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THE ROLE OF THE COSMIC CHRIST IN GOD'S UNIVERSAL SALVIFIC PLAN: AN ASSESSMENT OF MICHAEL AMALADOSS' CHRISTOLOGY[1]

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Abstract. This paper examines the Christology of Michael Amaladoss, particularly his understanding of the Cosmic Christ within God's universal salvific plan. Situating Amaladoss within the context of Indian contextual theology and religious pluralism, the study explores his use of Advaitic philosophy, symbolic hermeneutics, and dialogical theology in articulating the relationship between Christianity and other religions. Amaladoss argues that God's salvific activity extends beyond the historical Christ-event and is mediated through diverse religious traditions, which function as authentic paths of divine-human encounter. Central to his theology is the distinction, without separation, between the historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ, whose universal presence transcends yet includes the incarnation. The paper critically assesses the theological implications of this position in relation to Chalcedonian Christology, Vatican II, and *Dominus Iesus*. While recognizing Amaladoss' contribution to interreligious dialogue and contextual theology, the study questions whether his framework sufficiently preserves the unity of the one economy of salvation in Jesus Christ.

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Doing Contextual Theology in India Today

Amaladoss explains that the Christian theological enterprise does not consist in repeating past faith interpretations and formulations articulated in the language and culture of Western Europe, but reinterpreting the deposit of Revelation in language that is intelligible to present cultural contexts.[2]

Contextual theology arises out of present experience and the questions they elicit, which are reflected upon through the lenses of a religious tradition, which in turn is challenged by contemporary experiences and questions. This theological-pastoral cycle is completed when reflection leads to the discernment of the course of action, which after implementation is submitted once again to the never-ending cycle of experience-reflection-discernment-action. Academicians, who are part of and not apart from the faith community, articulate the thoughts and sentiments of the community seeking expression and clarification.[3]

An important consequence of contextual theology is that theologies will be plural and diverse. Different epochs, different cultures, and Christians of varying social locations will raise different questions. The same set of primary religious symbols, such as the

[2] Michael Amaladoss is an Asian-Indian (as he would like to be called) Jesuit theologian, who has published thirty-six books in English and over five thousand articles. See Enrico Beltramini, *Michael Amaladoss and the Quest for Indian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024), Foreword (ix), Acknowledgments (xiii-xiv) and Premise (xix-xx).

[3] Michael Amaladoss, "From Experience to Theology: Methodological Explorations," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 61 (1997): 372. See also Amaladoss, "An Emerging Indian Theology: Some Exploratory Reflections (Part I)," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 58 (1994): 474-75.

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Kingdom of God or the Eucharistic banquet, may be appropriated and may evoke different nuanced meanings for different local communities.[4]

Contextual theology makes use of the social sciences as tools for analyzing society. But against the reductionist economic or psychological analysis of Marxist or Freudian frameworks respectively, Amaladoss proposes an integral analysis that covers the economic-political, the personal-social and the cultural-religious dimensions of Indian society.[5] While proposing economic or political plans is not the domain of theology, the theological enterprise can and should critique economic, political and cultural systems and structures, and "can directly influence culture, its worldview and value-system on the one hand, and on the other, motivate and inspire people to commit themselves to promote change."[6] Theologizing in India, aided by the fruits of an integral analysis, will hopefully lead to insights relevant to the struggles of Indian society with regard, for instance, to the caste system and the plight of the Dalits, the oppression of women, the tendency of the Indian State towards communalism, and the negative impact of globalization, themes about which Amaladoss has written extensively.

Indian society is characterized by its religious and cultural diversity—Hindu, Buddhist, Jainist, Muslim, Christian and others. Amaladoss clarifies that the starting point for theologizing within the Indian context of religious plurality is not an abstract comparison of religions, but reflection on the proclamation of Jesus Christ amidst religious diversity.[7] He maintains that

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[4] Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation: Can the Many Be One?* (Noida: Vidyajyoti Education & Welfare Society/ISPCK, 1988), 99.

[5] Ibid., 58-63.

[6] Amaladoss, "From Experience to Theology," 378.

[7] Michael Amaladoss, "Pluralism of Religions and the Proclamation of Jesus Christ in the Context of Asia," in *Proceedings of the Fifty-Sixth Annual Convention*, ed. Richard Sparks (Milwaukee: The Catholic Theological Society of America, 2001), 1.

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> people are saved not only in spite of, but in and through their religions, because God has been reaching out to them in the context of their life, community and history. This realization is not so much the conclusion of an argument, but is born out of a living experience of other believers.[8]

Amaladoss identifies the theological problem as the task of reconciling the intuition of many Christians regarding the possibility of salvation of non-Christians in and through their respective religions without undermining Christianity's faith in Christ as universal savior. The appropriate method is not an *a priori* approach, a theology from above that proceeds from dogmas by which other religions are evaluated and judged, but a dialogical approach.

> We are not starting from our self-understanding as Christians and our beliefs about means of salvation and from this point of view judge from the outside ... the other religions and their role in the history of salvation. Our approach will be dialogical. We listen to the other believers, be challenged by their faith and life. Even if we are not actually dialoguing with them, we have to be present to them in mind and imagination as we reflect on the meaning, for our faith, of this multi-religious situation.[9]

Amaladoss cautions against making judgments about non-Christians prior to listening, learning and being challenged by them.10 This does not mean that he recommends that we bracket our Christian faith perspective in dialoguing with non-Christians, for hermeneutically, we cannot detach ourselves from our particular perspective. We cannot interpret any reality from an Archimedean ahistorical point of view.

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[8] Michael Amaladoss, "The Pluralism of Religions and the Significance of Christ," *East Asian Pastoral Review*, no. 3 & 4 (1989): 276. Hereafter "Significance of Christ."

[9] Ibid., 278.

[10] Ibid., 278-280; 290. Cf. also Michael Amaladoss, "The Mystery of Christ and Other Religions: An Indian Perspective," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 63 (1999): 327-328; 335, 337-338. Hereafter "Mystery of Christ."

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We interpret reality inescapably from the perspective of our cultural location and faith commitment.

