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INDIAN STUDIES

Edited by A. J. APPASAMY
M.A. (Harvard), D.Phil. (Oxon.)

1. *CHRISTIANITY AS BHAKTI MARGA*

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CHRISTIANITY AS BHAKTI MĀRGA

A STUDY OF THE JOHANNINE DOCTRINE OF LOVE

BY

A. J. APPASAMY, M.A. (HARVARD), D. PHIL. (OXON.)

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS book has grown steadily during the last six years. The first draft of it was submitted to Oxford University in 1922 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy under the title 'The Mysticism of Hindu Bhakti Literature especially in its relation to the Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel.' During the three years I spent in Europe writing the thesis I had the generous counsel and stimulating direction of Canon B. H. Streeter; Dr. J. N. Farquhar and Professor Rudolf Otto encouraged me to see them constantly and to discuss my thesis with them. Every time I passed through London during the vacations I saw Baron Fredrich von Hügel and sometimes corresponded with him. These opportunities for meeting him were very inspiring. It was my intention to dedicate this book to him but now I must be content with dedicating it to his memory. Mrs. Herman, whose help I constantly received while I was in England, is no longer living. On my return to India I spent considerable time making further study of the subject and rewriting the thesis so that it might be of help to a wider circle of readers. In the present form of the book there is more emphasis on the Johannine writings and all allusions to Hindu Bhakti literature are only brought in to elucidate by comparison or by contrast the teaching of the Fourth Evangelist. The substance of the book has been repeated as courses of lectures in Calcutta, Bangalore, Madras, Madura, Vellore and Tirupattur. To the many friends who heard these lectures and helped me with their criticism I am much indebted. The Rev. G. S. Marris and the Rev. J. Passmore have kindly read through the book and have offered several important suggestions.

Miss D. J. Stephen has worked through my manuscript with much patience suggesting innumerable corrections in style and in thought. I am much indebted to her. Of Indian scholars I have to acknowledge receiving help from Professor S. Radhakrishnan, Swami Vedachellam, Sriman A. Govindachari Swamin and Pandit V. Krishnamachariar. Though these scholars have not agreed with many of the things I have said, they have pointed out inaccuracies in my account of Hinduism and have enabled me to correct them. My wife has helped me through all the stages of the preparation of this book in several ways and my series of acknowledgements would be incomplete without a reference to her co-operation. To other friends who have helped me at different times I should like here to express my sincere thanks.

As this book is ready for publication my sense of its inadequacy only becomes more acute. In this volume, I have been mainly concerned with clearing the ground. In a subsequent volume, which will be issued soon, I hope to deal with some of the deeper issues involved in the Johannine writings.

A. J. APPASAMY

PALLAVARAM
India

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

A SECOND edition of this book has been called for and I have taken the opportunity to revise it carefully. The Rev. M. Sanjiva Rao has kindly read through the book and suggested several corrections. The Rev. G. Y. Martyn has prepared an Index to all the references in the Johannine writings. I am thankful to both these friends for their help. A brief Glossary has been added and the General Index enlarged.

A. J. APPASAMY

PALLAVARAM
India

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CHRISTIANITY AS BHAKTI MĀRGA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In attempting to understand how Christianity is likely to relate itself in the coming years to Indian thought and become a living force in the country, I am inclined to think that it will lay much emphasis on mystic experience.

One line of evidence for this is that in studying India's sacred writings one is impressed by the fact that their outstanding characteristic is their emphasis on the mystical life, which has really kindled the imagination of our people and has been more popular in India than anywhere else. In many diverse ways—fervent, daring, fantastic, sober—has this life been lived in India. Whether it is such profound writings as the Upanisads that we are studying or the devout hymns of the Bhaktas, we feel that the burden of their thought is mystic union, though it assumes different forms with different writers.

Concerned as I am in this book more particularly with Bhakti Literature, I may say that while there are other profound spiritual experiences described in it,

such as one's conviction of God's abundant grace, of His purification of the soul, of release from births and deaths, they are either directly and significantly related to the enjoyment of mystic union or considered as of minor importance. The importance of mystic union in Bhakti Literature is clear from the abundant references to it, some full and others brief. There is scarcely a page which does not speak of mystic union. The deepest interests of a man may, not infrequently, be judged from the fact that he not only often speaks of them, but that as soon as he begins to speak of them, he betrays a new emotion, his face puts on a new glow. So it is with the Bhaktas. And they speak often of mystic union with such genuine feeling and warmth. When they describe it, their words often become filled with a new power; and their imagination, always alert, becomes still keener and weaves its fancies with a new vigour. And there is a further fact which indicates the commanding importance of the experience of mystic union in Bhakti Literature. Often when not speaking directly of mystic union, the Bhaktas speak of God, adore His goodness, worship Him with bowed heads and clasped hands and in all possible ways seek to establish a relation with Him which, in due course, will grow into mystic union. So does a woman deeply in love. Even when not meeting her beloved, she thinks and dreams of him by day and night, treasures his portrait, and follows in her imagination his many movements. It is correct, then, to state that the vital experience of the Bhaktas is that of mystic union, and that the other elements in their spiritual life are either related to it or are not of much significance.

The other line of evidence is furnished by the strong leanings of some Indian Christians towards the mystical aspects of Christianity. The doctrine of the indwelling Christ appeals to them with special force. As if by instinct they are drawn to the Gospel of John, the *Imitation of Christ* and, to come to modern books, the devotional writings of Andrew Murray. The demands which such a life lived in Christ makes for prayer and meditation meet with a hearty response from them. With sure grasp they realize the existence of a higher world of spiritual reality, not to be reached by our normal avenues of knowledge, but clear as daylight to the gaze of the seer. The peace and joy which such a life of fellowship with God kindles in the soul awaken the best in them.

Sādhu Sundar Singh shows in a remarkable way the attraction which Indian Christians feel for Mysticism. In his heredity and training are deeply ingrained many of the finer elements of Indian Mysticism, and he lives on John's Gospel assimilating its teaching into his very life. He is not a student of biblical criticism or exegesis. But he has, what is more important, a real insight into the mind of Christ. Loving Christ with fervour, seeking to abide in Him and to bear fruit, he has undoubtedly gained a real understanding of the Gospel. His public teaching, his habits, even the inarticulate impulses and motives of his life, all constitute a living commentary on the Gospel. Speaking of Augustine, Westcott says: 'His ignorance of Greek constantly betrays him into the adoption of a false sense of the words, but his genius no less frequently enables him to enter with the fullest insight

into the thought of a passage which may escape the verbal interpreter.' [1] For a somewhat similar reason weight ought to be attached to the intuitive insight of a religious genius like Sundar Singh into the real nature and importance of the Johannine Mysticism.

It may be asked however: What about the hundreds of Christians in India to-day who are enjoying a real Christian experience but to whom a reference to the mystical side of Christianity would probably convey little or no meaning? It is surprising how many people effectively adopt theological formulae from others and even derive benefit from them. There are Christians in India whose theology has little or no relation to the Indian ways of thinking. To say that their religious experience is a sham would be certainly uncharitable and probably untrue. They have assimilated certain interpretations of Christianity and are having certain Christian experiences. Theology they have; religious experience they have; but these are not living and fresh. If they were living, their theology, though often nebulous, would have a distinctive note and their religious experience would possess deeper reality. At present, it is theology which very largely produces experience: that is, the experience is moulded in the religious belief accepted from outside. But if experience could precede theology, then not being tramelled by any preconceived notions of what ought to be felt and done, it would grow spontaneously, enriching itself in innumerable ways. Theology, being an intellectual statement of such living experience, would

[1] B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, London, 1919: p. xcv.

then possess a power and genuineness all its own. Indian Christians who have spent many happy years in the interpretations of Christianity that have not regarded the supreme importance of mystic experience in religion, and who have therefore failed to take cognizance of what has been for centuries the dominant note of religious life in India, have not had a false experience, but, it may well be surmised, they have had a shallow experience. If they had thought for themselves, seeking to incorporate into their life and thought the best elements in their heredity as well as in their environment, they would no doubt have had a much deeper Christian experience.

Observing then, on the one hand, that the trend of religious thought in India has been mystical and, on the other, that Indian Christians are drawn to mystical Christianity, I am led to think that in India the Christianity of the future will be largely mystical.

The Definition of Mysticism

A distinguished thinker and missionary with a long experience in India strongly protests in a letter to me against any attempt to interpret Christianity as being mystical. 'I myself,' he says in the course of the letter, 'am in the habit of using the term "Mysticism" in a perfectly definite sense—the sense in which it is used, e.g., by Royce in his Gifford Lectures and by the Ritschlians in their constant polemic against it as un-Christian. I understand by Mysticism that tendency of thought of which the Vēdāntic *Tat tvam asi* is the consistent logical outcome. There is a good deal of

such Mysticism in medieval and later Christian piety, but I question whether there is any of it in John. Such Mysticism I myself regard as un-Christian. I do not mean that the piety which expresses itself by means of thought of this tendency is not deeply Christian: but I mean that in so far as such piety uses thought of the mystical type, it is using an alien instrument which must tend to its own injury. Why do Hindus so appreciate a book like *The Imitation of Christ?* My answer is: because in these books there is little or nothing distinctively Christian. The *Imitation* leaves me cold because, in spite of the living religion of which it is full, I find in it nothing of the unique outlook on life and God which was distinctive of Jesus and which binds me to Him.' This letter puts in vigorous language a criticism of Mysticism urged by some keen Christian thinkers and worthy of careful consideration.

By Mysticism, however, I mean the type of religious life which emphasizes the communion of the human soul with a personal God.[1] So stated, the word Mysticism might seem to indicate the heart of all religious experience, but as a matter of fact, the word is used to indicate not so much the heart of *all* religious experience, as one particular type of that experience. To distinguish between that type of religious experience and other types is most difficult.

Among other types of religious experience may be mentioned the ethical. By the ethical type in Christia-

[1] For a large collection of definitions of Mysticism with a running comment, see W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, London, 1899; Appendix A.

nity, to take a concrete example, I refer to the teaching which emphasizes right living as the distinguishing mark of every real Christian. Christians who follow such teaching would be the first to acknowledge that this right living is really based upon the believer's relation to Christ. They do not ignore the fact that such a life of character ultimately derives its origin from a life lived in Christ. But their emphasis seems to be rather on the outward result and visible expression of such intimate relationship than on the relationship itself. Such Christians are apt to extol the Sermon on the Mount. They do recognize that there is close connection in thought between the Sermon on the Mount and the Farewell Discourses recorded in the Fourth Gospel. They do not by any means reject the wonderful teaching recorded in the latter. They recognize the basic significance of this teaching for a life of such ethical perfection as they themselves teach. But they seem more interested in extolling the importance and significance of the Sermon on the Mount than that of the Farewell Discourses.

By distinguishing between the mystical type of Christianity and the ethical type of Christianity, I do not at all imply that mystical Christianity is not ethical. That, too, values highly a life of character : none values character more highly than the Christian mystic whose writing we study in the Fourth Gospel. But it emphasizes more the life in Christ, stating that from such a life sound morals and right conduct must necessarily flow. The difference between the mystical and the other

types of Christianity is then, I think, largely a difference of emphasis. All Christians regard the communion of the bhakta with Christ as a fundamental religious experience, but Christians who are mystical by temperament and training regard this fellowship with a deeper reverence than others and strive for it with more patient toil.

Much of the confusion of thought about Mysticism arises from confounding it with some of its consequences. Mysticism may often lead to a way of looking at the universe and at life which might be called symbolism. The man who is eager to come into contact with the living God naturally sees in the material universe indications of His presence. The sun, the moon, the stars, the flowers of the field, the birds of the air—all these speak to him of the God in them. Such symbolism easily tends to negate itself, to cease to be symbolism, the moment that which is considered a symbol is regarded as a reality. Then symbolism becomes pantheism. Life and matter in all their manifold forms come to be regarded not as indicating God but as being God. The transition seems to take place easily and naturally. Symbolism is thus the earlier and pantheism the later stage of Mysticism. They do not always follow Mysticism, nor are they an integral part of Mysticism but sometimes they are so considered; this leads to much confusion of thought.

Again, Mysticism emphasizes the heart as the seat of vital religious experience. God is not understood by us as the result of careful thought but rather as the object of love and devotion on our part. We do not

argue and reason about matters of the Spirit but see them, feel them, experience them. In its central contention that real religious experience takes place in the heart, Mysticism is not wrong. The intellect may and should make clear the implications of religious experience but the religious experience itself is not produced by speculation. We love God and enjoy Him with our hearts. But feeling might easily degenerate into dangerous emotion. To say that mystical experience depends largely on feeling is one thing: to say that mystical experience is feeling is quite another.

The man who has the conviction that real spiritual experience is not a matter of the intellect but a matter of the heart develops certain characteristic ways of approaching the Divine. Prayer, in the sense of petition, with its expression of needs and the strong desire to have them met by God, he neglects. Such petition he regards as of the earth. It is too noisy and insistent. Meditation on the attributes of God he lays aside as being too much the work of the intellect. But he seeks to silence his soul so that he might hear God. Such contemplation in which the soul lies quiescent and communes with the living Christ has the support in the experience of many of the finest Christian souls. Mystics of the Christian Church have spoken of the meditation in which the mind thinks deliberately as being on a lower plane than the contemplation in which it empties itself and waits divine teaching. If a man believes that he hears God better in the silence of his soul and that his grasp of spiritual things grows surer with his increasingly complete absorption in

contemplation, he is likely to neglect study. He is also likely to neglect action. The busy life of doing good ceases to have the attraction of the quiet life of contemplation in which his soul comes to be filled with the flood of Divine light. To some, however, such a state of quiescence is an inexplicable mystery; they regard it as a meaningless vacancy.

The discipline which is needed to quiet the mind makes the mystic strong. Take the man who trains his body by carefully regulated and abundant exercise. What feats of strength he displays! The heavy weights he lifts, the unusual flexibility with which he bends his body and moves his muscles, the enormous strain and fatigue he can stand, all astonish a man of ordinary strength. Because he has devoted time and energy to the training of his body, he is able to do things beyond the normal man. Just so, the man who prepares himself for communion with the living God by much discipline and concentration, develops certain abnormal psychical and physical powers. His body comes to be under the influence of his soul. If he is artistic by nature, he may see visions. Mysticism may often give rise to such abnormal phenomena, but these are not its sum and substance.

