sensation of outrage.⁵

Methodist Bishop Ralph E. Dodge agrees with Okwuosa's point: "Many Christians think that they are in Africa to impose their western culture without first finding out what good the people already have."⁶ "When European Missionaries first went to tropical Africa," he writes, "it was assumed that Black Africans had no religion, no complex, satisfying views of the world, of human destiny and of supernatural powers." But we have now come to see that "some of the dynamics which have helped to shape African appropriations of Christianity stem from the roles played by religion in pre-Christian African societies."⁷

It was probably too much to expect that nineteenth-century missionaries would be able to discern

⁴Ibid., 16.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ralph E. Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1964), 52.

⁷Richard Gray, *Black Christians and White Missionaries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

the insights which African traditional religion might have into the nature of god, human nature and human community. They went with a supreme confidence—indeed one might say arrogance—because as Heber's hymn says

Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high—
Shall we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?⁸

That confidence was born not only of religious certainty but the rolling tide of Western imperialism, science and technology undergirded by the postulates of liberalism—progress, liberty and individualism. The missionary movement became the pathfinder for colonial domination and the legitimizer of the liberal capitalist enterprise system by virtue of the emphases which were built into the mission program.⁹

David Livingstone, though appointed as a missionary to southern Africa and married to a daughter of the famed Moffat missionary family, devoted himself to exploring the interior of Africa, because "[he] believed thoroughly in the civilizing influence of commerce. His explorations were made that many others might easily follow with commerce and Christianity."¹⁰ So, while combatting the activities of Arab slave traders, he made an important contribution to the exploration and opening of Africa to Western exploitation.¹¹

Albert Schweitzer laid aside two earned doctor

⁸Breed, *History and Use of Hymns*, 168-169.

⁹Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 63-69.

¹⁰David Lamb, *The Africans* (New York: Random House, 1982), 141.

¹¹*Ibid.*

ates, one in philosophy, another in music, to study for a doctorate in medicine and to minister to Africans in the jungles of that part of Equatorial Africa that was then under French control. Notwithstanding his extraordinary dedication, Schweitzer never learned to speak an African language, and his attitude toward Africans is summed up in the following quotation from his writing: "The Negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority . . . With regard to Negroes, then, I have coined the formula: I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother."¹²

C. Positive Mission Values

In spite of the condescending attitude of Western missionaries, it cannot be denied that the work of the missions produced very tangible benefits for the countries in Africa and Asia in which they were located. Wherever one goes in Africa, the presence of mission stations with churches, schools and hospitals testify to the first major contribution of missionaries. In China, prior to the communist revolution, the thirteen Christian colleges and numerous middle and primary schools provided evidence of the Christian mission investment in that country. In India, until recently, the Christian educational institutions—medical schools, colleges, and high schools—were the ones to which admission was most avidly sought.

A second major contribution of Christian mission to Africa and other continents was in the area of communications. As missionaries strove to proclaim the gospel, they found barriers to the accomplishment

¹²Ibid.

of that mandate in the lack of written languages. Undoubtedly one of the greatest achievements of Western Christian missionaries was to reduce languages to written form. This involved linguistic analysis, invention of symbols for representing complex oral distinctions (e.g., pitch, intonation, prefixes, suffixes, tenses, etc.). They compiled dictionaries, prepared grammars and produced translations of the Bible and other Christian literature in these newly devised written forms.¹³

However laudable, and on the surface-liberating-such developments were, they also played into a cultural imperialism which, in the long run, had a negative impact on the psyche of native peoples.

. . . cultural imperialism is the most subtle, and if it were ever to succeed by itself alone, the most successful of imperialistic policies. It aims not at the conquest of territory or at the control of economic life, but at the conquest and control of the minds of men [and women] as an instrument for changing the power relations between two nations.¹⁴

The transmission via translation of large bodies of Westernized Christian literature into the languages of Africa, Asia, (and other places) often gave an unconscious bent to the idea of the "superiority" of Western ideas and values. This was reinforced by westernized educational methods and materials. Thus the good work done in education, linguistics and publication was

¹³Okwuosa, *In the Name of Christianity*, 26. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989) offers a useful discussion of the wider theological and cultural implications of the translation work done by missionaries in Africa.

