A DOMESTICATED GOSPEL?

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> *... I used to spend one evening each week in the monastery of the Ramakrishna Mission in the town where I lived, sitting on the floor with the monks and studying with them the Upanishads and the Gospels. In the great hall of the monastery, as in all the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission there is a gallery of portraits of the great religious teachers of humankind. Among them, of course, is a portrait of Jesus. Each year on Christmas Day, worship was offered before this picture. Jesus was honoured, worshipped, as one of the many manifestations of deity in the course of human history. To me, as a foreign missionary, it was obvious that this was not a step towards the conversion of India. It was the co-option of Jesus in the Hindu worldview. Jesus had become just one figure in the endless cycle of karma and samsara, the wheel of being in which we are all caught up. He had been domesticated into the Hindu worldview. That view remained unchallenged. It was only slowly through many experiences that I began to see that something of this domestication had taken place in my own Christianity, that I too had been more ready to seek a "reasonable Christianity", a Christianity that could be defended on the terms of my whole intellectual formation as a twentieth-century Englishman, rather than something which placed by whole intellectual formation under a new and critical light. I, too, had been guilty of domesticating the Gospel.*

Lesslie Newbiggin in The Gospel in a Pluralist Society p.3.