The work of dialoguing with adherents of other religions is not to accomplish a comparative study of religions. The objective is not to formulate

> an abstract universal scheme that will somehow unify all religions…. We are searching to make place for other believers in the perspective of our own faith, while respecting the identities of others without somehow reducing them to or interpreting them in terms of our own.[11]

The Symbolic Nature of All Religions

Amaladoss defines religion as "a symbolic structure that mediates a living relationship between the person/community and the Absolute."[12] Religions are encounters between human beings-in-community and the divine. While the phenomenological study of religions tends to reduce religions to systems of doctrines, rituals, and norms for behavior, he explains that religions are essentially saving relationships between God and human persons. Religions are systematized human responses to the divine initiative and invitations to ultimate human fulfillment. Second, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church's tendency to view non-Christian religions as deficient human searches for the divine, religions are simultaneously varied manifestations of the divine reaching out to human beings. Third, the diversity of religions is the outcome of the interplay of the creative freedom of God who discloses God's self in a multiplicity of manners and the freedom of human beings who respond in a multiplicity of ways. "Pluralism of religions is then seen primarily as a pluralism of relationships."[13] Fourth, God reaches out to all peoples in the context of their culture and history. God, in God's

[11] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 279. Emphasis by the author.

[12] Michael Amaladoss, *Making All Things New* (Anand, Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1990), 232.

[13] Ibid.

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desire to encounter human beings, adapts God's self to the ontological structures of human beings and the ontological conditions for human knowledge—corporeality, linguistic and cultural-situatedness, and historicity. God takes the human situation seriously, so that God manifests God's self to human beings in ways and means that human beings might perceive, encounter and come to know and be drawn to God. All religions, insofar as they are various expressions of God reaching out to peoples, are to some extent incarnational.

Despite the plurality of religions, Amaladoss underlines the unity and universality of the Word of God manifested in various religions in various ways: "the manifestation and understanding of the Word, which is fullness itself, may only be partial and limited in Christianity, in its pilgrim state, conditioned by history and culture."[14] Moreover, this diversity of religions is integrated within the one economy of salvation that God has for the world. We must clarify, though, that his claim about the universal salvific will of God is a theological assertion that, while not being open to demonstration, is a presupposition expressive of the religious ethos of modern Christianity.

While revelation is God's Self-communication to people of various cultures in various ways, faith is the personal response to the divine initiative. One's personal divine-human encounter is mediated by the systematized faith of the community to which one belongs; at the same time, one's faith response nourishes the faith of the community. He contends that insofar as all religions mediate a divine-human encounter, comparing the effectivity of religions is pointless: "For a particular person the way in which God is actually reaching out to him historically is the best way."[15] Despite the limitations of the human being's capacity to know and respond to God because of human finitude and sinfulness, faith, nevertheless, can be an absolute commitment to God. Each one is called to witness to the manner through which God has manifested God's self to the individual:

[14] Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, 26.

[15] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 236.

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> For that person this will have an absolute--that is obliging--value. Yet one can be aware of a certain relativity in the heart of that absolute imperative if one is conscious of the distinction between God who obliges and the concrete way in which this obligation comes to an individual.[16]

To engage in interreligious dialogue thus enables one to witness to God's presence and activity in the lives of other people. Because God has revealed and continues to manifest God's self in and through one's religion and in others' too, an individual engaged in interreligious dialogue "need not hesitate to confess one's deepest experiences and convictions because one does not engage in discussion, much less in polemics, but in doxology, thanking and praising God-and in praxis-open and responding to God who is calling."[17]

One cannot appreciate Amaladoss' pluralist Christology unless one understands his hermeneutics of symbol, which coheres with the main insights of Ricoeur, Tillich, Dulles, and Haight. Culled from several essays on symbolism, the following are the salient characteristics of symbols that Amaladoss notes.[18]

Advaitic Dialectic. The dialectical relationship between the symbol and the signified means that while the material symbol makes present a transcendental reality, the latter can only be perceived through the material symbol. While Western dialectics stresses the interpenetration of two separate entities in a dialectical relationship, the Advaitic approach stresses the unity-in-difference of the two elements. *Advaita* literally means "not two;" it denies duality and dichotomy. All reality is understood as a unity-in-difference.[19]

Aside from the advaitic-dialectical relationship between the symbol and referent, a dialectic relationship also exists between the symbol

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 237.

[18] See Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus* (New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 1-8.

[19] Amaladoss, "An Emerging Indian Theology (Part I)," 480-82.

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and the perceiver. Whereas the meaning of the symbol is grounded in the reality behind the symbol, its meaning is dependent on the cultural matrix in which the symbol is situated. This dialectic between the reality symbolized and the meaning assigned by the community is that which gives rise to culture.[20]

Relativity of Symbols. Amaladoss explains the need to uncover and encounter the reality behind the concrete symbols, which are relative both to the transcendent referent of the symbol and to the human, cultural, and historical conditions that shape the symbol. This principle cautions us, on the one extreme, from absolutizing the concrete symbol which is historically conditioned, and, on the other extreme, denigrating symbols as mere pointers to and not embodiments, albeit limited and relative, of transcendent realities.

In an advaitic dialectic, the two poles need not be equal, for while the symbol is permeated by the reality symbolized, the referent, on the other hand, is not totally subsumed by the symbol. This principle will have important consequences in understanding the personal presence of the Word of God in Jesus Christ without restricting the freedom of the Word to be present and active outside the Christ-event.[21]

Because symbols are relative to the socio-cultural matrix that gives rise to them, their meaning can change through time. Symbols are not only polyvalent at any given moment, but also across time. Paradoxically, symbols, on the one hand, are not arbitrary, for there is a certain ontological reality on which the symbol is dependent and in which the symbol subsists—a reality which may not be manipulated, for instance, that water is a symbol for life.[22] On the other hand, symbols may lose their capacity to communicate the underlying reality, for instance, in monarchies that have become republics, wherein kingship has either been abolished or its symbolic power diminished.

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[20] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 155.

[21] See Michael Amaladoss, "How Does Jesus Save Us? An Indian Approach," *Landas* vol. 25, Issue 1-2 (2011): 258-261.

[22] Amaladoss, "An Emerging Indian Theology (Part I)," 483.