¹⁴Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 57.

somewhat vitiated by its subtle support of cultural imperialism. The mission enterprise became an instrument for legitimizing Western hegemony over colonial peoples.

In 1986 I attended an International Christian conference in Nanjing, China. It was a strange conference: there was a sprinkling of Asians, one African and a half dozen or so African Americans. The rest of the hundred or so delegates were Caucasians from Europe, Canada, Australia and the United States. One afternoon we visited the Nanjing Theological Seminary. As we strolled through the Seminary's library and saw its pitifully small collection, one after another visitor began to approach Bishop Ting, the President of the Seminary and the head of the church in China, with offers to send books. With great politeness but with firmness, he asked them not to send books. "We want to build our collection slowly and carefully," he said. Reading the subtext underlying his polite response, I understood that he wanted to avoid the cultural imperialism which had had such a *deculturizing* effect upon the Chinese church in the days before the revolution.

When we returned to Nanjing about ten days later, I requested and was accorded a meeting with Bishop Ting for our group of nine African-American Christians. We took that opportunity to express appreciation for the Three-Self Movement (self-support, self-government and self-propagation) which the Chinese church had adopted. We also expressed our concern that with the opening of relations with outside churches, the church in China would, through the seduction of resources, lose what it had accomplished through great suffering—an image of a truly Chinese Christian church, not a westernized appendage. Bishop Ting was apprecia-

tive of our views and wrote a mutual friend that it pleased him that we saw the Three-Self Movement as being important not only to China but to the world community of Christians.

This leads me to discuss a third area of mission impact: the resolution of the tension between the gospel and the non-Christian cultures in which it is propagated. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century missionaries aggressively challenged ideas, beliefs and practices which they thought belonged to the darkness of heathenism and stood in the way of ushering those mission lands into the enlightened era which they saw as Christian but which we have come to perceive as essentially Western. A large share of the blame for the decultralization of national Christians must be laid at the door of missionaries who saw in the destruction or undermining of the native culture the precondition for the establishment of Christianity. For example, Alexander Duff, the great Scottish pioneer in higher education in India, sought to "lay a mine to the citadel of Hinduism by introducing western science, English literature, and Western democratic ideals into the curriculum of Christian schools."¹⁵

This is not an idea which passed away with the pioneer missionaries. During my own term of service in India, one of my fellow missionaries expressed his understanding of our task in similar words: "I am here to bring down the structure of Hinduism," he said.

In Africa this removal of traditional practices extended to the use of indigenous herbalists, polygamy, dancing, drumming and African names. "How," asks

¹⁵J. R. Candran, "The Church In and Against Its Cultural Environment," *International Missionary Review* 12 (1952): 260.

Okwuosa, "can an African name like *Ifeanyichukwu*, literally meaning 'God is omnipotent' be rejected by a Christian priest as a baptismal name in favor of such names as George, Alexander, or Napoleon?"¹⁶

In India Dr. Ralla Ram, the great twentieth-century leader of the church in North India, delighted in telling the story of the Christian couple who brought their child to be baptized as Sita Ram. The minister refused, since this was the name of a Hindu deity, and sent them into the sacristy to decide on another name. When they returned and gave the name Joseph Stalin, the rite was performed without hesitation.

Because of the tension between the gospel and culture and the frequent confusion of Western culture with the gospel the missionary enterprise sometimes hindered national churches from finding their own authentic identity.

When Mrs. Swann and I visited Taiwan in the mid-nineteen sixties, we were taken into the mountains to fellowship with the indigenous people of the hill tribes. They had had, prior to their becoming Christians, a tradition of group dancing, but when missionaries came they were taught that these things belonged to the heathenism from which they had now escaped; and they were persuaded to put away this art. The young native pastor who was then working among them was encouraging them, however, to restore the native dancing to its place in the life of the community. And because we were interested in drama and the performing arts they went to their trunks, took out their dance costumes, donned them, and danced for and with us. It is clear that there can be no advancement in the use

¹⁶Okwuosa, 7.

of indigenous modes and arts by the church where Christians see in their prior destruction the Christian society.