The Mysticism of Bhakti Literature

'It is notorious,' says Baron F. von Hügel, 'that there not only exists a Mysticism that is pantheistic and which consciously angrily rejects any and all personality in the Divine, but that this Mysticism has been, upon the whole, the more prevalent type of

Mysticism and that the Mysticism of person itself easily tends to the Mysticism of person lost in, resolved into, thing. Mysticism is indeed a term which covers a more or less distinctly pantheistic and a more or less consistently personalist outlook.'[1] The Mysticism of the Bhaktas is that with 'a more or less consistently personalist outlook.' They strive after, and often attain, close intimacy with a personal God. They are not, however, always able to regard the object of their experience as a personal being. In supremely baffling and critical moments, the mind struggling for adequate expression, they utter thoughts of God's all-in-all-ness in the universe which seem out of harmony with the idea of the personal God, generally the trend of their teaching. That He is regarded as a person is evident from the abundant descriptions of His appearance which occur in their writings, and, what is more to the point, from the full realization of the fact that He possesses qualities such as love, joy and truth and that His dealings with men are determined by these qualities. But, at the same time, He is described as being, on the one hand, these qualities themselves, love, joy, truth and, on the other, as being the various phenomena which we call nature. This fact should be remembered as a necessary qualification to the statement that the Mysticism described in these pages is of a personalist character.

Nor are the Bhaktas always able to maintain the separateness of their own personality. There occur in their life certain transcendental, though apparently

[1] In a letter to the author

brief, moments when the personal intimacy becomes a sense of identity and they feel themselves one with the Lord whom they love. In the Bhaktas, the feeling of oneness is not permanent but temporary, felt in an hour of exaltation. The identity is not one of substance but of person. The mystic is not resolved into a thing but has himself become the person whom he has loved. Not a philosophic conviction of the oneness of his substance with that of the Divine Being, but love has wrought what to him is the supreme experience. God has lovingly and graciously come into him and filled him so fully that his self has become included in the Divine Self, love acquiescing in the inclusion. Outwardly, he lives and sings and acts, and men call him Nammāḻvār or Chaitanya, but inwardly he is no longer Nammāḻvār or Chaitanya. It is the Divine Self in him which inspires his thoughts and fits them into moving and melodious verse. He does not cease to exist, for does he not live and sing? But the source of these activities is not he himself but the God in him.

The Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel

Of the Fourth Gospel, we may say that while there are other doctrines in it, such as that of the Logos, of the New Birth, of the Comforter and His mission, they are viewed in their relation to mystic experience. There is no exaggeration in saying that in the Fourth Gospel fellowship with God and Christ is more frequently alluded to than any other Christian

experience, that it inspires the noblest passages of the Gospel, and that where it is not explicitly described, it is the ideal towards which the thought of the Gospel tends. 'This doctrine of a mystical union,' says Scott, 'in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel.'[1]

The experience recorded in the Fourth Gospel may be regarded as Mysticism in the same sense in which that word is used in this book—communion with a personal God. But some of the ideas in Bhakti Literature which complicate this thought are absent here. The all-in-all-ness of God as described in the Gospel does not come into conflict with the idea of a personal God. Nor is there any trace of the thought of the human self becoming part of a larger Divine Self and losing its inner life, while keeping its outer activity. The Divine and the human selves maintain their separate personalities while enjoying the closest communion with each other. Mystic union in the Fourth Gospel, whether of Christ with God or of the Christian with Christ, consists in carrying out God's or Christ's will to its complete fulfilment. It is therefore transacted largely in the region of will, of character. This teaching is not, however, easy to understand, as there are present in it certain other ideas as well. We commune now with Christ and now with the Father and now with both. Again, we are told with characteristic boldness that our communion with Christ is to be like His communion with the Father. This analogy is

[1] E. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, Edinburgh 1908; p. 282.

not altogether clear for we find it exceedingly difficult to understand the nature of the fellowship which exists between Him and His Father. Full of mystery as it is, the analogy extends beyond measure the possibilities inherent in our own mystic communion with Him.

The Importance of the Fourth Gospel for Indian Thought

It is urged that Mysticism has run riot in India often with disastrous results and that it would be extremely unwise to develop those elements in Christianity which may be called mystical or to make the Gospel of St. John the main basis for an exposition of Indian Christianity. Mysticism, so the criticism runs, tends to live in eternity, conscious of its vastness alone and neglecting or even despising time. It is easy to see how a mind eager to serve the eternal God and to live in His constant presence loses its sense of time. The Fourth Gospel, however, shows how accepting the historical Christ we may live in eternity. In it history and metaphysics are woven together. This correlation between time and eternity ought to prove of the greatest importance to us in India. We in India have emphasized metaphysics at the expense of history and have lived in other worlds than this, absorbed in spiritual things. Now a reaction has set in : we are keen on the present and eager to set in motion swift currents of thought which will work their way into politics. The danger now is that, absorbed in the things which happen, we may lose sight of the profound issues in

them. The visible is but a dim and partial revelation of the invisible. It is this great truth that underlies the method of interpretation adopted by the Fourth Evangelist. As a disciple the author of the Gospel had come into contact with Jesus. He had taken careful note of His sayings and doings and had meditated on them long, so that they began to reveal to his earnest and searching soul some of their great secrets. The historic Jesus began to appear to him vividly as the eternal Logos. On the one hand, John is aware of the importance of history as he reckons with a person who has appeared in time. On the other, he fully realizes the significance of metaphysics, being aware of the eternal issues in time. If it can base itself on the Fourth Gospel, Indian Christianity will, we may hope, avoid the danger of neglecting history.

Another danger of Mysticism is the identification of the human soul with the Divine. If Mysticism be pushed too far, as suggested in the letter already quoted, it must end by considering the human soul as one with God. This conclusion has been as a matter of fact reached by Śaṅkara, one of India's greatest philosophers. In a country where this tendency is strongly present, the influence of John would be all to the good. John was considerably exercised over this problem of the relation between the human and the Divine in deep religious experience. He seems to be quite aware of the possibility of man being metaphysically one with God but emphatically maintains the difference between God and man even in the deepest moments of religious experience. The study

of the Gospel of John will, therefore, be of peculiar helpfulness to thinking people in India.

Yet another reason why Indian Christians should take full account of the Fourth Gospel is that in Mysticism all the world over there is a constant tendency to ignore the laws of morality. The man who feels that his entire being is dominated by God comes to think that he cannot possibly go wrong; for if he can go wrong, the blame would rest not upon himself but upon the Divine Self working within him: has he not annulled his own self in order to give room to the Divine Self? On this point too John has much that is of value to teach India. Wholly obedient to God as he is, he realizes that he has constantly to be on his guard against wrong doing. For the human self is ever apt to assert itself and to do wrong; and the Divine Self is not likely to compel it, by any definite act, nor by sheer over-mastering presence, to put an end to all possibility of wrong-doing.

Why Emphasize the Mystical Element?

Why should we seek to give prominence to the mystical element in the Fourth Gospel, deriving an impetus to such an emphasis from a study of Hindu Bhakti Literature? The answer to this is that in the mystical life we have a real and vivid experience of Christ. This is, in fact, the great value of Christian Mysticism. We have historical records of Jesus as He lived and wrought on this earth centuries ago. We can study and ponder over these records and let their meaning soak into us. With skilful imagination

and patient research we can seek to understand the past and to recall to our minds the Jesus of history. The mystic, however, does not depend only, or even mainly, upon an accumulation of historical data for his knowledge of Christ. He probably has assimilated, in some measure consciously and in a larger measure unconsciously, the historical data that are known to his contemporaries about Christ, though unwisely he might sometimes set up as a critic of such data. But his own pathway to the feet of Christ is different. In prayer, in hours of devotion and ecstasy, as well as in ordinary life, he experiences the living Christ. The barriers which lie between him and Christ cease to exist and they enter into close fellowship. The spirit of Christ becomes multiplied and His exalted presence keeps company with men for ever.

A remarkable example of such Christian Mysticism is Paul. As Deissmann says: 'The formula "in Christ" (or "in the Lord" and so on) occurs one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul's letters; it is really the characteristic expression of his Christianity. It has been, in my opinion, very often and very greatly misunderstood by the commentators; they have rationalized it; they have ignored it; under their hands it often has become a mere scrap of parchment; they disguised its inner mystical energy, in very many cases applying to the so-called historic Jesus and to His work, regarded as finished in the past, instead of applying the formula to the present exalted Lord and to His action still going on. Though weakened in effect by exegesis, the formula "in Christ" must be

conceived as the peculiarly Pauline expression of the Apostle's most intimate fellowship with the living spiritual Christ.' [1]

Biblical Criticism and the Fourth Gospel

The problem of Christianity in India, then, consists in getting a real grasp of the various trends of Hindu thought, and in interpreting Christian writings like those of John bearing these constantly in mind. When this is done Christian theology in India will become genuinely Indian. This process may also shed new light on the mind of the evangelist, light which will certainly be acceptable to the people in India and perhaps prove of much use to Christians elsewhere. An exclusively Indian meaning need not be read into a book that was written in another land in a different environment, as is done in Śrī Parānanda's commentary on the Gospel [2] where the writer makes John out to be a Hindu following the Śaiva Siddhānta doctrine. To do this is to go against the fundamental laws of historical criticism—a process of study which has proved so useful in our understanding of ancient texts. What we may accept, however, is that while the Gospel was composed in a different land and in a different environment, and while its particular doctrines were determined accordingly—it is necessary to under-

[1] Adolf Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, London, 1923; pp. 171, 172. See, however, Wilhelm Herrmann, *The Communion of the Christian with God*, London, 1913. (such pages as 27–37) for an able statement of the view that Mysticism is un-Christian.

[2] Śrī Parānanda, *An Eastern Exposition of St. John*, London, 1902.

stand clearly the differences—yet its fundamental teaching is significantly related to the leading problems and experiences of Hindu seers.

In recent years much has been written about the authorship of the Gospel of John, its date, its literary character, and the influence of the then current philosophy and environment on it. All these questions are important. They vitally affect our understanding of the Gospel and its purport. After a careful study of the subject, I have decided to treat the Gospel as a mystic document of the early Christian Church by an immediate disciple of Jesus, whom we may call John or the Fourth Evangelist. The same author seems also to have written the Epistles bearing the name of St. John. I have accepted the conclusion of modern scholars that in the Fourth Gospel we have the utterances of our Lord after they have passed through the Evangelist's brooding mind. Browning well puts into the Evangelist's mouth these words:

> 'Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
> Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
> Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
> Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
> Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
> Of new significance and fresh result;
> What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
> And named them in the Gospel I have writ.' [1]

It is often difficult to recognize which is our Lord's

[1] *A Death in the Desert.*

own teaching and which the teaching of the Evangelist.[1]

The Significance of Bhakti Thought

When we speak of interpreting Christianity in its relation to the spirit of India's religious genius, we have to remember that India's religious genius has expressed itself in systems of philosophy, religious practices and sacred books often most diverse. The immediate task which lies before Indian Christians anxious to make clear to themselves and to others the relation between the real spirit of Christianity and the real spirit of India's religious life is that of choice. We have to decide what particular form of religious life in India is best suited for this purpose. As there are many types of religious thought in India, an inevitable consequence of the attempts of Christian thinkers to adjust the

[1] The commentaries or books of exposition I have found helpful are, arranging the names in alphabetic order:

St. Augustine, *Lectures or Tractates on the Gospel according to St. John*, translated by John Gibb, Edinburgh, 1873.

Wilhelm Heitmuller, *Das Johannes Evangelium* in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, edited by Johannes Weiss, Göttingen, 1918.

H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Tübingen, 1911.

W. W. Peyton, *The Memorabilia of Jesus, commonly called the Gospel of St. John*, London and Edinburgh, 1892.

A. Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Cambridge, 1913.

R. F. Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, Edinburgh, 1918.

E. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel, Its Significance and Environment*, London, 1917.

H. Weinel, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Tübingen, 1921.

B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John*, London, 1919.

expression of their religious experience to the terms and ideas familiar to India would be the development of many types of Indian Christianity. Some of these types of Indian Christianity would be more true to the real spirit of Christianity than others. A keen Advaitin, for instance, who accepts Christianity and sincerely believes that Christianity is Advaita might offer an interpretation loudly proclaiming it to be Indian Christianity. Indian it certainly will be but not Christianity. Those who look forward to Christianity becoming indigenous in the country must not forget this danger which attends the process of relating Christianity to Hindu thought.

In this book I have chosen the Bhakti type of religious thought in India for the purpose of showing the intimate relation between the inner spirit of Christianity and the inner spirit of India's religious thought. This I have done for three reasons:

1. The type of religious experience which has expressed itself in the Bhakti writings, with its longing for union with God as well as its enjoyment of such union, is of all the types of religious experience in India probably the nearest in affinity to Christian experience.

2. The metaphysical background lying behind Bhakti experience is also nearest in affinity to the metaphysical background of Christianity. Both agree in maintaining the separateness of the Divine and human personalities, however much they may be eager for union.

3. The immense following which Bhakti has in India is another reason. Through popular hymns it has

reached and influenced great numbers of people with little or no education. Historically also it probably started as popular devotion to idols, but it would be wrong to maintain that Bhakti is the religion of the masses only. It has always included among its votaries not merely millions of the common people but hundreds of India's able scholars and devoted saints.

Meaning of Bhakti

Generally speaking, Bhakti[1] is the deep, unselfish love of the whole man for God, finding its highest bliss in union with Him. The main thing to remember is that Bhakti is love. Often the word Bhakti has been translated into English as 'faith'. The word 'faith' calls up in the minds of many the one-sided idea of intellectual assent to certain facts. Rendered as faith, Bhakti seems to imply that the one following it has to believe in something. Such an understanding of Bhakti does not do justice to its rich and complex meaning. Certain facts and ideas may be accepted as true by a bhakta and may lie at the basis of his Bhakti. But the acceptance of them is not the whole of Bhakti nor even the essence of it. The heart of Bhakti is the strong love which such facts and ideas, accepted as true, produce in the soul. More often the word Bhakti has been rendered by the English word 'devotion.' While this word is more satisfactory than faith in bringing

[1] For detailed and careful accounts of Bhakti, see especially Sir George Grierson's article on 'Bhakti Mārga' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar's *Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*, Strassburg, 1913.

out the whole-hearted character of Bhakti, it seems too cold and distant effectively to convey the warm and intimate character of Bhakti. The only English word which can adequately render Bhakti is love. It is significant that in the Tamil Bhakti hymns, the word love is often used as a synonym for Bhakti.[1] Though the word Bhakti in itself has no trace of the sex element, it is not without interest that, like the English word love, it has sometimes been used to indicate movements of the soul, though always towards God, in terms, or even in practices, in which the sex element has found an all too absorbing emphasis.