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Religions: The Universal in the Particular

The relationship between the Divine and human beings is characterized by a dialectical relationship between the universal and the particular, the eternal and the historical, the absolute and the relative. In the language of Advaitic Indian philosophy, the relationship between the Divine and human beings is that between the one, absolute Real and the plural, relative phenomena or historical manifestations. *Advaita*, the non-dichotomy of unity-in-diversity, is the Indian philosophical symbol of the inter-relatedness and participation of all phenomena in the Real. From an Indian religious perspective, *Atman*, the Self, in whom all phenomena emanate and participate, is the symbol of the unity of all being. The philosophical category of the non-duality of all reality, *Advaita*, has been personalized in Hinduism as *Atman*.[23]

While God is absolute and human beings relative, the human response to the divine initiative, which we call faith, may take on an absolute character. However, the expressions of this absolute faith commitment to the absolute God are relative: "The symbolic expression of it [faith] is culturally, historically and humanly conditioned and therefore relative."[24] Therefore, relative human beings express their absolute faith in the Absolute through relative symbols. The danger lies in confusing one's absolute faith with one's relative faith expression, which, because its object is the Absolute and its conviction unflinching and certain, is often absolutized.

The Universal Salvific Will of God and the Indian Conception of God. While we have numerous terms for God—Father, Mother, Creator, King, Judge, Victim, Bridegroom—all these images of and names for God only partially convey the mystery of God who is ineffable and beyond name and form.[25] In the Indian tradition, the

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[23] Michael Amaladoss, "The One and the Many: Reality and Manifestation," *Indian Theological Studies* 29, no. 4 (1992): 305-09.

[24] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 280.

[25] Michael Amaladoss, *Creative Conflict: Theological Musings* (Bandra, Bombay: St. Paul Press, 1995), 13.

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Hindu notion of purnam or fullness is an apt symbol for ultimate mystery. This fullness is dynamic, creative and effusive; it is full of life and shares its abundance with creation. Moreover, the *purna kumbha*, the full vessel, serves as a metaphor for divine fullness. In the Indian festival celebrating abundance, the *pongal*, the pot of boiling and overflowing rice, is used as a symbol for the fullness of the divine overflowing into creation.[26] According to Hindu tradition, "the fullness of God is fullness of the *cosmos* in God,"[27] which, Amaladoss explains, resonates with the Christian notion of *pleroma*.

Reality as *Advaita,* God as *Atman*. Amaladoss proposes an advaitic epistemological approach rather than a dichotomous approach to reality. The dichotomous approach tends to objectify and separate the knower and outside reality in the process of knowing and to reify anything perceived and subjected to analysis or reflection. In contrast, the advaitic approach denies duality and dichotomy; it affirms unity amidst plurality, which, however, is not monistic. The advaitic approach does not attempt to explain the how and why of this unity-in-difference; it merely points to the complexity of reality as interrelated and unified, despite the diversity of phenomena.[28]

Amaladoss calls attention to the human body to illustrate the advaitic approach. The human being is a spirit-body. On the one hand, the body is, but is not only, material and chemical compounds, intelligence, and emotions. While we do sense a personal identity beyond or underlying the body's corporeality, the intangible and mysterious human person (which Amaladoss identifies as the soul or spirit) does not exist in itself, but rather is present to itself and to others only in and through one's body: "In a human, therefore, the 'soul' and the 'body' are not two different things. They are two and yet not-two. I do not have a body. I am my body, though I am not only

[26] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness: Searching for an Integral Spirituality* (Bangladore: Revisuality & Sevasadan Training Institute, 1994), 3.

[27] Ibid., 44.

[28] Ibid., 44-48. See also Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, 108-110.

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my body. Similarly, I am my spirit, though I am not only my spirit. I am a spirit-body."[29]

Amaladoss employs the advaitic approach and expounds on the relationship between God and creation and human beings. Theists assert that God created and continues to create the world; however, creation does not exist autonomously outside God. God pervades and grounds all that exists. The advaitic approach to reality explains that the transcendent God is at the same time the most immanent reality of my personal being: "God is a deeper-I. I am not-God. Yet, I do not face God as an Other. God and myself, we are not-two."[30]

The Upanishads, which in the Indian tradition were the first to speak of God as *Atman,* declare that everything is related and integrated to the Self: "Though our superficial experience is pluralistic, yet our deeper experience reveals, not identity, but a non-duality."[31] The hymn of Sankara illustrates the advaitic relationship between God and creation: "Even when I am not duality's slave, O Lord, the truth is that I am Thine, and not that Thou art mine; the waves may belong to the ocean, but the ocean does not belong to the waves."[32] For Amaladoss, human beings are thus manifestations of the divine. The identity between the human and the divine is formulated in a negative manner, in the advaitic manner of "not-two." However, our identity with the divine is a process of divinization. Human beings are transformed by God who is not external to us, but is a deeper-I, an indwelling Spirit that does not suppress human freedom, but rather "englobes our freedom,"[33] the end of which is deeper communion and identification with *Atman.*

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[29] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 46. See also Amaladoss, "How does Jesus Save Us?" 259.

[30] Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 46.

[31] Ibid., 47.

[32] As quoted in Amaladoss, *Towards Fullness*, 47.

[33] Amaladoss, *Creative Conflict*, 92.

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God's Universal and Salvific Will

Amaladoss steers us away from a conception of salvation that focuses on the redemption of the human soul and proposes a notion of integral salvation that is multi-dimensional, cultural-spiritual, economic-political, environmental-cosmic. He proposes the Reign of God as the imaginative symbol of the gathering of all that is that is grounded on scriptures, which proclaim God's plan to reconcile all things (Col. 1:20), to gather up all things (Eph 1:10), so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15;28), according to God's one salvific economy (1 Tim 2:4-5).

The ecclesiological consequence of Amaladoss' fundamental theological presupposition in the universal salvific will of God is that the Church is not the efficient cause of grace but an instrumental cause of salvific grace, which emanates from God alone. The Church embodies God's saving presence in history. Amaladoss explains that this theocentric soteriology "will also help us not isolate God's action in Jesus, but ... set it in the context of the totality of God's action in the world seeking to communicate himself to human beings which embraces the whole process of history from creation . . . to its ultimate consummation."[34] A crucial question underlying the notion of salvation from God alone is whether Jesus Christ is the sole mediator of God's universal salvific will.

Because God's offer of salvation extends to all peoples in their historico-cultural contexts, God's redemptive activity extends beyond the Christ-event—Jesus' life, death and resurrection—and is operative in and through all cultures and religions, and not despite them. As God reaches out to people through the multitude of religions (which for Amaladoss is the highest point of a culture), people respond to God not only as anonymous Christians, but in and through their very religions.