II. Nature of Mission Today

This brings us to the knotty problem of the nature of our mission today. We have come into a new time. The present situation—thanks be to God—does not permit the assumption of the superiority of Western culture and civilization. Since World War I, there has been a declining confidence on the part of western peoples themselves in their culture and civilization. This decline in confidence and power accelerated after World War II. The stalemated war in Korea marked a slippage in military dominance and defeat in Vietnam confirmed the trend. Since World War II, newly independent nations in Asia and Africa have taken their places at the negotiating table, profoundly modifying the political and cultural equation. The development of several strong Asian economies has changed the economic equation as well. Africa and Asian cultures are today impinging on Western societies.¹⁷

A. Pluralistic Society

Given the situation in the world today, we have to acknowledge that we live in a pluralistic society. Both Christians and non-Christians of Asia and Africa have increasingly questioned the attitude of superiority which was inherent in the traditional missionary message. Dr. Radhakrishnan, India's most distinguished contemporary philosopher, draws attention to the ab-

¹⁷See "Mantras, Mudras and Mandalas: Asian Challenges to American Values" in this volume.

sence of such attitudes in Hinduism. He writes: "Hinduism is wholly free from the strange obsession of the Semitic faiths that the acceptance of a particular religious metaphysics is necessary for salvation, and non-acceptance thereof is a heinous sin meriting eternal punishment in hell."¹⁸

Within the ecumenical Christian family, Kosuke Koyama, Japanese missionary theologian, is equally direct:

[I confess] that I do not see much future for Christianity. . . . my reason is rather simple. It is because Christianity has become so self-righteous that I do not see much future for it. It wants to teach. It does not want to learn. It is arrogant. It is suffering from 'teacher complex.' God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector . . . There is not much future in this type of religion.¹⁹

Christianity, he reminds us, like every other religion stands under the judgement of Christ.

'Christ-like going' is not one-way traffic. It is intensely two-ways. And in this two-way traffic situation with his people, he [Jesus] gave up his right of way! I understand that 'to be human' means to live in two-way traffic and 'to be divine' means to give up one's right-of-way for the sake of the other in this two-way traffic.²⁰

¹⁸Rhadhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926), 37.

¹⁹Kosuke Koyama, "Christianity Suffers from 'Teacher Complex,'" in *Mission Trends No. 2: Evangelization*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson and Thomas F. Stransky (New York: Paulist Press 1975), 73.

²⁰*Ibid.*

Perhaps here we need to define pluralism and what it means. Lesslie Newbigin has, I think, made the correct connection. He writes:

Pluralism is conceived to be a proper characteristic of a secular society, a society in which there is no officially approved pattern of belief or conduct. It is therefore also conceived to be a free society, a society not controlled by accepted dogma but characterized rather by the critical spirit which is ready to subject all dogmas to critical (and even skeptical) examination.²¹

There is a dilemma for Christians in this, for if we grant validity to other religious points of view, how can we continue to say that there is no other name under heaven whereby we may be saved? Of course, A.T. Robinson contends that this passage, Acts 4:12, should never be quoted in the debate on comparative religion—that the context of the passage is healing, the word translated "saved" is the same word translated "cured" a few verses earlier.²²

This verse (and others such as Matt. 12:22-30, Mark 3:22-27, Luke 11:14-23) notwithstanding, many in the church have maintained an absolutist or exclusivist position which at its severest would declare that the gods of other faiths are not gods. A middle inclusivist position has emerged granting some light to other faiths but maintaining a position that it is through Christ that that light comes. The pluralist position maintains both the otherness and the validity of other faith professions.

²¹Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 1.

²²John A. T. Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 105-106.

This creates a theoretical dilemma for us which Langdon Gilkey clearly sketches: ". . . the inescapable drive toward ecumenical community, toward respect for and recognition of the other as other, and of the religious validity and power he or she embodies has pushed us toward a relativity that seems to defy intellectual resolution."²³

The dilemma of those who would do mission is about the message we bring to these who embrace other faiths. If in our acceptance of pluralism we acknowledge the validity of the faith of others and a respect for their traditions, what then is the message?