The doctrine of Bhakti has had a long and varied history in India. Often its emotional and occasionally its intellectual aspect has received emphasis. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, over the date of which there has been much controversy, but which according to the two eminent Hindu scholars, Mr. K. T. Telang[2] and Sir R. G. Bhandarkar,[3] was written about the fourth century B.C., we find the earliest extensive teaching of the doctrine. From the *Bhagavad-Gītā* it appears as if Bhakti attained its importance, at least in philosophic circles, as a temperamental reaction to the severity and rigour of Yōga. The Yōgin had started out to suppress desire, love and all feeling in general, and though these had been strangled, they had not been killed. So in the

[1] cf. *Periya Purāṇam*, edited by Arumuga Nāvalār, Fifth Edition ; p. 128.

[2] The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, The Sacred Books of the East, vol. viii, Oxford, 1908 ; p. 34.

[3] *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems* ; p. 13.

Gītā Bhakti is an outlet, though a calm and sober one, for pent-up emotions. Through such Bhakti, the devotee can attain God. 'Those who worship me with Bhakti are in me and I also in them.'[1] In the *Gītā*, Bhakti is constantly associated with action and knowledge and these three are spoken of as paths leading to God, though the first is of prime importance. Such constant association tends to raise Bhakti from the emotional to the practical and intellectual spheres. Between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D., the poet-singers of the Tamil land, both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, contributed their warmth and fervency—the result partly of their poetic temperament and partly of their devotion—to the development of Bhakti. The missionary zeal, accompanying their attempts to win triumphs for their particular creeds, lent additional stimulus to the further enrichment of Bhakti. The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, written not later than A.D. 900 and abundant in its influence upon the Bhakti of later generations all over India, infuses still more passion into Bhakti. 'Bhakti in this work is a surging emotion which chokes the speech, makes the tears flow and the hair thrill with pleasurable excitement, and often leads to hysterical laughing and weeping by turns, to sudden fainting fits and to long trances of unconsciousness.'[2] In the eleventh century A.D. came Rāmānuja, who called a halt to this movement and gave Bhakti the strength and virility that comes of restraint.

[1] *Gītā* ix, 29.

[2] J. N. Farquhar, *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, Oxford, 1920; p. 230.

He made it more a type of intellectual meditation, accompanied by love, but deprived of the extravagance of rapture and ecstacy. To him it is like a 'stream of flowing oil.'[1] A popular life of the great teacher written in Tamil makes him, however, subject to moods of ecstatic devotion.[2] In the meanwhile saints had become aware of the incapacity of some souls for full and strong emotion. They desired to enjoy God in the same fervent way as the Bhaktas of the *Bhāgavata-Purāna* did, but they could not. That led to the open teaching of the doctrine of Prapatti, or complete surrender to God, without any feeling whatever, either of joy or of sorrow, a doctrine which had already been taught[3] but which had been kept secret because it came into conflict with the doctrine of works which was so prominent at the time. The movement was a spiral one, going around in a circle and yet finishing off at a higher point than where it began. The Yogin had sought to eliminate feeling, but the devotee who practised Prapatti surrendered himself completely to God, so completely that he ceased to expect in himself any change of feeling whatever, for better or for worse. It is clear then that Bhakti has been used in different senses by different schools of thought. The meaning of the word would then depend in each case upon its context.

A careful study of the Bhakti books convinces me

[1] *Srī-Bhāsya*, I. 1. i.
[2] *The Life of Rāmānujāchārya*, translated by A. Govinda charya, 1916; p. 78.
[3] e.g. to Rāmānuja by his Guru.

that while the heart of their teaching is spiritual and while a strong desire to love God and to become one with Him, and often a real joy at this desire being fulfilled, is found in the books, there is in them a great deal of puerile mythology, cosmology and theology. I am aware of the fact that I belong to a different religion, with different standards of judgement and different ideals, and that these may affect my estimate of Bhakti literature in spite of all my desire to reach a scientific and unprejudiced view. Further, the Bhakti writings are old writings which naturally contain a good deal which strikes a modern mind as strange. The same holds true of the writings of medieval Christian mystics, in which are found many exploded ideas of theology, eschatology, angelology and psychology. It is necessary to dwell here upon this general character of Bhakti literature, for otherwise it would be necessary throughout the book to make digressions to point out the strange frame-work into which the significant and valuable spiritual ideas here discussed are set. These digressions would interfere with the main purpose of the book which is to show the affinity between the heart of the teaching of John and the heart of Bhakti.

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

dependence. Nor is it necessary for the purpose of this book, which attempts to see what theological relation the Fourth Gospel bears to the doctrines and ideals, the wistful longings and the assured results of Hindu thought, to accept or reject such a theory of historical connection. And, further I have not hesitated to emphasize, at what may seem disproportionate length, ideas which are not prominent in the Fourth Gospel or in Bhakti, each taken by itself but which attain great importance when the two are considered together. Such synthesis in the interests of living religion has, however, its imperfection as a scientific method as it sometimes leads to wrong proportions.

CHAPTER II

THE AWAKENING OF BHAKTI

There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

John i. 6–14.

The subject of our study in this and in the following chapters is the pathway to union with God, which is the goal of mystic religion. To state such a purpose might seem to indicate that there is a distinction between the pathway and the goal, between the process of attaining and the attainment. This distinc-

tion, however necessary for the sake of clearness, is not quite real. It is not possible to separate entirely the experience of seeking, from that of reaching, God. The two are so closely inter-related and so often occur together that there really seems to be no distinction between them. The illustration of the path is frequently used in this book to describe man's experience of God because it seems so natural and expressive and because it has been so largely used in India for that purpose. But there is a grave defect in it. A road suggests the idea that the end is distant. To reach the destiny may be a matter of several days or months, involving many difficulties. It might be long before even the spires and turrets of the city are seen at a distance. Not so mystic experience. God's revelation of himself and man's response to this revelation proceed together. The path of the mystic quest does not wind through strange and unknown country at a distance from the city, but enters the city immediately and keeps going round it in daily sight of its wonders, though it may take some time before the heart of the city is reached. There would always be new regions of God's love to be seen, and yet almost from the first, the soul would begin to experience God.

The pathway to God, whether taken by Hindu or Christian, I propose to describe as Bhakti. It is quite evident that the approach to God as set forth in the Johannine writings has a distinctive character of its own. By calling it Bhakti I do not imply that the Fourth Evangelist teaches exactly what thinkers in

India have meant by the term Bhakti. As already pointed out, the term Bhakti has not always meant the same thing in India. But an increasing use by Christians in India of this word and others like Antaryāmin and Jīvan-Mukti would show that, whatever the differences in the exact content of these words may be, they seek to express certain experiences which cannot but be regarded as common to Hindus and Christians. There is no reason why, after realizing the subtle, and often important, differences in meaning, we should not allow ourselves to come under the spell of these historic words which have become attractive after long usage. This may look like sentimental devotion, but it at once brings the discussion of Christian experience into an atmosphere with which we are familiar in India. Even if we seem to lose in accuracy of thought, we gain in strength and vigour of appeal, though we must safeguard ourselves against this loss by frequently remembering the fact that the terms do not always mean the same thing in Christian and Hindu theology.

The Aim of the Prologue

The passage from the Gospel of John which stands at the beginning of this chapter gives us some aspects of the Johannine teaching about Bhakti. The passage, it will be noted, occurs in the opening verses of the Gospel, known as its prologue. To understand the passage aright and to attach proper value to it will be possible only after we have attempted to estimate the significance of the prologue. What, then, is the

meaning of the prologue and what is its relation to the rest of the Gospel? Is it more like a gateway leading to the beautiful gardens and splendid buildings of a palace or is it rather like a tower in the palace itself? A gateway, however fine and massive, is often a thing by itself, marking but the fringes of the gardens and in no adequate proportion to the magnificence of the palace. But it proclaims to the world that *it* is the entrance to the palace. A tower is more closely related to the palace and, in fact, forms a part of it. From it are seen the grounds and buildings of the palace in their exact relations. The prologue seems to be to the Gospel more as its tower than as its gateway. It does not stand by itself, a magnificent piece of writing, having no real connection with the Gospel; but as from a tower, we see rapidly and yet clearly glimpses of the many truths in the Gospel. Thus understood the passage which forms the subject of our study in this chapter gains greatly in importance.

The prologue falls into two broad divisions, the first five verses describing the One who is to be loved and worshipped, and the next nine verses describing the way in which we should love and worship Him. That is, the first part deals with the Objective Source of religious experience and the second with the religious experience which is the result of reaching that Source We consider here the latter part of the prologue first and not the earlier part, because at the present day we are tending—and rightly—to attach considerable importance to religious experience. We all have it to some degree and can seek, however inadequately,

to understand it. By understanding it we hope—with good reason—to understand the ultimate objective facts which are the basis of Religion. But this method is not that of our Evangelist who opens his Gospel with certain profound theological statements which cannot be easily understood or accepted. Would it not have been better if he had simply described the life and teaching of Jesus and the impression He produced on His contemporaries, leaving us to form our own conclusions about Him? We should then have been inevitably led to the conclusion that He was no ordinary man. But the Fourth Evangelist does not do this. In the course of meditation certain great truths had become clear to him. Such is always the result of prolonged meditation on true lines: details and separate facts disappear and in their place certain broad truths stand out with compelling power. So when the Fourth Evangelist began to write his Gospel, these profound and significant truths naturally and spontaneously found expression at the very outset. It was only after they were set down that he could proceed to narrate the particular facts which fed his mind and were the source of these dominant convictions. This is confirmed by the fact that when he begins to write his First Epistle, he cannot help repeating, though in a different phraseology, the same great ideas which had become strong and clear in the course of long brooding.[1] It may not be good literary form for an author to begin two of his writings in almost the same way, but it is perhaps inevitable for a

[1] 1 John i. 1-4.

thinker to whom a few great truths count profoundly after prolonged meditation.

But did not the Evangelist anticipate the possible effect of such a prologue on his readers? Did he write like this because it was the most natural and spontaneous thing for him to do, or because, with an eagerness bordering on an almost impatient anxiety, he wanted his readers to be sure of the profound truths which were so important to his own mind? Of one thing we may be certain. He was not a dogmatist who sought to force his opinions on others regardless of their point of view. A man of such loving temperament could not have been so oblivious of the feelings of others. The dogmatist is primarily self-centred. His opinions count, not the opinions of others. If his opinions hurt others, it is all to their good; what he is concerned about is the correctness of his own creed, not its effect on others. We cannot imagine the Fourth Evangelist being so unconcerned about the effect of his words. If he had really anticipated it, he might have adopted a different method. He gave expression naturally to certain great truths which dominated his consciousness, anxious, but not with a blind, dogmatic, unfeeling anxiety, that his readers also should accept them, and perhaps not altogether aware of how his presentation of them would strike some of them.

If there was any error in him, it was not the lack of sympathy which insisted on teaching unpleasant truths, whether others liked them or not, but rather an unconscious lack of imagination which failed to make clear to itself all the possible consequences of his words.

Imagination John really had—the daring yet solid and constructive imagination, which realized clearly all the exaltation of the humble Jesus and which imparted this knowledge to others in words of immortal power. In this sense, imagination was rarely so vigorous or soaring in its flight as in the prologue. But it cannot be forgotten that the Fourth Gospel has been the cause of much heated controversy. For this, not a lack of spiritual genius—about the possession of which by the Evangelist there can be no doubt—nor an absence of the generous sympathy and love which inspires the best literature—there is plenty of evidence in his writings that he had this too—but his strange method seems to be partly responsible. All through his writings, and particularly in the prologue, he has given expression to strong convictions with a boldness which cannot but challenge. Men who set out to write theological treatises generally begin with the known and the accepted and proceed from them to the less known and the debatable. But this writer guards his very entrance with flaming swords.

The Immanent Christ

A careful study of the passage at the beginning of this chapter, reveals the fact that, according to the Evangelist, man's Bhakti is initiated by the Logos, inadequately translated in English as the Word. 'There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world.' The light referred to here is obviously the Logos, the main theme of the prologue.

There is a long history behind the term. To understand what the Evangelist means by the expression, we must first study, however briefly, the course which philosophic thought has taken on the subject.

The Greek Philosopher, Heraclitus, who lived in the sixth century before Christ, found in the order of the universe the 'signs' of a power similar to man's reason. This power he called the Logos. Then came Plato who marked off rigidly the world of matter from the world of ideas. After him, the Stoics sought to bridge the gulf between these two worlds by going back to the earlier hypothesis of Heraclitus and maintaining that the universe is entirely pervaded by an eternal reason. It is possible for man, they contended, to rise above everything that limits him and to reach a sense of identity with the Logos which dwells in his own soul, in the souls of others, thus making fellowship with them possible, and in the world. Philo, the Jewish thinker, took over the main Stoic conception but combined it with other elements. As a Jew he was eager to maintain belief in one supreme God. But the Jewish idea of God as transcendent had resulted in a severe type of dualism with its moral and intellectual defects. And Old Testament writers began to speak of the Word of God in more than a poetic way as creating heaven and earth and as making His will clear to His servants. Though the personification of the Divine Word probably took place later than Philo, there was already in his time a strong tendency in that direction. In Job and Proverbs we see Wisdom working with God in the creation of the

world. The teaching of Philo regarding the Logos combined elements from Hellenic as well as from Old Testament sources. In Greek thought the Logos was the immanent reason and more or less took the place of a Divine Creator. Philo, of course, could not fully accept such a doctrine. To him, therefore, the Logos is a means of explaining how God works in the world. Because of this fundamental difference between the Greek and Jewish points of view, there is a certain inconsistency in Philo's teaching about the Logos, which he sometimes makes out to be only an attribute of God and at other times an independent and personal being. The Fourth Evangelist was doubtless strongly influenced by current Greek ideas about the Logos, particularly by those of Philo. But if he was influenced by Greek philosophy, he was loyal to Hebrew tradition as well; and his thought must have been shaped also by Old Testament ideas about Wisdom and the Word of the Lord.[1]

The doctrine of immanence has received emphasis in Hindu Bhakti Literature, though in a form quite different from the Greek doctrine which we have sketched. Many and emphatic are the assertions which speak of God as present *in* the world and *in* man as the Antaryāmin. *The Bhagavad-Gītā* says:

'I am seated in the heart of all and from me come memory, knowledge and reason.'[2]

[1] For an account of the doctrine of the Logos see the article on 'The Logos' by Dean W. R. Inge in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.*

[2] *Gītā* xv. 15.