> God's universal salvific will ... reaches out to the members of other religions not only in the secrets of their hearts but in and through their religions so that these...can be called ways of salvation. Some may call it the cosmic activity of the Spirit. Others may see in it the active presence of the unknown Christ. In whatever way, God's

[34] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 282.

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> saving love has been present to people through prophets, their Scriptures and their rituals. Not that these are free from human limitations. But these limitations do not radically vitiate God's self-manifestation in them.[35]

Amaladoss' theology of religions presents a God who does not only manifest God's self in the intangible interiority of human hearts, but in and through all that is material, in and through all the material symbols and symbolic actions of human communities.

He thus cautions against restricting God's saving activity to Christianity, as Christian exclusivists do, or to the mediation of Jesus Christ, as inclusivists do. Non-Christians' experience of God's offer of salvation is not grounded upon the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but on the universal activity of God or of the Mysteric Christ manifesting, calling and redeeming humanity in a myriad of ways: "God calls me to himself through the Church, but He seems to be calling my brother through another religion. My friend is not only free, but obliged to respond to God's call along the way in which he feels God is directing him."

Against the charge that he promotes religious relativism, Amaladoss explains that it is not a matter of indifference whatever religion one embraces: "The world is not a supermarket of religions.... Religion is a matter of God's call: a vocation." Hence, although Amaladoss affirms the Indian saying that all rivers lead to the sea, he refutes the notion of religion as a personal preference and choice among a variety of options and underlines God's initiative in reaching out to the person, calling the person in and through the religious tradition of one's community. This view does not exclude personal decision or conversion to a religion different from one's community of origin; however, the personal decision to embrace the religion of one's community or to convert to another religion is always a response to a prior call from God:

> [E]very divine-human encounter is salvific... while there may be limits to the free human response, the divine offer of love and fellowship is always boundless. This supposes that all religions mediate or facilitate

[35] Ibid., 168.

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> divine-human encounter. We do not know how this is a participation in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, as we Christians claim.[36]

Amaladoss asserts that while Christians proclaim to have experienced salvation through the Christ-event, the one, same God offers non-Christians salvation through their respective religions.

Christology

Amaladoss affirms, firstly, that Christ mediates God's offer of salvation to all humanity and, secondly, that other religions facilitate salvation, defined and experienced as a divine-human encounter. While inclusivists maintain that adherents of other religions are saved through the Christ-event and not through the instrumentality of their respective religions, Amaladoss speaks of the *margas* or paths to God and argues that non-Christians are saved not despite their religions, but in and through their religious traditions.

While John Paul II in the *Mission of the Redeemer* reasserts, "The Church ... alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation,"[37] Amaladoss notes that the International Theological Commission (ITC) has recently shown greater openness to the possibility that other religions mediate God's universal offer of salvation through their respective religious worldviews and traditions: "Whether the religions as such have salvific value is a point that remains open."[38] What the ITC acknowledges as a possibility, he argues, is, de jure, integral to God's universal salvific plan. He pushes the logic of the Second Vatican

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[36] Amaladoss, "Proclamation of Jesus Christ," 2.

[37] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio (Mission of the Redeemer) on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, Encyclicals, December 7, 1990, no. 55, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html, as cited in Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 328.

[38] International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, Documents, 1997, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1997_cristianesimo-religioni_en.html, no. 81, as cited in Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 327.

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Council's recognition that other religions offer "rays of truth" (GS 22) by arguing that God's revelation cannot be dichotomized from God's work of salvation. It would not make sense for God to reveal or communicate God's self to other peoples without at the same time drawing them to God. Moreover, other religions, if by concession are labeled extraordinary means of salvation, facilitate God's full offer of salvation: "we can make a good case that the other religions are extraordinary means of salvation ... [and] the salvation that they facilitate can only be full, because one cannot be saved partially."[39]

In relation to the Symbol of Chalcedon, Amaladoss distinguishes, firstly, between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ: "The human nature cannot act alone, but it cannot be separated from the divine nature. But the divine nature cannot be limited or conditioned by the human nature."[40] Secondly, he distinguishes between the historical Jesus and the eternal Word: "[W]e can say that whatever the human Jesus did, the Word/God did. But we cannot reverse this relationship and affirm that whatever the Word of God did, the humanity of Jesus did too."[41]

He maintains that "this distinction, not separation, in the incarnate Word is not only before but also after the incarnation."[42] By this he means that the Word was not restricted by the event of the incarnation so as to be present solely or exclusively in the person and life of Jesus. Furthermore, he asserts that the eternal Word and the historical Jesus remain distinct even after the resurrection of Jesus.[43]

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[39] Ibid., 328.

[40] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 331. The Indian theologians correctly interpret the principle of *communicatio idiomatum* in terms of predicating the divine attributes on the human nature, but not vice versa.

[41] Ibid., 330.

[42] Ibid., 331.

[43] Amaladoss' position apparently counters that of *Dominus Iesus*, which maintains that the divine *Logos* or Son of God cannot be separated from its

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> We have no real experience of what a risen humanity is. . .. But the Chalcedonian paradigm commits us to the affirmation that even after the resurrection, the risen humanity of Jesus does not become divine, that is, cease to be human. It is alive and shares in the life of God and of the world in a new way, certainly, but in a human way.[44]

The key to the Christology of Amaladoss is to understand the advaitic relationship between the historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ. Because different Christologies often employ the same fundamental terms with different meanings, Amaladoss advocates the need to distinguish Jesus from the Christ, from the Word, from the risen Christ, and from the Christ at the End Time.[45] For Amaladoss, the "Word" refers to the Second Person of the Trinity; the "Incarnate Word" to the divine-human composite, Jesus Christ; "Jesus" refers to the humanity of the incarnate Word; and "Christ" refers both to "the anointed" of God and to the pre-existent Cosmic Christ. In his framework, Amaladoss identifies the eternal Word with the cosmic Christ. The most distinctive element in his usage of Christological terms is his identification of the Word with Christ:

> [S]ince the Word has become incarnate, the term Christ, which refers directly to the anointed humanity of Jesus, can be used to refer to the Word by extension. It shows that the Word that we are talking of has become incarnate and united to Jesus who is the anointed one.[46]

The Historical Jesus Is the Christ. Firstly, to claim that Jesus is the Christ is to recognize in him the anointed or the chosen of

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incarnation in Jesus Christ, so that according to *DI* the salvific action and presence of the *Logos* is always the salvific action and presence of the risen Jesus Christ.