C. Positive Value of Pluralism

In spite of the dilemma, in many ways we are moving toward an acceptance of the view that pluralism is a positive value. Within our churches and also in secular life we accept the notion that diversity of race, culture and traditions is a strength, not a handicap. Those of us who accept the notion of contextualization have already granted the point that there is not an absolute point from which we apprehend truth, that each of us comes with a bias, a conditioning arising out of our own set of circumstances. Thus there is pluralism even within our own Christian tradition. The significance of a pluralistic world is the recognition that there are real alternatives to whatever we may proclaim. One of the problems for Christians, especially Western Christians, is that in the past we

²³Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications" in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. John Hicks and Paul F. Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), 46.

have been unwilling to acknowledge that there is any other way that is viable or possible. Even now we struggle to find a way to acknowledge the new situation in the world and our sense of being adrift if we do not hold to the traditional absolutist formulations. Andrew D. McRae, responding to Marian Bohlen's paper read at the Association of Theological Schools meeting in 1990, says:

While I strongly support the desire to accept the sincerity and the heritage of those with other religious systems, I can find no way of accommodating their value-systems as equal to the Christian view, if the cost of such accommodation is the abandonment of the uniqueness of the gospel, and of Christ. Many moral ideas we share with others, but the Incarnation of Truth in Christ is non-negotiable.²⁴

Two things about this statement suggest to me paths that we ought not to take. The use of the term "non-negotiable" is unfortunate and casts the dialogue with other faiths in terms of a struggle. It is a power term and power is not the category that is useful. Secondly, he denies these systems' equality with the Christian view. The structures of Christianity and the church are culture- and time-bound. We ought not haggle over them. Christian structures and systems are as vulnerable to human failings as any other system. The goal of mission is not to promote structures or systems but the kingdom of God. We shall be on sounder ground if we can lift up the person of Jesus Christ, for in Christ is the kingdom made present among us.

In my own struggle I have benefitted by contact,

²⁴Andrew D. McRae, "Response to the Future of Mission in a Pluralistic World." *Theological Education* 27 (Autumn 1990): 45.

friendship and dialogue with those of other faiths. It has helped to reduce distortion and clarify my own faith. Several writers, addressing the problem of dialogue, have helped me to begin to see certain things which were not at first apparent. First, John A. T. Robinson has helped to make clear how inter-religious dialogue works. Persons in dialogue speak from their center, but the difference between centers and edges is important. Robinson says:

Each of us, if we are in any way integrated, has a centre from which our lives are lived, and our 'world' is what is enclosed within the circumference of that circle. Yet often we are more conscious of the edges than the centers, corresponding to the bounds of an animal's territory which it stakes all to defend. The edges may be hard, while the centers are relatively unformed. The effect of dialogue is to bring to consciousness, and therefore to strengthen our centers—so that where we stand will often in the process become closer and firmer. But we do that by being prepared to soften our edges, to open up the frontiers and let down our defense.²⁵

In other words, we need to be vulnerable.

Secondly, Langdon Gilkey, Donald Schriver, and Marian Bohlen have also helped. If we cast the dialogue in the realm of discussion of principles, to those unwilling to accept a neutered relativism, the dilemma seems unresolvable. But what seems on the level of intellectual argument unresolvable, may indeed be resolvable in practice. "The puzzle that to *reflection* may represent a hopeless contradiction, said John Dewey,

²⁵Robinson, *Truth is Two-Eyed*, 4.

can through *intelligent practice* be faithfully entered into and successfully resolved." Practice forces us to exercise our options.²⁶

Shriver writes, "We listen most intently to those whose words emerge from their lives, especially lives made vulnerable to suffering and death in the service of God and neighbor."²⁷

Marian Bohen, a Maryknoll Sister, with three other nuns, went to live in a low-income Muslim neighborhood (kampung) of indigenous Betawi people in Jakarta, Indonesia. "Our mission was to be a peaceful presence, living as neighbors within the cultural context of the kampung, and not be divisive seekers of converts."²⁸ She found this experience to be a positive good, one which sharpened her own sense of herself and raised her consciousness of the goodness and beauty of those different in many ways yet sharing with her a basic humanity.²⁹

Thirdly, Langdon Gilkey has outlined a position which he calls relative absoluteness made up of one part absolute and two parts relativity, a dialectic. He says:

There seems to appear here as a requirement of authentic being a relationship, on the one hand, to some stable and assumed, and in that sense, *absolute* standpoint, a participation in it, and commitment to it. But on the other hand (and here is

²⁶Gilkey, *Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 46.