'The Lord dwells, O Arjuna, in the heart of all beings and is whirling them by His supreme power as though they were mounted on a machine.' [1]

Commenting on a similar passage, Rāmānuja interprets it thus: 'I am seated as the soul of all beings, who constitute my body. The soul is that which is the entire support, ruler and enjoyer of the body.' [2]

From these and other passages, which might easily be multiplied, it is quite clear that the doctrine of immanence forms an important element in Bhakti thought. The explanation for this is no doubt to be found in the fact that Bhaktas seek to reconcile two different ideas, of which one is an eagerness to attain the closest possible intimacy with God, and the other, the conviction that God and man are different. The only way in which God and man, though separate, can come into the closest possible contact is the realization of an indwelling God.

But neither an account of the Greek doctrine of the Logos, by which the Fourth Evangelist is likely to have been influenced, nor that of the Hindu doctrine of immanence with which we in India are familiar, can explain what exactly the Evangelist meant when he used the term Logos. We have the great difficulty of dealing with an original and independent thinker who did not tie himself down to accuracy in fact. This we know from the way in which he treats the material already given in the first three Gospels. He omits certain details, adds certain other details, rearranges

[1] *Gītā* xviii. 61. [2] *Gītā-Bhāṣya* x. 20.

incidents in a different chronological order and tells us of new miracles. One who is led by a sense of truth to make such changes in the narration of facts, so that they may more adequately represent truth, may be expected to take greater liberty still with the thoughts and speculations of men. We know that in some respects he has departed widely from such philosophical teaching about the Logos as we may expect, after careful historical study, to have influenced his thought. While availing ourselves of as many clues as historical criticism can provide, we ought to seek to understand his meaning in the light of his own writings. His thoughts are intimately related; if we can understand this relation, we shall understand their inner meaning.

The Purpose of Immanence

'There was the true light,' says the Evangelist, 'even the light which lighteth every man, coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not.' The Fourth Evangelist seems to be concerned mainly with the immanence of God in man. It is that which stirs him deeply. He would certainly not say with Kabir:

'If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed.'[1]

John does not despise matter as unable to contain God. His doctrine that eternal life or the life of fellow-

[1] *Songs of Kabir*, Tr. by Rabindranath Tagore, New York, 1917, p. 53. This book seems to be not an exact translation, but a free rendering.

ship with Christ can be attained now, while still in the body, bears witness to his conviction that the realm of matter is a possible medium for enjoying God. Again, he says that the Logos became flesh and that He manifested Himself clearly to men. Here we have an emphatic evidence of the fact that He recognizes the physical as an effective means of manifesting the Divine. And yet he has not, like many mystics, sought to see God everywhere, in a running brook or in a bronze image as much as in the heart of man. This is because, philosophical as he is in his outlook, he feels strongly that morality is necessary in order to see God. He seems to have a more exalted notion of the human body as a possible temple for God than of matter in general.

'And the world was made by Him.' It will be noted that this is a repetition. In the prologue the assertion has already been made, 'All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.' Why then should this truth be repeated here? In a piece of careful argument like the prologue, the repetition cannot be taken as meaningless redundancy. We must ask for its inner significance. A possible interpretation is that it is meant to make more exact the statement 'He was in the world.' The idea of His being in the world might lead to the supposition that God is the sum-total of the energy and the life in the world. To prevent such a misconception the author goes on to add, 'And the world was made by Him.' To him God is Antaryāmin, without, however, being exhausted in the universe.

He exists in, and yet beyond, the world. This interpretation fits in well with the general tenor of the Johannine teaching but not so well with this particular context. The verse is putting forth an explanation of how the Logos was the light and yet how men did not know it.

The commentary of the Bhakti philosopher, Raṅga-Rāmānuja, a follower of Rāmānuja, throws out an idea which helps us to understand the meaning of the Fourth Evangelist. It is that He enters the created world so that men might perceive Him more clearly. Commenting on the verse in the *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad*, 'Having created that, He then entered the same'[1] he says:

'If asked "The Lord is continually pervading everything. What is this 'entrance' at the time of creation?" the answer is: "It is the condition in which He who pervades everything, becomes fit to be known perfectly in each distinctive thing, as the calf in the womb of the cow."'[2] The illustration in the last sentence seems to mean that as the calf, already present in the cow, comes out in definite form and becomes an object of clear perception, so the world manifests clearly the Creator who dwells in it.

On this point Śaṅkara too, whose view is generally so opposed to the Bhakti standpoint, agrees in the main with Raṅga-Rāmānuja. His extensive comment on the same verse in the Upaniṣad, may, for the sake of clearness, be summed up thus: As this passage in

[1] *Tait. Up.* 2.6.2.
[2] Raṅga-Rāmānuja, *Upaniṣat-Prakāsikā*, ad. loc.

the Upaniṣad begins with a reference to the knowledge of the Supreme One, we ought to say that its real meaning is that the Supreme One can be known only in the heart of the world. The Supreme One has no form but shines in contact with other things. It is this shining in the hearts of individual beings which is here called 'entrance.'[1]

The central idea of both these comments, that the immanence of God in creation is for the sake of clearer perception, is stimulating and offers us a clue for understanding the progress of thought in the prologue. By being in the world, the Logos illumines it.[2] We here see a further reason why the prologue dwells with such peculiar emphasis on creation. It is not merely to show that Christ existed before the world was made, nor merely to show that He was the supreme Agent in creation. Both these are important facts which should be understood before we can really understand His exalted character. But the emphasis in the prologue on creation is also to demonstrate the fact that God's purpose to reveal Himself through creation could not be realized and that, therefore, He had to use another and more effective means of making Himself known to men. That way is the Incarnation. The Evangelist states that God is present in the world, that is the world of men, so that they may understand Him clearly. And yet they have not understood Him clearly. 'He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him

[1] Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya on the *Tait. Up.* 2. 6. 2.
[2] cf. John i. 4 ; viii. 12 ; ix. 5 ; xii. 35, 36, 46.

not.' This thought he repeats and emphasises further: 'He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Because men have not understood Him, even though He is immanent in them, He has 'become flesh.' The incarnation then is a more effective means of showing God than mere immanence.

We may be puzzled by the use of the past tense in the statement, 'He was in the world.' Then is He not in the world still? Is not God always immanent in man? This difficulty, however, ceases to exist when we remember that the first thirteen verses of the prologue are meant to describe the Logos before His Incarnation. That is why the past tense is so largely used throughout the passage. Not that the author does not believe in an indwelling God now. There is ample evidence in his writings to show that he believed in an indwelling God who operates now as before the Incarnation. Before the Incarnation, He who was the light was Himself not properly seen and instead of illumination there was ignorance.

And so He 'became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth.' With rare insight John identifies the historic Jesus with the immanent Logos and tells us, with a boldness which would have shocked the philosophers of his day, that the Logos became flesh. His distinctive

contribution is that he sees in Jesus the visible and concrete manifestation of the Logos. The Logos who was with God from eternity, the Logos who created the worlds in the dim beginnings of time, the Logos who is in the world and illumines it—behold that Logos is Jesus! The Logos, whose silent and mysterious work is as wide as the universe and as long as eternity, is none other than the Jesus whose words and deeds during His Incarnation have become the source of endless inspiration to men. It does not seem as if the Evangelist wanted to limit this experience of beholding His glory—an experience so very different from the ignorance of the world which did not know Him—to the contemporaries of Jesus. The vision of the Logos in His glory, which is made possible by His becoming flesh, stands open to our gaze even after His earthly life is over. The men who lived in the time of Jesus felt and experienced His presence in a peculiarly intimate way. Theirs was the privilege of beholding with human eyes the incarnate Logos and of having intercourse with Him in word and deed, but the Incarnation was not meant merely for them. Such a stupendous event in the spiritual history of mankind could not have been so narrow in the sphere of its work. In all ages men behold the Logos in the historic Jesus and in His endless presence in the hearts of men, a presence made more clear by His manifestation in time. The love of Jesus which wins our hearts, His peace which stills the violent storms of our souls, His wisdom which teaches us the right with unerring insight,

His power which helps us to triumph over sin—these are the veritable characteristics of the Logos. The immanent Logos is no stranger, of whose real nature we are ignorant, but is One of whom we know much; for in the Jesus of history and experience we behold His unutterable glory. The thought that the Logos became flesh thus sheds new light on Him, bringing Him within the reach of our understanding and feeling, and on Jesus, revealing in Him a loftiness of nature unperceived before.

Man's Response to God

But if Christ is already immanent in man as a spiritual fact, what is the real teaching of the Gospel which seems to point to Christ's abiding in us as the highest experience of religion? This difficulty seems to be felt in the verse: 'He came unto his own and they that were his own received him not.' If they received Him not, in what sense were they His own? If they were His own, they would continue to be His own whether they received Him or not. If they become His own as a result of receiving Him, they could not have been His own before they received Him.[1] The same difficulty confronts us when we are told that those who are born of God are spoken of as being given the right to become children of God. If they are born of God they are already children of God and

[1] In view of the general tenor of the passage, I am inclined to interpret 'His own' as all men who are begotten of God and not as the Jews only. On this point however, see Godet: op. cit. vol. i.; p. 352.

there would be no necessity to give them the right to become the children of God. Thus we have in the Gospel three lines of thought which really move in the same direction: men in whom the Logos already dwells are exhorted to abide in Him so that He may abide in them; those who are His own are expected to receive Him; those born of God are given the right to become children of God. The paradox implied here is made clear by other passages in the Gospel. The prologue speaks of the immanence of God in man, but the real significance of this immanence is understood only in the later chapters. In the assertion about the indwelling Logos we see as it were the foot-hills of a mountain range. It is only as we get into the heart of the mountains that we can see at close range their towering peak in all its magnificence. As he goes on writing, John takes us to the heights of Christian experience and asks us to gaze on the exalted Christ who rests in individual human hearts with majesty and love. We shall see that in his later chapters John wants us to reach a loftier sense of immanence.

The prologue however suggests here an illustration which throws light on this difficulty. The illustration is that of a father and his son. In Hebrew thought, the word 'son' indicates possession of the same character as in the expression 'sons of light', which means those who have the character of light. The physical relation between father and son can never be changed, but the kinship between them is fully realized only when to this physical fact is added the recognition of certain moral

obligations and duties. Though it is quite true that the father never ceases to be the father and the son never ceases be the son, whatever either of them may do, the relation between them is really determined by moral, just as much as by physical, facts. Father and son are father and son only when they carry out the moral obligations consequent upon the physical kinship. To use the phraseology of the prologue, though a man is his father's own, he has to receive his father; though born of his father, he has to gain the right to become his son.

This embodies the important idea that every man, though indwelt by God, has to relate himself to God. They that are His own are expected to receive Him. The indwelling Logos does not do away with the functioning of a man's self. It may illumine the self, quicken it into new activity and impart vigour to it, but never does away with it. God is in all human souls in the sense that the minimum functioning of men's capacity is dependent on Him. But all men have to attain to a full experience of the indwelling God in the sense that they have to attain to a maximum functioning of this capacity, such maximum functioning being only possible with Divine illumination and strength. Every man who lives does so because of the God within. But there is a good deal of difference between the inner life of an ordinary man and that of a man of God. In the quality as well as in the intensity of his inner life, the latter stands high above the former. His thoughts are so much nobler, his feelings are so much more exalted, his decisions are directed to ends so much higher. Not

merely do the activities of his mind move among nobler themes but they do so with an intenser force. The ordinary man, on the other hand, does the minimum of living. His mental life is more or less busy with the needs of the body. It is within a man's power to say whether he wants the God within to function at His highest or at His lowest. The limitation is not imposed by God upon Himself but is placed upon God by man and those physical instincts and impulses for which he himself or his ancestors may be responsible. It is man who must decide whether he will allow his mind, with whatever capacity it may have, to be fully or partially indwelt by God.

Hindu Bhaktas realize that if the God within puts an end to all human functioning, there would be no separateness of personality and consequently no rapture of Bhakti. Bhakti arises when man, who is not God, but in whom God dwells, seeks with eager love to attain a full experience of that God. It is not enough to recognize the fact of the indwelling God. Such a realization by itself might easily lead to the thought of a Being who is immanent equally in all things, inanimate as well as animate, bad as well as good. It is not enough to recognize that man has to make a definite effort to experience God. Again such a recognition by itself might end in nothing more than in a stern moral discipline. But the two doctrines must be brought together. It must be recognized that God is already immanent in the soul and that yet man has to endeavour to make this immanence a fuller and richer spiritual experience.

As the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* puts it:

'Thus the Supreme One, unlimited and beloved,
is naturally present in one's own mind.
Him we must worship with joy, refraining from
all other pleasures.' [1]

In the words of Appar:

'I ever cry Lord, Lord!
The Lord himself is inseparable from my mind.
Keeping the Lord ever in my mind,
I will never forget the Lord.' [2]

Is Bhakti Possible for Every One?

The initiative in man's religious experience is always taken by God. 'He lighteth every man coming into the world.' 'He came unto his own.' This conviction that it is God who first calls us and implants in us deep and strong longings for Himself is often found in the Johannine writings.[3] We do not endeavour with our unaided effort to attain Him, but He floods our path with light and leads us on to Himself. It was not we who chose Him and made Him our own, but His gracious choice rested upon us and His hand beckoned to us. We did not love Him first but He loved us first, and how deep and immeasurable and eternal is that love! He it is who

[1] *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, 2. 2. 6.

[2] Appar: 'Īsan Īsan.' The southern school of Vaiṣṇavas, however, maintain that as a kitten is taken hold of by its mother and carried to a place of safety without any effort on its own part, so the devotee makes no effort, but God's grace does everything for him.

[3] John vi. 44; xv. 16; 1 John iv. 10, 19.

awakens in us Bhakti and does not cease until we attain a real and full experience of the living God.

On this point Hindu Bhaktas too have strong convictions.

Appar, the Tamil Saiva saint, sings:

'I did not know myself at all,
Nor did I know my God.
When He knew me as His servant,
I knew Him as my God.' [1]

Nammāḷvār, the Tamil Vaiṣṇava saint, asks:

'I cannot say, I will approach Him and compel
Him to dwell in me.
He Himself comes, with yearning for me,
And dwells in my body and mingles with my life.
Is it possible for Him now to leave me?' [2]

There are occasionally lines which seem to imply that man and not God begins the process. 'Even though,' cries Sundarar, 'Thou dost not hold to me, I will hold to thee.' [3] But these rare utterances do not shake the conviction that it is God who, out of His abundant grace, first makes the devotee His own.