[44] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 331.

[45] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 283.

[46] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 332-33. Amaladoss uses the title Christ in its patristic sense: the Alexandrians spoke of Christ as the divine person that became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, a composite of two natures, divine and human; the Antiochenes, on the other hand, spoke of Christ as the result of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures. Amaladoss employs Christ, referring to the divine *Logos* in the Alexandrian sense.

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God. According to Jewish expectations, the anointed of God was not necessarily a divine being, but rather a human being who had been specially favored by God for a spiritual-political function in the salvation history of Israel. Secondly, the Christian claim goes further, because Christians proclaiming Jesus as the Christ do not merely point to his anointed character, but to the faith claim that Jesus is the historical enfleshment of the eternal Word of God.

Amaladoss thus cautions against the tendency of radical Christology from below towards reductionism: "[l]f we simply reduce him to being a human person, however extraordinary, then of course the question of uniqueness and universality does not arise."[47] Moreover, reducing Jesus to a mere prophet undermines the saving event of his death and resurrection. Hence, when he speaks of the earthly Jesus, he is not referring to a historical being who becomes divine in and through the resurrection, but to the divine person of the Word who is incarnated as a human being at a certain historical moment. "We do not mean that Jesus in history was a mere human person who becomes divine in his resurrection. We are rather before two manifestations of the same person."[48] Third, the historical Jesus is also not identical to the risen Jesus: "After the resurrection, Jesus becomes trans-historical, cosmic."[49]

The Cosmic Christ in relation to the Jesus of history. Amaladoss holds that the cosmic Christ is not identical to the risen Jesus: "The cosmic Christ is not just the risen Christ . .. The concern is that one should not reduce the action of Christ to what he did in

[47] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 197. Hans-Georg Gadamer would argue against Amaladoss' assumption that Jesus' particularity as a human being is not universalizable. Gadamer points to the literary classic couched in its historico-cultural particularity, yet meaningful across cultures and times. See also David Tracy, "Particularity and Universality of Christian Revelation," in *Dogma: Revelation and Experience*, edited by Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas von Iersel, *Concilium* 1978/3 (New York: Seabury, 1979), 111-116.

[48] Ibid., 256.

[49] Ibid.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Jesus. Christ is also present and active in other people and their religious traditions."[50] He argues that the risen Jesus is a human nature united to the divine person of the Christ that is resurrected at a particular moment in history, thus becoming transhistorical, while the Cosmic Christ is transhistorical from all eternity, whose presence and activity permeate all existence. Secondly, while affirming the distinction between the cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus, Amaladoss rejects the Bultmannian distinction between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. The former, according to Bultmann, is the disciples' collective subjective hope and projection of Jesus, who persists in their hearts beyond death. Such a Christ of faith is ontologically unreal, whereas the cosmic Christ underlies all existence. Thirdly, the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ is not one of simple identification, which would result in a docetic conception of Jesus, a divine being who enters history clothed in human garb, but not integrally human: "People... seem to equate the cosmic Christ with the Christ of faith quickly.... This equation is not correct. The cosmic Christ is related to the Jesus of history in the same way that mystery is related to history."[51] Instead, Amaladoss suggests an advaitic relationship between Jesus and the eternal Word, which maintains the unity of the human and the divine natures in Jesus the Christ, while making room for a distinction between them. In attempting to explain this unity-in-distinction in terms of two natures subsisting in one person, he speaks of "the reality of the Word transcend[ing] while englobing the humanity of Jesus."[52]

The Cosmic Christ is none other than the eternal Word incarnated in the historical Jesus but whose presence and activity nonetheless transcend the reality of the earthly Jesus. Based on the advaitic unity-in-distinction, the historical Jesus and the Cosmic Christ, though not identical, are united in the person of the *Logos*, which, though eternal,

[50] Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, 111.

[51] Michael Amaladoss, "An Emerging Indian Theology: Some Exploratory Reflections (Part II)," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 58 (1994): 571.

[52] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 332.

https://publications.lst.edu/

becomes historical at a given time. This is evidently a confessional claim, the cornerstone of the Christian faith, which is rooted in the experience of the divine in the person of Jesus and the experience of God's salvation in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The coherence of the Christian faith is grounded in the mystery of the incarnation.

> …. God is not adopting merely transcendent, transhistorical means to transform history and humans. God takes seriously the ongoing struggle between good and evil God becomes human in Jesus and gets involved in that struggle, taking the side of the poor and the oppressed. He does not use miraculous means to impose God's will on the world. Rather, he launches a new social movement... which becomes the Church.[53]

In the language of the early Councils, the doctrine of the incarnation, the faith claim of God's personal presence in Jesus, is explained theologically as the hypostatic union between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. The terminology of the two natures in one person, which Nicaea adopts from Cyril of Alexandria and Leo, explains the unity of the eternal Word and the historical Jesus in the one divine person. Amaladoss points to the mystery of the Incarnation as the ground of the unity between the divine Word and the earthly Jesus, giving cogency to the Christian proclamation that the divine person of the Word is truly present and incarnated in Jesus, or simply that Jesus is both human and divine.

On the other hand, the Advaitic dialectic also points to a distinction, notwithstanding the unity, between the historical Jesus and the cosmic Christ. While the divine Word is personally present in Jesus, the divine Word or Christ transcends the historical Jesus, "Jesus is the Christ, but Christ is not only Jesus."[54] Jesus thus totally subsists in Christ, but the eternal Christ does not subsist in the historical Jesus without remainder. The reality of the divine Word, while constituting the person of Jesus, is not fully exhausted by its historical manifestation.

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[53] Amaladoss, "Proclamation of Christ," 9.

[54] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 284. See also Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 235.

https://publications.lst.edu/

The logical consequence of this claim is that Christ, while present and active in Jesus, can also be present and active elsewhere in other ways, in varying intensities, in infinite possibilities of historical manifestations. He argues that the universality of Christ refers to "'the whole cosmic breadth of the action of Christ" and cannot be limited to "his action in his incarnate form named Jesus."[55]

Hence, on the one hand, "the cosmic Christ must never be de-linked (separated) from the historical Jesus, though it has to be distinguished from and not be confused with it."[56] On the other hand,

> Christ may also be mediated by other symbols in other religious traditions. This perspective is not simply theocentric: it takes seriously the Trinity and the role of the Word in the history of salvation.... [I]t takes the incarnation seriously…. the specificity of Jesus is also affirmed.[57]

While Jesus is totally subsumed into the reality of the cosmic Christ, the cosmic Christ or Mysteric Christ, while truly present in Jesus, is more than the historical Jesus. While the cosmic Christ is universal, Jesus is a particular historical manifestation of the cosmic Christ, who can manifest himself elsewhere, even simultaneously with his actualization in the historical Jesus.