²⁷Donald W. Shriver Jr., "Response to the Future of Mission in a Pluralistic World," *Theological Education* 27 (Autumn 1990): 51.

²⁸Marian Bohen, "The Future of Mission in a Pluralistic World," *Theological Education* 27 (Autum 1990): 36.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 37.

where the polar side of the dialectic appears), in order to avoid repeating in ourselves the same oppressive religious absolutism we confront, there must at the same time be a deep apprehension and recognition of the *relativity* of our standpoint.³⁰

We encounter others as God-created beings, those whom God loves and we evidence a sense of humility and respect in the presence of those of other faiths, recognizing the work of the Holy Spirit in all ages and all cultures.

Finally, Bohlen in her address sums up in language that is poetry her vision of the Christian mission as she has come to understand it:

We are all of us a mystery of light-in-darkness and darkness shot through with light. We will walk the road of mission, go out to others in humility, in humanity, bearing the light of our Christian faith within the clouded and smeared lamps of religious and cultural structures which often impede the light from shining clearly. We will sit down with those of other faiths, with those of no faith, to learn from them, realizing that their lights are also encased in holders encrusted with age, and burning in alien oil.³¹

As a Christian, I am captivated by the music of the gospel, by the wonder of God's love, revealed in Jesus whom we call Christ. I spend my life straining to hear the music, sometimes deaf to it, sometimes not getting myself in syncopation, not getting it quite right. If people ask me why I am dancing, and want to join the dance, I'll do my best to help them hear the music, then let them

³⁰Gilkey, 46-47.

³¹Bohlen, "Future of Mission," 41.

go, so they can create their own new dancing to the captivating music. But I hear other songs, played by strange instruments, and see people dancing in a different way. How can I tell they're all mixed up, and wrong? I sit and watch, and listen, and try to catch the sense and harmony in their dance and praise them for it.³²

III. Conclusion

I close with a personal story. Some years ago when I was doing field research for my doctoral dissertation in North India, I did much traveling, staying in cities, small towns and villages, spending more time with Hindus than I had ever spent during the ten years I served as a missionary. One of the places I had to visit a number of times was the small city of Hathras, about ninety miles south of New Delhi. I went there to interview people who worked at a printer that published scripts of one of the dramatic forms I was investigating and whose company was famous. After my second visit, my principal contact said to me, "The next time you come, you are not to go to the hotel; you must come and stay with us." It did not strike me until later that I would be staying in the home of a Hindu family, where I would need to observe their customs. I was particularly concerned about eating, for interdining between persons of different castes is one of two primary prohibitions which orthodox Hindus observe. (Intermarriage is the other.)

When meal time came on the first day, my hostess, with silent signals to her husband, served my tray and seated me at a small table. She then served her

³²Bohen, 42-43.

husband, and he sat cross-legged on the floor about ten feet away. Knowing that there would be a violation of their ritual purity if they had to wash my dishes, when I had finished my food, I got up from the table, went to the spigot in the corner of the room, washed my plate and utensils, using the ashes placed there for scrubbing them. There was an almost audible gasp from my hostess and host. They had not expected me to do this, but my gesture had an interesting effect on our relationship. On my next visit, when the meal was served, the wife asked her husband in Hindi, under her breath, "Where are you going to eat?" He replied, "Right here," indicating the table at which I was sitting. I washed my dishes as had become my custom. On the next visit, however, when I rose to wash my dishes, my hostess stopped me. "No," she said, "I will wash them." Something significant had occurred. The principles of religious purity had been superseded. Without discussion, what had become important to both of us was our friendship and common humanity.