If God it is who calls us first, uttering His summons in the depths of the soul where He is immanent, John is never tired of repeating the great and wholesome truth that every one comes within the magnificent and all-embracing gesture of His grace. [4] Our passage

[1] Appar: 'Ennai Etum.'
[2] *Tiru-Vöi-Moḷi*, 1. 7. 7.
[3] Sundarar: 'Mātar Pūṅguḷal.'
[4] John iii. 16, 17; vi: 39, 40; viii. 37; x. 7; xii. 26; ii. 1, 2, 29; iii. 3; iv. 14, 15.

contains the words: 'The same came for witness that he might bear witness of the light, that *all* might believe through him.' And again: 'There was the true light, even the light which lighteth *every man*, coming into the world.' Belief in Christ is, according to the Fourth Evangelist, the one supreme condition for entrance into the bliss of divine fellowship, but this belief in Christ is not beyond any one's capacity. Again, our passage declares emphatically: 'But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' It may seem at first sight as if this reference to being born of God as the first step in the acceptance of Christ removes belief in Him from the reach of every one. If every one who is born of God alone believes in Christ, it may well be that some are begotten of God and others not. The condition then depends not upon man but upon God. If God alone can awaken in men love for Christ, He may, in His mysterious grace, choose to do so in some but not in others. But being begotten of God is not some mysterious, spiritual process, reserved for a chosen few, but is another name, lofty and significant, for the inherent God-given capacity in all men to respond to the Divine Will working within them. Any interpretation which places limits upon the operations of God's grace would be inconsistent with the Johannine doctrine that God is love. If God is love, He cannot well awaken in some the longing for Himself and leave others in the darkness

of their own desires. Nor can we in any other way understand the tender and kindly John writing with such vehemence of those who do not believe in Christ. If special grace is needed for believing in Christ, those who do not possess it are not to be blamed. It is because every man has in him the power to accept Christ that John writes with such feeling against those who deliberately fail to use that power. The idea that God awakens love for Himself in the soul by being immanent in the world confirms further this interpretation. The immanence of God is no random fact, present here and absent there. The corporate character of John's thinking, for which we shall have evidence all along, comes in here as well. There is a solidarity and coherence about the immanence of God. The whole world, in other words all mankind, is indwelt by Him and there are no individuals who are left out of the gracious sweep of His love.

Further, that God calls the soul by dwelling in it means that His call is no external thing. It occurs in the depths of the personality and affects vitally all the choices and doings of men. And it is not a single event but a summons which is continually repeated. With his endless patience, He keeps stimulating in man a longing for Himself, making the human heart His home. Because of His constant indwelling in us, Bhakti shall ever continue to well up in our hearts.

Then why are some people good and some people wicked? To this the Fourth Evangelist would say: It is true God is in every soul. But the presence of God in the soul does not do away with man's responsibility.

Man can either accept or reject a full experience of this indwelling God. In the words of our text, he can either receive the Logos or not receive Him. The words 'as many as received Him' imply that it is possible for every one to accept God. The only explanation, then, for some men rejecting Him is that they have chosen to use their will in that way. Using their will to reject the full experience of the God within, they go from bad to worse, their own deeds bringing upon them the necessary retribution. Good men, on the other hand, accept the God within and go from strength to strength, their deeds naturally and inevitably causing an enhancement of goodness. Those who decide to ignore the oft-repeated voice of God are soon lost in the mazes of their own decision and, wandering farther and farther away from Him, shall finally find themselves enveloped in the gloom of utter darkness. But those who steadily seek to obey the God within and to listen to His voice of love, ever stimulating them to goodness, will find themselves led, by the momentum of their own decision, nearer and nearer the realms of light, where finally they shall stand in the full blaze of His Divine presence.

It should be noted here that Rāmānuja seeks to explain the difference between good men and bad in a somewhat similar way: 'That man who acts with the determination to be wholly on the side of the Supreme Person, the Lord blesses, by Himself creating in him a taste for such actions only as are a means of attaining Him and are extremely good. But He punishes the man who acts with the determination

to be wholly against Him by creating in him a taste for such actions as stand in the way of attaining Him and lead him downward.'[1]

But this determination to be devoted or opposed to God arises, according to Hindu Bhaktas, from a man's previous karma. It is his karma which enables him either to have or not have Bhakti. The importance of karma in determining the genesis of Bhakti is thus expressed by Tāyumānavar:

'The flower in blossom has its fragrance, its bees.
But not the bud still cold with dew.'

Though fragrance is inherent in a flower the moment it comes into existence, this fragrance does not spread until the flower blossoms and when the fragrance does spread, bees swarm around the flower. Thus it is also with the human soul. From the first moment of its existence divine energy is hidden in it, but this divine energy is revealed only when the soul is 'ripe,' that is, when it has experienced in different embodiments, appointed by the grace of Śiva, the whole effect of its works, those which are really its own and those which have been laid upon it by the Lord. Then He unites with the soul. Thus He is like the bee, and the soul like the flower in blossom.[2]

In thus speaking of karma as the factor which conditions God's grace, Hindu Bhaktas take away from man his immediate responsibility. It is true a man is held responsible in Hindu thought for his previous

[1] *Śrī-Bhāṣya* 2. 3. 41. cf. also his *Gīta-Bhāṣya* xviii. 15.
[2] *The Poems of Tāyumānavar*, with a commentary by Pūvai Kalyāna Sundara Mudaliar, Madras 1916; p. 181.

karma, but when the data for our previous karma are so doubtful and vague, such a sense of responsibility has little meaning. The evidence for former karma being of the slenderest kind, any acquiescence in its fruit becomes a kind of resignation, entirely different from the decisive attitude we take towards actions performed in this life and of whose nature we are thoroughly aware. John is extremely wise in laying stress on the fact that God's abundant grace is infinite, neither His own partiality nor man's previous karma putting any limit to His grace; what we do now is all that matters.

The first characteristic of Johannine Bhakti, then, is that it is primarily men's response to God. God is in men energizing them and illumining them. He is their life as well as their light. All of their capacities—physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual—are given by Him. He not merely gives them these capacities but abides always in them flooding them with light, so that they may make the best use of these capacities by relating them steadily and effectively towards Himself. His indwelling in men, though meant to give them a vivid perception of Himself, may not always be clear and distinct. The Light that is in man may be dim and flickering or may even be turned into darkness. It is not the fault of the Light, but the fault of the medium through which the Light shines. So this Light chose to shine fully and with all its glory and effulgence through a perfect medium—Jesus—by beholding whom we behold God perfectly. The Light in Jesus is not uncertain and dim, as in the hearts of

men, but it is full of beauty and truth. It shows men clearly the path along which they should walk.

But it is for men to decide how they will use their capacities. They may either listen to the God who is imperfectly in man but perfectly in Jesus and attain to a deeper and deeper realization of His indwelling presence, or they may stifle His voice and set out on a career of their own, using their capacities for purposes other than those for which they were really meant. By an inevitable law the choice and the deeds which follow confirm them more and more surely in the path of love and devotion to God, or in the path of self-will and destruction away from God. Not some external bond, over which man has no control, but men's inner choices and deeds make them either the sons of light or the sons of darkness. Men's response to God covers not merely one supreme moment of choice but a continuous walking in the light. This important characteristic of Bhakti places on men the main responsibility. And responsibility is at the basis of all morality and religion. It is the stuff out of which personality is formed. It is quite reasonable that the Bhakta who seeks a personal relation between man and God should start with clear convictions on this matter. If Bhakti is determined by karma for which we are not responsible, it cannot be the deep personal relation it ought to be. A river ought to be pure at its source as well as all along its course. If at the very source its waters are not clear and lucid but muddy, how can we expect it to become a refreshing stream? Therefore the Johannine idea that from the

very beginning Bhakti is man's genuine and voluntary—and therefore personal—response to God gives us a pure source. It is only such Bhakti that can deepen into a full and intimate life of fellowship with God.

CHAPTER III

THE LOVE OF GOD

Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled. This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you. Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John xv. 9–16.

The Keeping of Commandments

In the last chapter we saw that Bhakti is man's response to the God who works within the soul. We must now try to understand the nature of this response. In what way do we listen to the voice of

God within and relate ourselves to His divine purpose which He reveals by His being in us?

The words from the Fourth Gospel which form the basis of our meditation in this chapter are put into the mouth of Jesus. When these words as well as any others in the Gospel are spoken of as the words of Jesus, it should always be remembered that they are not necessarily His words reported in the exact form in which they were uttered. In this Gospel it is difficult to say how far we get the actual words of Jesus and how far the interpretation of them by the Evangelist. If the picture of Jesus given in the Synoptic Gospels is like a pencil sketch, the picture given in this Gospel is like a painting. In the first three Gospels we see the lineaments of Jesus sketched slightly, though with plenty of accuracy and feeling, but in the Fourth they are filled out and idealized by the Evangelist who did not hesitate to draw much from his own experience.

Jesus, then, as interpreted by the Evangelist, says: 'Abide ye in my love.' It has been well pointed out that 'abide in' represents John's doctrine about 'the highest and ultimate relation of the believer to God,'[1] that relation which we are describing in this book as the mystical relation. The verses immediately before our passage have spoken of the relation between Christ and His devotees in an impressive picture. Those who believe in Christ are not to remain separate from Him, functioning as best as they can, but are to

[1] Edwin A. Abbott, *Jahannine Vocabulary*, London, 1905; page 32.

be organically connected with Him. Just as the stem of a vine is intimately related to its branches, its sap and energy flowing into them, so is He closely connected with us in order that through such organic relation His life and energy may flow into us. Such a picture of intimate relation leads us to ask how we can attain it: just this question is answered in our passage: 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' Again and again we are taught in the Johannine writings to keep the commandments.[1] This means that our will should be directed so as to be in entire harmony with the will of God. Though the Evangelist often speaks of keeping the commandments, we cannot suppose that he was thinking punctiliously of a moral frame of mind which delights in obeying a law here and enforcing a prohibition there. He was too deeply influenced by Jesus and His new era of freedom and love to be in bondage to the strict legalism of ancient Israel. The Jews often supposed that religion consisted in the careful performance of a great number of duties based upon the Ten Commandments, which had been multiplied scores of times. Even in Jesus' day, religious teachers were engaged in piling on the consciences of men this immense burden of restrictions and prohibitions. But Jesus took it away and brought men under the light yoke of His own teaching. They were no longer to harass their minds with meaningless restrictions and burdensome duties but to accept His law of love: 'his commandments

[1] John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24. 1 John ii. 3–6; v. 2.

are not grievous."[1] What we need is a renewed will which seeks the things from above. If the ultimate source of our desires and actions—the will—is purified and set in its right relation to the Divine Will, then everything will be right. Thus the keeping of commandments primarily implies a new kind of activity which begins as soon as the will is placed in its right relation. If we seek to abide in God we must release the deepest energies of our soul and let them flow into the sphere of action, for as we do so we shall get nearer God. It is in decisive act and purposeful deed that we can really respond to the stirrings of the God within.

But how do we keep His commandments? What are the decisive deeds in which we express our love and loyalty to Christ? 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love. Even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.' We keep the commandments of Jesus by abiding in His love. In other words, it is in words and deeds of love that we keep His commandments. After a digression, which we shall consider in a moment, the passage continues: 'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends if ye do the things I command you.' The love of God, then, is not gushing emotion or rapturous feeling. It is not to be measured by the mental or physical symptoms which may go along with it. As Luther says with characteristic derision: 'It is sheer hypocrisy for a man to creep

[1] 1 John v. 3.

into a corner and think "Oh, I will love God, Oh, how dearly I love God, He is my Father. Oh, how affectionate I am to God," and so forth.'[1] What a slap on the face to the many who have measured the reality and the depth of their experience of God solely in terms of emotion! All over the world there have been ecstatics—particularly are they abundant among Hindu Bhaktas—who have seen signs of the God within mainly in outbursts of extraordinary emotion. If their bodies thrill with joy, their limbs move to the rhythm of music and their eyes shed copious tears, they think that God has really taken possession of them. When Luther was stirring Europe with his powerful teaching, Chaitanya was spreading Vaiṣṇavism in India by his magnetic personality and rapturous Bhakti. Though an extreme case, his life offers a marked contrast to Luther's teaching in this respect. On reciting a mystic verse, 'the Master fell down on the ground in a trance, senseless with the intensity of love. Nityananda hurriedly took Him up in his arms. Chaitanya rose weeping, and ran hither and thither in a transport of devotion, shouting, laughing, dancing and singing. Oft did He repeat the first word of the stanza, His voice choked with emotion and tears running down His cheeks. He trembled, perspired, wept with joy, stood still, changed colour—now showing remorse, now grief, now stupor, now pride or meekness. The stanza opened the gate of His love. The servitors of Gopinath gazed on the Master's outpour-

[1] Quoted in Herrmann, *Communion with God*, op. cit ; p. 280.

ing of love. But He came back to Himself on seeing a crowd gathering.'[1]

Such a method of showing one's love for God is utterly foreign to John. He does value emotion as a means of approach to God, but it should not be of an extravagant character. We need not at present discuss the larger question of the place which emotion occupies in religious experience, nor need we here ask what truth there is in the assertion of ecstatics that they see God in joy, but let us simply try to understand John's teaching on the subject. It is clear that with John the emotion that we experience in our life with God is not the rapture which is born of ecstatic worship but the steady joy which is born of devout action. The constant and close connexion in the writings of John between loving Christ and keeping His commandments should be carefully noted. This close connexion determines the character of both the factors. On the one hand, the keeping of commandments ceases to be a heavy and irksome task and is filled with love. And, on the other, love does not remain sheer emotion, as its character and intensity are constantly tested in the deeds of every-day life. The joy that comes from a steady endeavour to carry out the will of God day after day does not show itself always in paroxysms of excitement, but is mostly sober and rational. On occasions there may be great joy in doing something which is felt to be in accordance with God's will or sorrow at failure to do so. But this joy or sorrow never falls into the chaos

[1] *Chaitanya's Pilgrimages and Teachings*, translated by J. N. Sarkar, Calcutta, 1913 ; p. 21.

of emotion that accompanies ecstatic worship in song and dance.

The Mystic's Joy

But are we correct in saying that John was no ecstatic? Our very passage contains in an important digression the words: 'These things I have spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled.' Let us first recognize the fact that this element of joy is not as prominent in the writings of John as it is in those of Paul and other Christian mystics. There are indeed some passages in the Johannine writings which speak of joy,[1] but joy does not hold the important place in them that love does; how often does John come back to his theme of love! Yet passages about joy do occur in his writings and their meaning ought to be grasped.