The issue at stake is the inclusivist claim of the universality of the Christ-event. For Amaladoss, this is universalizing the particular, which leads to absolutizing the particular. Instead, he proposes viewing the historical as the particularization of the universal, which leads to an openness to the multiple particularizations of the universal, without absolutizing any of them, while recognizing each one's authentic expression of and link to the universal.

This universal action of Christ cannot be localized in the sense of being reduced to a point of time in history, because it will not be

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[55] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 284.

[56] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 333.

[57] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 235.

https://publications.lst.edu/

complete till the last day when Christ will be all in all. The universality of Christ, therefore, includes all God's manifestations in history. While we Christians see a special, even unique place and role in this history for God's action in Jesus, we cannot universalize this particular divine act.

The Uniqueness of Jesus and the Significance of the Christ-event. While Amaladoss' advaitic, dialectical relationship between the eternal Word or cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus resonates with Justin's *logos spermatikos* and Chalcedon's dialectical relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ, and while *Gaudium et spes'* proclamation of the presence and activity of the Spirit in other religions coheres with Amaladoss' assertion about the universal presence and activity of the cosmic Christ, there remain significant differences between Amaladoss' Christology and the Christology that links Chalcedon to Vatican II and to *Dominus Iesus.* The bone of contention has to do with the extent to which Christologies will permit a distinction between the Word or cosmic Christ and the historical Jesus. The debate is not about whether the historical Jesus is divine or not. Amaladoss himself expressly rejects neo-Nestorianism, which reduces Jesus to a mere prophet.[58] The dispute concerns whether the saving presence of Christ or the Spirit in other religions is inseparable from the incarnation of the *Logos* in the historical Jesus. In other words, is the claim that the Cosmic Christ or the Spirit is active in other religions equivalent to asserting that it is Jesus Christ, the human-divine being, who is present in all cultures and religions?

Dominus Iesus asserts that the Word present everywhere cannot be distinguished from Jesus Christ. This does not mean that *Dominus Iesus* claims that Jesus, the human nature of the hypostatic union, is pre-existent. The argument of Dominus Iesus hinges on the Chalcedonian framework that Jesus Christ is not a human person but a divine person. The divine nature of Jesus Christ constitutes the subject underlying the person of Jesus Christ. The incarnation of the Logos does not involve a union with a human person, which would result in the Nestorian heresy of two-person theory in Christ, but rather with a human nature,

[58] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 195.

https://publications.lst.edu/

with the resulting hypostatic union consisting in one person, the person of the divine *Logos*.

For the modern mind, it is difficult to conceive of the divine person of the Logos uniting itself with a human nature that is not in itself a human person. Sarah Coakley explains that the one person in two natures theory of the Alexandrian School, which Chalcedon adopted, is only comprehensible in the light of a Platonic understanding of human nature as an amalgam of human characteristics. Chalcedon speaks of human nature not in terms of subsistent individual beings, but in terms of a set of traits that together define being human.

Proceeding from such a framework, we can appreciate how and why *Dominus Iesus* maintains that the incarnated *Logos*, Jesus Christ, cannot be distinguished from the divine *Logos* who is present universally.

Amaladoss comments on the Church's adoption of *Logos* Christology and explains why the incarnate Jesus Christ cannot be universalized. Jesus is a historical and particular manifestation of the cosmic Christ: "The covenant in Jesus has a cosmic significance precisely because of the divine (Christ) in him."[59] The universal significance of Jesus has to do not with his particularization of the universal, but rather with the presence of the divine universal in him. What is universal in Jesus is the Cosmic Christ who is manifested in innumerable ways throughout ongoing history. Jesus Christ, hence, is universal saviour because of the presence of the Cosmic Christ in him, a presence that cannot be restricted to him: "We confess in Jesus Christ the universal saviour. We experience in our dialogue with others that God has also been active in them."[60]

Amaladoss admits that his Christology owes much to Karl Rahner, whose exposition on the Christ-event as the summit of both God's self-communication to humanity and humanity's self-communication to God has given credence and cogency to Christian faith in Jesus the Christ. However, if the Cosmic Christ is present and active everywhere,

[59] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 286.

[60] Ibid., 289.

https://publications.lst.edu/

what is special about the Christ-event? What is definitively revealed and universally significant in it? The transhistorical significance of the historical Jesus can be understood, "only insofar as we liberate the mystery from its historical particularity without severing the link."[61]

As a historical being in whom the ahistorical Christ subsists, "Jesus offers a historical and symbolic (sacramental) concretization of the continuing saving action of the Word and gives it an eschatological character and urgency." Jesus actualizes in a definitive manner the Cosmic Christ's activity in the world, especially in his resurrection: "In raising Jesus to new life God has made a commitment to--an enduring covenant with—humanity.... This does not mean that the other manifestations of God in history become useless. They lead people in their own way to their personal commitments."[62] While Jesus is a particularization of the cosmic Christ, his life, death and resurrection have universal significance in relation to God's universal saving activity in other religions."[63]

> These concrete actions [of God in the Christ-event] have a universal significance and relevance as parts of this structure. But affirming this is different from universalizing the historical/particular, making it historically universal . . .. The mystery of Christ includes all the other manifestations of God in history. Therefore we cannot reduce it to its manifestation in Jesus.[64]

The Non-Absoluteness of the Christ-event. Because the Mysteric Christ transcends the historical Jesus, the incarnate Christ

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[61] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 193.

[62] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 286.

[63] Ibid., 285.

[64] Ibid. While Amaladoss cautions against universalizing the particular, in this quote he seems to contradict himself by expounding on the universal significance of the historical Jesus, insofar as he is God's manifestation in history. Perhaps what Amaladoss really means is that the particular ought not to be absolutized, since the historical cannot exhaust the full reality of a transcendental reality. While this assertion is valid, it does not negate the potential of the particular from becoming universal or universally meaningful.

https://publications.lst.edu/

does not exhaust the full reality of the Mysteric or Cosmic Christ. While, for Christians, Jesus' life, death and resurrection is the definitive revelation of God, in the sense that God makes an irrevocable promise to humanity that what God has done in and for Jesus, God has been doing for humanity, the Christ-event does not exhaust the full cosmic and historical breadth of God's salvific plans.