In India the great Bhakta and philosopher, Rāmānuja, likewise did not emphasize joy. The reason for his not doing so seems to be his realization of the difficulties which a life of rapture creates. Bhakti, with Rāmānuja, is like a stream of steady flowing oil. There is no rapture, for rapture might later mean depression and gloom. The Bhakta who seeks exaltation of feeling is caught in the whirlpool of emotion. Moments of unutterable ecstacy lifting the soul to heights of bliss are followed by others which cast it down into depths of gloom. A follower of Rāmānuja

[1] John iii. 29, xvi. 24, xvii. 13; 1 John i. 4; 2 John 12.

points out that one means of attaining Bhakti is 'freedom from paroxysmal joy, for such joy is also a hindrance.'[1] It is a striking proof of the clear insight of Rāmānuja that he and his followers did not encourage the ebullitions of feeling which are so changeful and short-lived. Though John takes up a similar position, his motive seems to be different. He is afraid not so much of the rapid and ever-changing nature of emotion as of its empty character. Joy is indeed a good thing, he would say, but it must be no empty feeling. The joy that wells up in the heart of the devotee is the joy that lies in keeping the Father's commandments.

There is great delicacy of spiritual analysis in the passage. The joy that is in us is perfected by the joy of God. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled.' In India the nature of God as joy has been most clearly recognized. He is deep and unutterable joy. The whole of creation is the expression of His joy. As Kabīr says:

'The earth is His joy; His joy is the sky;
His joy is the flashing of the sun and the moon;
His joy is the beginning, the middle and the end;
His joy is eyes, darkness and light.
Oceans and waves are His joy: His joy the Sarasvati, the Jumna, and the Ganges.
The Guru is one: and life and death, union and separation are all His plays of joy.'[2]

[1] *Yatīndra-Mata-Dīpikā*, translated by A. Govindachārya Swāmin, Madras, 1912; p. 110.
[2] *Songs of Kabīr*, op. cit; p. 120.

Unlike man's joy, the joy of God does not depend upon external facts. Then His joy would have to undergo constant change, for external facts do not always remain the same. But His joy is the deep and unutterable bliss, like the calm that dwells in the bosom of the ocean, which is unaffected by any change. While external objects do not affect His joy, His joy affects external objects. All the joy which we experience from nature is really derived from Him by nature. It is His joy, so spontaneous and free and surpassing all bonds, even the bonds of karma, which abides in nature and creates endless delight in the hearts of men. The roots of this doctrine are many and cannot be discussed here. But it would be safe to say that the general tendency in Hebrew thought is to think of God as a holy and stern being who carries on the government of the world in perfect righteousness. But even against this severe background we have the idea that the sons of God shouted for joy at creation.[1] Again, we are told in Genesis: 'And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was very good.'[2] And what joy was there in Jesus! Whatever our idea of God's joy may be from our study of the Old Testament or New Testament, we cannot but be impressed by the fact that joy was an outstanding characteristic of Jesus. He fully shared in the joys of men and took part in their festivities; He was moved by the beauty of nature and the flowers spread on the Galilean hills filled His heart with poetry; His passion for friendship and His

[1] Job xxxviii. 7. [2] Genesis i 31.

life of continual service must have further increased His joy. In Jesus we understand how the keeping of commandments could be a source of joy. He ever lived in the spirit of oneness with the Father; to do the Father's will was His meat and drink and His whole being was filled with joy on that account. There was nothing of the ecstatic in Jesus. He was not filled with rapture one moment, struggling to let out the emotion which came in a flood from His inner self and in the next, feeling bitterly the drought which followed such a flood. Neither were longer periods of joy followed by periods of despondency, when His soul sank in the darkness of the night. But a calm and steady joy always lit up His countenance and helped Him to continue every moment His ministry to the men who were suffering in body and soul. Now the joy of Jesus fulfils and perfects man's joy: 'That my joy may be in you and that your joy may be fulfilled.' Jesus is an exalted being who insists on the highest purity and the utmost service from us, but He also dwells in us and if we abide in His love in word and deed, a steady and constant stream of His joy will flow into our hearts from moment to moment. Our own joy will be flooded with this divine joy.[1]

The Importance of Knowledge

Our passage continues: 'No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what His Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made

[1] cf. John xvii. 13.

known unto you.' We are to love one another because Christ has revealed unto us what He has heard from the Father and we know what our Lord doeth. Our knowledge is not attained by a course of painful or severe reasoning; it is given to us. We do not always grope in the dark nor do we arrive at conclusions only by putting together this with that; we are also told what we ought to know. The Divine Christ illumines us and pours into our souls floods of light. We are not like servants who are simply bidden to serve but are not told why. Their duty is simply to obey, not to understand. If they ask questions or seek to understand why they are bidden to do certain things, they will be rebuked and regarded as impertinent. And often they are not even interested in finding out the reasons for the commands given them. Their loyalty is not deep enough to demand such a knowledge, for full understanding is asked for only when there is full love. But Christ and His devotees are like friends who fully know each other's hearts. God is beyond our understanding, and yet His love has unveiled His heart to us and we see some at least of its workings. When there is genuine love, knowledge is imparted even before it is asked for. And such knowledge, spontaneously given, has a fulness which is quite different from the poverty of the knowledge which is reached by the highest flight of the intellect. This does not, however, mean that the intellect ceases to work. For understanding and turning into practice this divine knowledge, which is so generously given, it has to put forth its utmost capacity. Though put in

an extreme form, there is a great deal of truth in the words of Rāmakrishna Paramahaṁsa: 'Knowledge and love of God are ultimately one and the same. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.'[1]

The Response of the Whole Man to God

It will thus be seen that in responding to God we are taught fully to exercise our will, feeling and thought. By this it is not implied that St. John expresses in the passage quoted above exactly the ideas of a modern psychologist about the mind of man. The account already given makes it sufficiently clear to us that if we are to abide in God and to respond effectively to the stirrings of His limitless grace within, we must do so with our entire being. If our response is to be real, no part of our personality can be left out. Only thus can our union with Christ become genuine. When do we say that there is an ideal fellowship between a father and his son? It is only when the son conforms to the will of his father and does what his father bids him do. So long as the son makes an effort to translate into action the wishes of his father, so long will he be one with his father. Such conformity in action is not, however, everything. Unless there is love, it might be external and mechanical. It is only when the son is filled with love for his father and does with real joy what his father wants him to do, that he can be said to be one with his father. And such love is not possible unless there is knowledge with it. In fact where there

[1] F. Max Müller, *Rāmakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, London, 1899; p. ix.

is love, there will be knowledge also. A son instinctively understands his father if he loves him and the father also shows the workings of his heart to his son. The fellowship of a son with his father, then, consists in obedience and love and knowledge. If the son says that he understands all that his father wants him to do and yet does not carry out in practice what he thus understands, or if he says that the thought of his father fills him with joy and yet does not seem really to understand him, we say that there is something wrong in the relationship between them. Only when he carries out the desires of his father, finding love and joy in such conduct, and understanding the reasons for his father's wishes, can he be said to be one with his father. Such an ideal relationship often breaks down in human life and raises all sorts of perplexing questions about personality and freedom and yet it is quite important to bear it in mind for we shall find in it the key which will unlock much of Johannine thought.[1]

The order of importance assigned in this passage to will, feeling and thought is evident throughout the Johannine writings. Is it not the natural order? Let us take again John's favourite illustration of a father and his son. In extremely early life, the son is only taught to obey and he obeys, not knowing the reason why. Even if the father sought to explain the reason, it would be beyond the little boy's understanding. Though he does not know why he has done a certain thing which his father has told him to do, he knows,

[1] Cf. W. R. Inge, *Faith and Its Psychology*, New York, 1915; p. 23. R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel, Its Significance, and Environment*, p. 14.

however young he may be, that he has pleased his father by doing it and this knowledge gives him real joy. As the son grows in years and in understanding, the father explains to him the reasons for his asking him to do certain things and then loving obedience becomes intelligent conformity with the father's will. This is repeated in the religious life—first obedience without understanding though with love and joy and then only the knowledge which explains and illumines.

Again, the emphasis laid in this passage on the will is thoroughly characteristic of John. Love and joy are in a sense determined by the will. Our love consists in keeping the commandments of Jesus; it does not merely enjoy itself in ecstacy, but is connected with action. Joy too is no aesthetic rapture but comes from keeping His commandments. Yet again, the knowledge spoken of here is not speculation but the knowledge which is necessary for the doing of our duty. Thus a man's will, which is obedient to the Father's will, is like a sober charioteer driving the chariot of Bhakti and having well under control the powerful horses of feeling and reason. Endless have been the instances in which, in the absence of the charioteer, emotion has gone out of control and brought the chariot to ruin. Our own country provides innumerable examples of Bhaktas who have been ruined by emotion. To them a life in God has meant rich ecstacy and exuberant rapture. For this they have lived and worked in a world of their own, cutting themselves off from the terrible and urgent needs of the men around. But when they have set out on their

course the powerful animal they have yoked to their chariot has played havoc with them, and they have come down broken and exhausted.[1] There have been other Bhaktas who have been likewise led into trouble by reason. They have had the mistaken notion that their life in God consists in study and meditation. Study has become scholastic discipline and meditation has developed into speculation. Instead of knowing any better the God whom they set out to reach, they spend their time in accumulating useless knowledge which only serves to fill their mind with pride but does not reveal the God whom they wish to worship. With great wisdom, therefore, John insists upon bringing our feeling and reason under the strong and restraining influence of the Father's will.

Personality in Hindu Bhakti Literature

In Hindu literature also Bhakti is the going forth of one's whole personality to God. A great many Bhaktas have certainly been inclined to attach too much importance to the emotions, while a few have come too exclusively under the power of the intellect. But, speaking in general terms, we may say that Bhakti is not merely intellectual meditation on God nor a rapturous emotional experience of Him nor a steadying of the will to draw near Him. It is all these together, though necessarily the terms used by the

[1] See M. T. Kennedy, *The Chaitanya Movement*, Calcutta, 1925 ; p. 50, 88, 244, cf. Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley*, Oxford, 1925 ; vol. i. pp. 189–217.

Hindu writers do not wholly correspond to the western terms—thought, feeling and will.

The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* thus lays down the ideal for a Bhakta:

'Whatever he does with the body or the tongue or the mind or the senses or the intellect or the nature which is in accordance with his self, he must consecrate it all to the Supreme Nārāyaṇa.'[1]

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* says:

'He who offers to me with Bhakti leaf, flower, fruit, water, that, offered with Bhakti, I accept from the sure self.

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give, whatever penance you do, O Kaunteya, do all that as an offering to me.'[2]

The Tamil poet, Appar, sings:

'Our body is the shrine and the firm mind the devotee.
We have cleansed the shrine with truth.
And erected God, the jewel of our mind, as the image.
With love as ghee and milk made into a dainty dish,
We have worshipped Him.'[3]

It is evident from these verses that Bhakti involves the whole man. If we ask the early Tamil Bhaktas, who lived before Rāmānuja and the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, what they mean by Bhakti and what they do when they

[1] *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, xi. 2-36.
[2] *Bhagavad-Gītā* ix. 26-27.
[3] Appar: 'Kāyame Koyil.'

practise Bhakti, they will not say that they simply wait until God enters their soul filling it with joy and bliss, nor will they say that they sing and dance until He enters them, but they will say: 'We have a longing to draw near Him. That longing is planted in our souls by God himself. With His help we think of Him, steadily and constantly and with deep love, in order to realize that longing. As we do so, He enters our souls. We keep meditating on Him if He is to remain in us. His dwelling in our hearts brings with it joy and light and freedom from impurity and release from the ever-recurring cycle of births and deaths. And we sing and dance filled with rapture because of this experience.' Song and dance are not regarded as the means by which God is inducted into the souls of these Bhaktas as they were among the dervishes and the ancient Hebrew 'sons of the prophets.' If they had been so regarded we might suspect that the Bhaktas' experience of God was primarily an emotion; but they are rather the outward expression of that experience.

Thought certainly plays an important part in Bhakti. The Tamil Bhaktas constantly tell us that they have 'held Him fast with their minds.' They speak of him sometimes as entering their will (cittam), their heart (neñjam), their innermost heart (ullam), but more often do they speak of Him as dwelling in their understanding (unarvu), mind (cintai), intellect (pundi) or thought (eṇṇam).[1]

[1] It is very difficult to give the exact English equivalents of these Tamil psychological terms.

The Bhaktas give feeling its due weight. The term Tēvāram, the name applied to the collection of Tamil Śaiva Hymns by Jñānasambandar, Appar and Sundarar, has by some been interpreted to mean 'that which awakens love for God.' 'Nothing matters but love' says Appar in a significant hymn.[1] Here is a striking passage recalling St. Paul's hymn on love in 1st Corinthians xiii:

> 'The bones may be used as firewood and the flesh cut up and roasted on fire until it becomes aglow like gold.
>
> 'Yet except for those who melt with love and are stirred in the depths of their soul, the Jewel, resplendent like the Sun, is impossible of attainment.'[2]

In Hindu Bhakti literature we do not find many references to what may be termed the activities of the will. This is no doubt to be explained by the deep-rooted Hindu conviction that the will is to be entirely suppressed as it is the creator of desires and consequently of actions and so of births in which the actions are to be enjoyed. And yet in their endeavour to draw near to God the Bhaktas do seek to steady their thoughts, to control their senses and to eliminate their passions. In spite of frequent failures they pursue the mystic quest, and this implies that their will has been educated and that they are not always helplessly driven to and fro by their strong mystic feelings.

[1] 'Tanalatu ulaga milai.'
[2] Tirumular, 'Enbē Virahāi.'

Personality but not Egoism

In the religious books of our country the danger of egotism is frequently and forcibly asserted. It is often pointed out that the root of many of our troubles is this sense of 'I' and 'mine.' Now if Bhakti means an exercise of our personality in our communion with God, the result may be the strengthening of this sense of the ego. If we respond to God using our will, feeling and thought, as John asks us to do, we may be led to develop our ego, which will be a grave mistake. But the passage which we are studying points out three different ways in which the sense of personality may be kept under discipline and not allowed to develop into an ego in the ignoble sense. It is necessary to draw near to God using fully all the will, feeling and thought we have, but this does not mean that we are to be slaves to them.

The first way is explained in the words: 'This is my commandment that ye love one another even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.' There are occasions when even love, the greatest and highest of human achievements, can degenerate into something ignoble. Love can become self-love. We may love because of the joy which it gives us. But selfish love will be impossible if we lay to heart the profound teaching of Jesus. A man should even lay down his life for his friends as Jesus Himself did. When we realize this, we shall find that love will be purified of all selfish taint. If we can impress upon our

minds the teaching of Jesus, repeated all through the New Testament, that love's end is not selfish enjoyment but its readiness to help and suffer and even die, there will never be any danger of its strengthening the claims of a false ego.

The next way is through the conviction that our call comes, not from any special merit on our part, but from God's working in the soul. 'Ye did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.' If there is any reason for us to think that it is we who first awoke out of the lethargy or indifference and resolved to seek God, unlike millions who are sunk in worldly life, we may easily begin to have a false sense of our own importance. But the real truth must be writ large in our souls that it is God's grace which awakens in us a love for Himself. Then we shall be constantly led to contemplate the grace of God, who has loved us without any thought of our own worthiness or goodness. A constant recollection of this fact will fill our souls with a humility which will purge us of everything that is ignoble or selfish.

The third way is also explained here. 'Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.' There is a natural and logical development of thought in our passage which reaches its climax in this verse. The fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of John seems to make the bearing of

fruit the great end of the life in Christ. With such graphic power is this truth unfolded that we are led to think that the bearing of fruit is the final bliss of the life that is lived in Christ. But this verse seems to point to something higher still. We have been chosen to bear fruit in order that our fruit may abide and that whatsoever we ask of the Father He may give it to us. There seems to be then something beyond and higher than the bearing of fruit and that is the readiness to ask of God and to receive from Him whatsoever we want.

In the theory and practice of Mysticism petition has always been regarded as belonging to a lower stage of spiritual development than communion. With remarkable unanimity mystics have taught that to ask God for this gift and that is not of the highest form of religion. If we have a friend we should not think of troubling him with requests everytime we met him. He would get tired of us and our friendship with him would evaporate for we should always be thinking of what we could get from him and not of him. It is only when we can find joy in God, apart from anything He may give us or do for us, that our life with Him can be of the highest type. This experience of the mystics seems to need some such correction as that of John who teaches that even in the highest stage of mystic experience, we have to realize the infinite difference that exists between us and God, and to depend on Him for what we need. This dependence appears to be the mark of all the stages of the religious life including the highest. There have been some mystics who have looked forward to absorption in God. But here we are

taught that on the contrary the distinction between God and man continues with full force, especially in the form of man's dependence on God.

The Continuation of Personality Necessary

Suppose we are travelling to a city which we have never seen, we begin to make inferences about its soil, its climate, its vegetation and so forth from what we see on the way. Even before we actually get into the city, we come to have some knowledge of what it will be like from an observation of what its immediate neighbourhood is. An exact knowledge of the city can be obtained only within its limits, but even from data collected on the way we may come to know some reliable facts about it. So from the nature of Bhakti we can make inferences about the final bliss to which it will lead us, though they can be tested and confirmed only by experience.

Bhakti, as we have seen, is the offering of our whole personality to God. It is not a cult of personality. We do not follow it in order to develop our thought, enrich our feeling or strengthen our will. But in practising Bhakti we are enriched and strengthened along all these lines. This development and enrichment is not a momentary experience but is continuous with every act of Bhakti. Now we ask: Will this development suddenly stop? Is it possible that this personality, which has been developing so gradually and steadily, will cease to be in a moment? Is it not rather possible that so long as Bhakti continues,

the development of the personality will also continue? And every devotee is convinced that the movement of his soul towards God in love and service implied in Bhakti will always continue. With characteristic fervour Hindu saints have prayed that their Bhakti should continue in all the births and deaths through which their souls may pass. And Christian saints pray that they may love God and continue to be in communion with Him through all eternity.

But it may be said: We know that the body develops day by day. Stores of inexhaustible strength seem to be laid up in it; we sometimes almost marvel at the vitality which it contains. But there comes a day when the strongest man begins to fail and the stores of his energy disappear. Something similar may happen to personality. Though it is true that with every act of Bhakti, our personality becomes richer and stronger, yet after reaching a certain stage it may disappear. The answer to this is that it is not reasonable to apply to the soul all that we know of the body. In several matters, which are within the range of our immediate and definite knowledge, the soul differs widely from the body. We need not, then, suppose that after a certain stage personality will rather mysteriously cease to be, as physical strength does.

Even if this argument may appear to some to be of doubtful value, the question remains: What is the object of following God with all that we have? As has been just pointed out, we do not aim at the sheer exercise of our personality. The supreme concern of the mystical life is the realization of God. It is in

order that this realization may be complete that we offer all we have. There is no merit attached to such wholesale surrender of ourselves. It is only when we bring to God all we have that we can possibly experience Him to the full and not when we lose our personality or anything attached to it. If it is true that here and now our enjoyment of God is possible only after a full devotion of our personality, can it possibly be that there will come a stage when such experience will be possible with anything less? Day by day we experience the living Christ, this experience determining all the manifold activities of our being. Our thoughts are continually enriched and purified with the vision which He unfolds of God's unutterable glory. This vision changes all life for us and teaches us its real meaning. And we are provided with the moral energy which we need to overcome sin and to live a life of purity and service. The world loses its charm and we are constantly being led away from its strange deceits to the realm of character. And such a life fills us with joy and love and peace that are unspeakably beautiful. Beginning to serve God and man, our hearts are lifted up and our souls are garrisoned with the peace that comes from on high. It cannot therefore be that the personality which is necessary even in the initial stages of our experience can ever cease to be. Even in final bliss we shall continue to be separate from God and to depend upon Him for all that we need in humility and helplessness and whatsoever we ask of him in his name he will give it us.'

CHAPTER IV

THE LOVE OF MAN

Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man hath beheld God at any time ; if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us : hereby know we that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love : and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgement ; because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love : but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment : and he that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a

liar : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 John iv. 7–21.

We have already seen two important characteristics of Bhakti as taught by John. Bhakti is primarily man's response to God, who out of His abundant love awakens the longing for Himself, and it consists in loving Him and enjoying His fellowship with our whole personality. In this chapter we shall proceed to study another characteristic of Johannine Bhakti. The man who has Bhakti should love not only God but also man. The love of man is the only way in which the love of God can really and adequately find expression. Without the love of man, the love of God is nothing but a meaningless expression. While the love for God is like a mountain stream, flowing through lonely heights, beautiful to behold but for the time useless, love for man is like the same stream when it has come down to the plains, broad and large and peaceful, furnishing men with the water which is the very essence of life, patiently allowing boats with their cargo to ply to and fro on its ample bosom and calling out magic green in the fields.

Love and Life

But how can our love of man ever become the means through which we may love God ? Are not love of God and love of man entirely separate, the former belonging

to the realm of religion and the latter to that of philanthropy? John answers this question with striking insight and power in the passage which we study in this chapter. The first answer which he gives is that there is an intimate connexion between love and life. 'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God.' These words seem to point to the fact that much of John's thought on the relation between love and life is based on an experience which is familiar to every one. Love begets life and life responds with love. It is through love that life is born and the life which thus comes into being naturally responds with love. It is not necessary to point out here the wisdom of this close connexion between love and life except to say that it is the foundation of all life. Not only does the child love his father and mother but he loves also his brothers and sisters. Of all human relationships those of the family circle are the strongest. It may be said that the strength and character of these relationships depend partly on environment. A child who has never seen his father and mother does not love them. While this is true, it is also true that as his knowledge of his father and mother grows, he loves them with a passion which no strange child can possess. There seems to be in him closely connected with his inmost life some hidden instinct, which responds to love, though it needs the help of environment to bring it out.

Now, some such intimate connexion exists in John's mind as to the relation between God and His children. The line of John's argument seems to be this. Out of

great love God sent Christ into the world that men may attain life through Him. 'Herein was the love of God manifested in us that God sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him.'[1] And when men attain life through God's love, they love not merely the God who has given them life but love the brethren who likewise have received life through His love. This idea finds clear expression in the words: 'We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'[2]

John's conviction that love is related to man's very being makes us understand why he so often speaks of men as being begotten of God. The relation between man and God is no temporary, outward or superficial one. It is founded on life itself. Men are not merely created by God, they are begotten by Him. The expression 'created' does not, apparently, convey all the intimacy and fulness of the relation between man and God and is therefore replaced by the stronger expression 'begotten.' It is not by chance that the Fourth Gospel which speaks so much of love speaks also of life. How different is the attitude of a painter towards his painting from that towards his child! However close the connexion between him and his painting, it can never be as close as that between him

[1] Compare also John x. 10–17. [2] 1 John iii. 14–16.

and his child. The painting expresses his mind and is a part of his being and yet it cannot hold that vital relation to him which his child holds.

In the Śaiva-Siddhānta the thought that love is fundamentally related to life is expressed, though in a different way. The grace of Śiva orders that the human soul should take embodiment in order that it may get rid of its bonds. Thus all life springs from the abounding love of Śiva.

Tirumūlar sings:

'Born in love, growing up in love,
Merging and resting and hiding in love,
Fed with the precious ambrosia of the love which is bliss,
My lord has entered my heart in love.'[1]

The great Tamil Bhakta of the nineteenth century, Rāmalinga Swāmi, has written a beautiful essay on the love of man which might well be regarded as a Hindu paraphrase of the Johannine teaching about love. The thoughts are given such an entirely different setting from Christian teaching and fit in so closely with the Śaiva-Siddhānta doctrine that, even if he made use of any ideas from Christian sources, as well he might have, his essay appears as quite a natural and logical exposition of the teaching already inherent in Śaiva-Siddhānta. In this essay he says with his usual vigour:

'As the love of man is the natural light of the soul, the light of God, whether internal or external, can never shine in those individuals who do not possess this natural light. What is the chief characteristic of

[1] Tirumūlar, 'Aruḷil Pirantiṭṭu.'

the love of man? All souls are not only finite beings existing in the absolute Reality, but they are also intimately related to divine and self-luminous love, which manifests itself in them as the intellect of their intellect. Bodies evolved from the elements are necessary in order that these souls may develop into individuals. If these souls do not develop into individuals in such bodies, the light of these souls will be hidden and there will be no illumination of love; then there will be ignorance and that will lead to the bondage of souls. For this reason bodies evolved from the elements are necessary. And as matter is the original cause of physical bodies, the varied phenomena connected with matter such as hunger, thirst, sickness, lust, poverty, fear and murder frequently tend to ruin these bodies. But love has endowed individuals with the gift of self-existing power which, with the knowledge which they have received from the internal and external senses, will enable them to ward off most carefully and diligently these attacks.'[1]

All the passages in John's writings on the intimate connexion between love and life do not, however, refer to the physical analogy. In some of the verses in which such a connexion is implied, the reason in John's mind for the connexion is not at all clear.[2] Is it too much to suggest that having once connected the two in his mind as a result of observing well-known physical facts, he went on to speak of them together in a much wider

[1] Rāmalinga Swāmi, *Jīva Kāruṇya Oḻukkam*, Madras, 1923; page 13.
[2] John x. 17; xii. 25.

sense, not always keeping the original reason in mind? Another set of facts seems also to have provided John with the idea that life and love are fundamentally connected. The good shepherd who loves his sheep has sometimes to lay down his life in order to protect them from the fury of wild beasts and to save their life.[1] A man may out of great love—greater love does not exist—lay down his life to save the life of his friend.[2] Thus does Christ out of His abundant love lay down His life for us.

God Cannot Be Seen But Man Can

The second answer which John gives is this. 'No man hath beheld God at any time: If we love one another, God abideth in us.' 'If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.' Here John emphasizes a motive which has played a great part in the history of Mysticism. To see God has been the greatest longing of the mystics and some systems of mystical philosophy like that of Plotinus have made the vision of God the climax of all experience.

Nammāḻvār, for instance, sings:

'As thou dost not come to see me, my eyes and mouth are dry.
And thy servant is ashamed. I pine with this good desire.

[1] John x. 11. [2] John xv. 13.

Will you not take pity on me and come and see me just once?'[1]

In the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Arjuna listens with eager heart to the teaching of Kṛṣṇa but there comes a moment when he longs to see Kṛṣṇa in his exalted form. It is not enough for Arjuna to hear; he must also see. Arjuna wants teaching to proceed to its supreme climax, the beatific vision.[2] Thus have several other devout souls longed and prayed.

In laying the emphasis on this motive John awakens a quick response in many an eager soul. He seems to say: You want to see God. You think it is the greatest experience you can have. For this you are earnestly striving. Now let me tell you that you cannot see God. But you *can* see your fellowmen and it is your duty to love them. What is the use of saying that you love God whom you have not seen when you continue in not loving the men whom you have seen? This teaching, coming from a lover of God like John, gains immensely in significance. It would sound more natural if it had come from someone who believed in man more than in God. But such a strong believer in the reality of God as John is driven to teach that there is no means of reaching God as effective as the love of man.

It should be noted that this is only the heightening of an idea which has already found expression more than once in our passage. 'Everyone that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God.' The motive for loving man is stated

[1] *Tiru-vōi-moḷi*, 8. 5. 2. [2] *Bhagavad-Gītā*, xi. 1–4.

here with double emphasis, first from the positive point of view and then from the negative. He only knows God who loves but he does not know Him who does not love.

This argument would only appeal to those who want to know God and to see Him. Then what about the millions who are neither anxious to know Him nor to see him? And yet many of them love men truly and with great intensity. If they are exhorted to serve men from humanitarian motives, they may respond quickly and effectively.

It may again be asked: Is there not something of intrinsic worth in human nature which calls for human love? Man as man deserves sympathy and love. Should he be loved only for spiritual motives?

Yet again, is not suffering deep enough and intense enough by itself to call for sympathy without our being influenced in any way by religious motives? The agony and intense suffering which disease causes in men tend to arouse the strongest of human emotions even in hearts which are normally barred against the entrance of feeling. The suffering caused by poverty and showing itself in rags, care-worn faces and withered limbs does not fail to strike a chord of sympathy in men's hearts. It is not merely physical suffering of this kind which stirs sympathy but also mental and spiritual suffering. There are men who are forced to pass every moment of their lives in sorrow because of the vicissitudes of fortune for which they are in no way responsible, or because of the treachery, falsehood and deceit of their friends and neighbours, or because

of some weakness in their own character. Separation or misfortune or death has sent the iron into their souls and their lives are embittered to the end of their days. Do not these men deserve to be loved for no other reason than that their suffering is great?