> The Christ-event ... cannot be simply equated with the Mystery, the plan of God for the world of which Paul speaks. Whatever be the key place we give to the Christ-event in this plan, the Mystery itself is cosmic and would be complete only on the 'last day.'[65]

The God who has revealed God's self as unconditional and indomitable love in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus manifests God's self in multiple ways in other cultures throughout history.

> God, who acts through the Word and the Spirit, acts also through a variety of human and historical mediations.... But we need not compare them or hierarchize them as if they all belong to one linear history. This means that all religions are not pre-biblical in such a way that will seek accomplishment in Jesus.[66]

Whereas Christians tend to view other religions as preparations to Christianity and revelation in them as inadequate and fulfilled in the Christ-event, Amaladoss rejects a linear view of history and suggests a synchronic view of multiple complementary revelations of God. Each religion manifests facets of the infinite Mystery not experienced, symbolized, or formulated in other religions.

God's multiple manifestations through the Word in human history do not relativize or reduce the value of God's revelation in the Christ-event, which in turn does not make superfluous or illegitimate God's manifestations in other religions: "The history of Jesus is important. But it should lead us, as it did Paul and John, to contemplate the

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[65] Amaladoss, *Making All Things New*, 173.

[66] Amaladoss, "Mystery of Christ," 334.

https://publications.lst.edu/

mystery of which it is a symbol."[67] Amaladoss seeks to maintain a balance between the Christian claim of God's definite revelation in the Christ-event (a confessional statement grounded on the experience of salvation in the Christ-event) and the invitation to recognize God's freedom to manifest God's self elsewhere. "The act of God in Jesus ... does not seek to limit God's universal salvific action to its particular history. On the contrary, the history of Jesus opens out to the mystery of God's universal salvific presence and action."[68]

Assessment

On God's Universal Salvific Will. Amaladoss identifies himself as both an inclusivist and a pluralist: "The paradigm I am trying to evolve will find a place between inclusivism and pluralism. It is inclusivist in so far as it is reflecting in the perspective of the Christian faith in the mysteries of the Trinity and of the Incarnation and their ongoing action in history."[69]

He remains a Christian inclusivist insofar as he professes faith in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the divine Cosmic Christ, the redeemer of all creation. He confesses, "I have discovered the mystery of God's universal salvific will in Christ through Jesus."[70] However, he maintains a real differentiation between Jesus and the Christ, and understands inclusion "only at the level of the mystery of God and Christ whose universality we affirm."[71] For Amaladoss, God, the efficient cause of salvation, redeems the world through the mediation

[67] Michael Amaladoss, "Jesus Christ in the Midst of Religions: An Indian Perspective," in *The Myriad Christ: Plurality and the Quest for Unity in Contemporary Christology*, ed. T. Merrigan and J. Haers (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 224.

[68] Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation*, 38.

[69] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 290.

[70] Ibid., 291.

[71] Ibid., 290.

https://publications.lst.edu/

of the Cosmic Christ who actualizes salvation in history in various ways, the Incarnation of the Cosmic Christ in Jesus of Nazareth being one of them.

He is also a pluralist who recognizes God's multiple ways of revealing God's self and redeeming peoples across time and space. At the same time, he recognizes the multiplicity of ways people seek God and respond to God's revelations, the various ways people conceptualize their experience of the divine and systematize their beliefs into a religion. Amaladoss hence affirms the legitimacy of various religions as authentic ways that God and peoples of various cultures are reaching out to each other. Moreover, he deems inappropriate the Christian tendency to view other religions as partial, inadequate, or non-redeeming revelations compared to the definitive, full, and salvific revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In sum, Amaladoss is a moderate pluralist insofar as he breaks the causal link between salvation through the Christ-event and salvation through other religions.

Because religions are, in essence, divine-human encounters, Amaladoss asserts that Christians cannot judge the quality or the authenticity of the encounters of non-Christians with God through their religious traditions. A Christian, however, unavoidably views others' experience of the divine through one's Christian perspective. Nevertheless, by dialoguing with others, a Christian is invited to encounter vicariously the Mystery that others encounter through their religions. Because faith is an absolute commitment through a relative religion, a believer cannot but speak in terms of a definitive and transformative or saving encounter with God through one's religion. While Amaladoss holds on to his faith conviction in Jesus Christ as the definitive revelation of God and saviour of humanity, he recognizes the equally absolute commitment of non-Christians to the Ultimate Mystery, which they have every right to claim as saving, liberative or illuminative.

As an inclusivist-pluralist, he explains, "[i]n faith I affirm that this pluralism is structured into a unity. All believers, because they believe that God is one, will have to affirm this. But this unity is

https://publications.lst.edu/

eschatological."[72] That Ultimate Reality or Divine Mystery, whom Christians call God and non-Christians call by other names, is One is a theological presupposition that Amaladoss maintains. He sees an inclusivity of all religions at the level of Mystery; however, he explains, too, that this inclusivity and unity amidst phenomenological religious plurality is eschatological. Consequently, he does not feel compelled to structure all religions into a unified system of beliefs and practices. Because he recognizes the authenticity of the divine-human encounters in all religions, he feels compelled and invites others, too, to dialogue with adherents of other religions, so that each party might be mutually enriched and challenged by the other's encounter with the one Divine Mystery manifested in diverse ways.

On Christology. The Universal and the Particular. It seems to me that Amaladoss is unclear about the universality of the historical Jesus because he confuses universality with absoluteness. Historical consciousness has taught us that the particular is unavoidably relative. Jesus, as a historical being, may reveal the absolute without exhausting the reality of the Absolute: "Jesus is the Christ, but Christ is not only Jesus."[73] Amaladoss is therefore correct to say that the particular cannot be identified non-dialectically with the absolute. However, I disagree with Amaladoss' assertion that Jesus' universal significance cannot emanate from his particularization of the universal, but only from the presence of the universal Word incarnated in him. Jesus' universality also ensues from his particularity, from his message and way of life, which are trans-culturally and trans-religiously relevant. Following Gadamer, David Tracy explains that the literary classic, while ensconced in its historico-cultural location, has universal significance. The classic couched in the myriad details of its culture and period reveals to others across time and space some aspect of reality and universal human existence.

Jesus in this sense is universal not only because of the fundamental Christian claim that the universal Word is incarnated in him, but also

[72] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 290.

[73] Amaladoss, "Significance of Christ," 284.

https://publications.lst.edu/

because his message and praxis—his inclusive love that embraced the poor and marginalized in a preferential way, his fidelity to his vision and convictions despite the threat of death, his unwavering faith in God amidst pain and suffering—have universal significance.

Ontological Unity of Jesus of History and the Cosmic Christ. Amaladoss maintains that while the Cosmic Christ subsists in Jesus of Nazareth, the mystery of the Cosmic Christ extends beyond the historical Jesus. The Cosmic Christ has been present and actively redeeming people before, during and after the Incarnation, independently of and simultaneously with the Christ-event, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In Chalcedonian terms, there is only one divine person—the second person of the Trinity—that subsists in the *Logos*, the Cosmic Christ, the historical Jesus and the Risen Lord. There is only one acting subject underlying the eternal *Logos* and all its various historical manifestations. The *Logos* is the acting subject, the who-this-is, underlying the historical Jesus. Ontologically, the person of Jesus of Nazareth is divine, his nature both divine and human. Consequently, the divine person of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be separated or distinguished from the divine person of the *Logos* pre-incarnation or post-resurrection. In *Redemptoris Missio*, St. John Paul II clarifies, "To introduce any sort of separation between the Word and Jesus Christ is contrary to the Christian faith."[74] It is the same person of the divine *Logos* that has become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and has, at the same time, been acting and redeeming peoples of various cultures before, during, and after the Incarnation.

Amaladoss counters that the Chalcedonian or Thomistic interpretation of the ontological being of Jesus Christ need not be the only framework through which the Mystery of Christ is understood and comprehended: "We do not wish to ignore two thousand years of doctrinal and theological development. But a pole of dialogue is

[74] St. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), no. 6.

https://publications.lst.edu/

different from a norm."[75] He rightly contends that the same Revelation in the Christ-event can be interpreted through other cultural lenses. He proposes the Advaitic approach of unity-in-difference, which speaks of the self as my-body but not only my-body. In a similar vein, Amaladoss speaks of the Cosmic Christ as the historical Jesus, but not only the Jesus of Nazareth. This Advaitic unity-in-difference allows Amaladoss to speak of the Cosmic Christ as the unifying element and the various manifestations of the Cosmic Christ as the differentiating elements. The one Cosmic Christ redeems humanity and the world through its various manifestations.

The One Economy of Salvation Mediated by Jesus Christ. Because, according to Amaladoss, the Cosmic Christ has been redeeming peoples of various cultures before, during, and after the incarnation, he has been suspected of proposing two economies of salvation, one by the Incarnate Word and the other by the Cosmic Christ. *Dominus Iesus*, while not mentioning Amaladoss' name, declares that there is only one economy of salvation that originates with the Father and is actualized in history by the Christ-event. The document rejects those who claim that "there is an economy of the eternal Word that is valid also outside the Church and is unrelated to her, in addition to an economy of the incarnate Word."[76] There is no saving work of the Triune God that is separate from or independent of the redemption brought about by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Amaladoss, however, does not propose two economies of salvation, one through the eternal *Logos* and the other through the incarnate Word in Jesus Christ. He maintains that there is only one economy of salvation; that is, that God alone saves and that God redeems various peoples in various ways through the Cosmic Christ,

[75] Beltramini, *Michael Amaladoss and the Quest for Indian Theology*, 17, citing Michael Amaladoss, "Toward an Indian Theology," in *Theological Explorations: Centennial Festschrift in Honour of Josef Neuner, SJ*, edited by Jakob Kavunkal (Delhi, ISPCK, 2008), 19.

[76] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "*Dominus Iesus*," in *Sic et Non: Encountering* Dominus Iesus, edited by Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling, (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 9.

https://publications.lst.edu/

who has been incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth but has also been variously manifested elsewhere.

Conclusion

As a Catholic theologian raised in a Hindu-Christian environment, Amaladoss addresses the phenomenon of religious diversity and constructs a Christian theology of religions grounded in a Trinitarian Christology that affirms the incarnation of the *Logos* in the historical Jesus, but recognizes the saving presence of the Word and Spirit in non-Christian religions.[77] While inclusivism recognizes God's universal salvific will and actions, Amaladoss goes further by arguing for the salvation of non-Christians through the mediation of their respective religions, while independent of the historical Jesus, dependent on the divine person of the *Logos* or the Christ. This does not imply two economies of salvation or a separation of the eternal *Logos* from the historical Jesus. The logic of Amaladoss' assertions is rooted in the advaitic notion of unity-in-distinction. There is only one economy of salvation, but multiple ways that God is reaching out to and redeeming various peoples. There is only one Christ, but multiple ways the Christ is manifesting himself and saving Christians and non-Christians.

To end, theology of religions reflects on the relationship of non-Christians to the saving Christ-event. While speculative, it is an important field of theological reflection that impacts missiology

[77] While the Cosmic Christ and the Spirit are present in the Church, they are present and active, too, elsewhere. Amaladoss explains that the Church's mission is to be a sacrament or a seed of the Kingdom of God, which is not identical with the Church. The Kingdom extends beyond the confines of the Church, inviting everyone, whatever ethnic race or religion, to enter. See Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Dialogue: Pilgrims to the Absolute* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008), 115-32. See also Michael Amaladoss, "People's Theology in Multireligious Communities," in *Wisdom and the People's Theology*, edited by Carlos Mendoza-Álvarez and Po-Ho Huang, *Concilium*, 2018/3 (London: SCM Press, 2018), 45-54. This raises the important question of the role of the Spirit and the Church in God's universal salvific plan. This paper though is limited to an exploration of Amaladoss' Christology.

https://publications.lst.edu/

and inter-religious dialogue, for one's attitudes about the religiously other affect how one thinks of, behaves toward, and engages the other. Amaladoss, who theologizes in a multi-religious milieu where Christianity is a minority, asserts the possibility of salvation of non-Christians in and through their religions. He employs a Trinitarian framework and refers to the Cosmic Christ as the agent who redeems Christians through Christ's incarnation in the historical Jesus, but non-Christians through their own religions in whom the Cosmic Christ, too, is present and drawing people to the Triune God.

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