Let us answer these questions in the light of the life of Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels we often read that Jesus was moved with compassion. Sometimes this compassion was aroused by the sight of hungry multitudes who in their eagerness to hear His teaching thronged around Him in lonely places forgetting their food.[1] On other occasions His heart was moved by the sight of leprosy[2] or blindness.[3] When the only son[4] of the widow of Nain was carried on his bier to his last resting place, the mother bewailing her loss with anguish, Jesus was touched with compassion.[5] On one occasion He was moved deeply by the spiritual needs of the multitudes who were scattered like sheep without a shepherd and began to minister to them.[6] On another occasion He was moved by the sight of multitudes who were without any spiritual guidance, and He exhorted His disciples to pray for them.[7]

There is in the Gospel of John a curious absence of any reference to Jesus being moved by such compassion.[8] There are at least three occasions on which such a reference might well have been made. In the records

[1] Mark viii. 2; Matthew xv. 32.
[2] Mark i. 41.
[3] Matthew xx. 34.
[4] Mark v. 19.
[5] Luke vii. 13.
[6] Mark vi. 34.
[7] Matthew ix. 36.
[8] See, however, John xi. 33–35.

of the healing of the palsied man and of the man born blind, there is no statement that Jesus was deeply moved. This may not mean much, but the fact that there is no record of emotion in Jesus in the account of the feeding of the five thousand calls for an explanation. The Synoptic writers have in this matter probably got nearer the heart of Jesus than John. There is no reason to suppose that they were simply writing from imagination. From all that we know of Jesus we are sure He was deeply moved by suffering. When John fails to notice the fact it must be due to some special characteristic of his thought. We may perceive what it is from the Johannine term 'signs' which is often used to describe the miracles of Jesus. In the mind of John the miracles of Jesus were first and foremost signs of His divine glory. They were indications to men of His exaltation and greatness. Through them His glory was revealed. When this point of view is so prominent in the mind of John, it is not at all surprising that he neglects the human emotions which such suffering is sure to have aroused in the tender heart of our Lord. As we read the accounts of the miracles in the Fourth Gospel we do not feel, as we do in the Synoptic Gospels, that the sight of suffering, physical or spiritual, led Jesus instinctively to perform them. We feel that He is more concerned to insist on His high mission than to relieve the suffering of men. The story of the raising of Lazarus needs to be carefully considered in this connexion. As we shall see later, the deep love which Jesus had for Lazarus and his sisters came

into conflict with His normal sense of His own mission and work. When He heard of the sickness of Lazarus, He at once thought of it as an opportunity for a manifestation of His glory. But when He went to Bethany and was besieged by the tears of the sisters of Lazarus, His generally calm awareness of His mission was overwhelmed with the floods of human emotion which rushed into His soul in a torrent. In that story we do not find a tranquil seer, undisturbed by the sight of sorrow and concerned only with God and His work. We have rather someone in whom this exalted sense of devotion to God is increased and intensified by the stress of the deepest of human emotions.

Whom Should We Love?

After accepting the teaching that the love of God should be expressed through the love of man, we are led to ask: Who are the people whom we should love? To this John replies: 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the son of God, God abideth in him and he in God'. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus commands us to love *all* men, Samaritan schismatics, the military officers of an alien government, publicans and sinners. In the Fourth Gospel this love is strictly confined to the brethren, the members of the Christian Church.[1] John's devotion to Christ is so exclusive that his love naturally extends only to those who like him are devoted to Christ and not to others. While his

[1] H. J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie*, Tübingen, 1911; Vol. ii. p. 435.

deepest love is spontaneously given to fellow Christians he is ready to show kindness to others. Yet there is in the Johannine writings a strain of universal love as well as a strain of particular love. Apart from the statement, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life' and other verses already quoted [1], we read that Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman and generously taught her some of the profoundest truths which He has revealed to men. The Greeks came to Him and He explained to them His Gospel. The conclusion we come to then is that John loves others also but reserves his best and most devoted love for his fellow believers.

Do the Hindu Bhaktas love those who do not worship their God? They are quite anxious that they also should enter into their joy by worshipping their God. Many are the fervent hymns addressed to outsiders, begging them to leave other gods or the absorbing and deceitful cares of the world and to worship the true God. The early Tamil hymns were sung in the midst of conflicts, often bitter, between different religions in South India —Jainism, Buddhism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism—and betray many traces of the hatred generated during such conflicts. Śaiva saints, for instance, often ridicule the Jains and Buddhists.

But the Bhaktas loved deeply their fellow devotees, indeed so deeply that they often did away with the restrictions of caste in dealing with them. The story of the noble fight which the Bhaktas, inspired with

[1] See pp. 50, 51.

love, fought in order to level down the distinctions of caste among their fellow devotees is an impressive chapter in India's religious history. Though the privileges they fought for were only the giving of the same teaching to all, and not removal of the other caste restrictions, they showed a manly courage and a bold faith. We quote here a striking verse from Appar:

'Some may give me boundless treasures.
They may grant me dominion over earth and heaven.
And yet if they are not absolutely devoted to the great Lord, we shall regard not their wealth; they will be ruined.
But they may be lepers with all their limbs decaying and rotting.
Or wretches who strip cows and meanly eat their flesh.
If they only love Śiva, who hid the Ganges in his long-braided hair, know ye, they are the gods whom we worship.'[1]

Chaitanya said:

'Be he a Brahman, be he a hermit, be he even a Śūdra—if he knows Kṛṣṇa's mysteries, he is a guru.'[2]

Tukārām, himself a Śūdra, sings:

'Our Lord knows nothing of high or low birth: He stops wherever he sees devotion and faith.'

[1] Appar, 'Sanga nithi.'
[2] *Chaitanya's Pilgrimages and Teachings*, op. cit; p. 71.

And again:

'A Vaiṣṇava is one who loves God alone, his caste may be anything at all.' [1]

The love for fellow devotees becomes strongest between teachers and diciples. Many and touching are the stories told of the love with which the Hindu Bhaktas loved their gurus or their disciples. Rāmachandra, the Bengali Bhakta, left his wife and became a disciple of Narōttama. His wife wrote several letters begging him to come back to her, but they produced no effect upon him. Then she wrote to Narōttama who after much trouble persuaded him to go home. With reluctance he set off home and travelled for about half a day. But the vision of the evening service and the figure of his guru joining in it rose before his mind so impressively that he retraced his steps to his guru. [2]

Bhakti and the Family

When we think of human love we think first of the love we give to our own relations and friends. What is the teaching of the Johannine writer about this love? It is significant that in this Gospel we have frequent reference to the disciple whom Jesus loved. From the other Gospels we know that Jesus had many disciples and that of these He had an intimate circle of twelve and that among these twelve there were three who were the special objects of His love and confidence.

[1] J. N. Fraser and J. F. Edwards, *The Life and Teaching of Tukaram*, Madras, 1922; p. 162.
[2] Sen, *Vaiṣṇava Literature*, p. 149.

This Gospel goes further and tells us that there was one among them who in a special measure gained the love of Jesus.[1]

Again, it is in the Fourth Gospel that we have the touching story of the love which Jesus had for Lazarus and his sisters. The details in the narrative of the raising of Lazarus indicate significantly the deep love of Jesus for this family.[2] When Lazarus was sick, his sisters sent Jesus the message that he whom He loved was sick. This news He received with a strange and mysterious thoughtfulness which reflected the importance the event had for His career and mission. Then He resolved boldly to go and see Lazarus in Judæa even though the disciples remonstrated and pointed out that only recently the Jews there had sought to stone Him. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha and then Mary welcomed Him with an eagerness and devotion which showed the intensity of their love. When He saw Mary weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. This agitation apparently increased when He went to the grave; for it is recorded that He wept. This tender expression of His love immediately impressed the bystanders who said, 'Behold, how he loved him!' These details are recorded in the Gospel most vividly. From them we may well infer the existence of a continued friendship as passionate, as selfless and as great as any known in history.

Once again, it is this Gospel which tells us of the care with which Jesus entrusted His mother to the beloved

[1] John xiii. 23; xix. 26; xx. 2, 7, 20. [2] John xi. 1–44.

disciple while He Himself was hanging on the cross in the midst of the greatest agony. The few words which Jesus uttered while He was on the cross impress us by their wide range. The great soul He was, He forgave His enemies fully in that supreme crisis, an act which has gained a place in the hearts of all men for its unbounded generosity and supreme nobility. He spoke of that mission of His which He had carried out with such zeal in His lifetime and told His Father that it was now complete. Along with these exalted thoughts He had a loving and devoted care for His mother. Neither His high idealism which led Him to think of others even in most painful circumstances nor His sense of His high destiny and of the importance of His mission, obliterated from His mind the love which He had for His mother. Shown on this occasion and under these circumstances the love of Jesus for His mother is revealed with a force which can never be forgotten.

The Bhakti poets must have known much of the rapture of human love. They use as symbols the normal relations in life to describe their relation to God. He is their Father, their Mother, their Beloved, their Kinsman. Surely if these relationships had not meant anything to them, they would not have used them as symbols to express the deepest facts of their experience. The use of these symbols must in its turn have reacted upon their life. The sight of father, mother or brother, if it called up thoughts of their beloved Deity, must surely have been pleasing to them. We know, for instance, of the deep love

which existed between Appar and his sister. But the chief fact remains that they regarded normal human relationships as hindrances to the perfect worship of their God. Many hymns pour contempt on family ties :

'I am caught in the tangle of supporting my children and wedded wife, who have merely physical wants.

I follow not the mighty Lord nor understand the virtue of penance.'[1]

Rāmānuja renounced his wife and left his home. Chaitanya would not go back to his mother, though he always spoke with profound love of her.[2] A legend tells us how when Sundarar was about to be married, Śiva himself came down as a Brahman to the wedding house and put an end to the wedding. There is another strange legend which may be related here. After the wedding festivities of Jñāna-Sambandar were over, he thought within himself, 'Behold, I am entangled in the coils of a family! But with this woman will I attain Śiva,' and accompanied by the numerous wedding guests went to a temple of Śiva. The gracious Śiva appeared to him and said : 'Enter thou into this glory—thou, thy wife, and all those who have come to witness thy wedding.' Śiva then became a vast luminous glory, encompassing the temple. Jñāna-Sambandar, with his wife and the numerous wedding guests, entered into this glory and became one with Śiva. This legend reflects the conviction that a human marriage may be a distinct obstacle to a life of

[1] Appar, 'Makkale mananda.'

[2] Sen, *Chaitanya and His Companions*, Calcutta 1917 ; p. 31.

mystic fellowship and should be somehow transformed into union with the Divine.

The Meaning of Love in John

The account which has been given in this and the preceding chapter of the Johannine doctrine of love will be incomplete without a reference to the subtle but nevertheless real distinction which exists between two different kinds of love. The English word love is used to translate two different Greek words, *agapaō* and *phileō*. There has been much discussion as to the exact shade of significance implied in these words. The word *agapaō* seems to indicate the love which arises from esteem and reverence, whereas the word *phileō* seems to indicate the natural and spontaneous affection which comes by instinct. One may be called reverent love and the other natural affection. It should be noted that the New Testament prefers the former word for describing our love to God using it one hundred and thirty-eight times, whereas the latter word is used in the sense of natural affection only twenty-two times, of which thirteen occur in the Gospel of John. Five of these are found in the account of the meeting of Jesus and Peter after the resurrection. Jesus said to Peter, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' using the more dignified expression. This question addressed to Peter after the cowardly way in which he had denied Jesus is pointed. All along Peter had stood out as being devoted to Jesus and had impulsively declared the strength of his faith and love. But at the time of the crucifixion he had denied even a knowledge of his

Lord. Jesus, therefore, wanting to correct him asked him whether he still loved Him, putting into that love that esteem and veneration which he had declared before. The beaten and disappointed Peter gives up all his original impulsiveness and eagerness to claim for himself utter devotion and says in all humility, 'Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. It may not be the reverent and exalted love which thy dignity demands but it is given spontaneously and I love thee with all my heart.' Jesus again asked him the same question and Peter again gave the same answer. Jesus asked a third time taking Peter at his word: 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? You say you love me with that instinctive love which goes forth spontaneously from one heart to another. Is that at least true?' Peter was grieved and could only falter in reply: 'Lord Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee.' Peter still claims that the love which he bears to Jesus may not be of that exalted kind which he ought to show Him. But it is certainly as sincere and as spontaneous as the affection which exists between man and man.[1] It is significant that in speaking of the love of Jesus for Lazarus the sisters of Lazarus use the word which indicates natural affection.[2] It looks as if Jesus instinctively loved Lazarus and gave him of His friendship. The Jews also described the love which Jesus had for Lazarus by the same word.[3] Again Jesus loved the beloved disciple with this natural affection.[4] There was apparently in

[1] John xxi. 15–17.
[2] John xi. 3.
[3] John xi. 36.
[4] John xx. 2.

this love the simple pouring forth of human affection. Again the Father loveth the Son with such a natural affection and shows Him all things that He Himself does.[1] And the Father loveth the disciples with such natural affection because they loved Jesus with the same kind of love.[2] The only other two contexts in which this word occurs confirms the interpretation that it indicates natural affection, for in one place it is used of the love which the world has for its own,[3] and in another place of the love with which a man loves his own life.[4]

The Apostle of Love

We have seen that there are two limitations to the Johannine doctrine of love. In the first place, there is a tendency on the part of the Fourth Evangelist to describe the manifestations of the love of Jesus not so much in relation to the needs of men as in relation to His divine work. In the second place, the love which John exhorts his readers to practise is to be confined within the narrow circle of the Christian Church. It is remarkable that in spite of these limitations John has stood out through all the centuries as the apostle of love. He is considered as pre-eminently a teacher of love. What, then, is the secret of his greatness in this matter? The answer to this lies in the fact that John has realized more than any other that there is no motive so exalted, spacious and compelling as the motive of

[1] John v. 20. [2] John xvi. 27.
[3] John xv. 19.
[4] John xii. 25. cf. W. Sanday and A. C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New York, 1917; p. 374.

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the love of God for inspiring the love of man. While the sight of suffering, misery or need may well call forth in us a genuine response, such a response is never so strong as when it is based upon the conviction that its ultimate and highest motive lies in our love for God. We love man because we first love God and the only way in which this love can find expression is the love of man. A Tamil poet has uttered this great truth in words which have laid a strong hold of the Śaivas in the Tamil country:

> 'The ignorant say that love and God are two.
> No one knows that love itself is God.
> Whoever knows that love itself is God,
> Shall rest in love, one with God.' [1]

There is no basis for human love so infinite and so powerful as the love of God. The love of man may on occasions be limited by circumstances. But John teaches us that the measure of our love for man should be determined, not so much by man's need, however urgent, nor by our own capacity, however freely offered, but only by the magnificence and breadth of God's own love for man.

According to the Johannine writer, the might and measure of God's love for man is shown by His only begotten Son being sent into the world. This thought is repeated three times in the passage which we are considering. 'Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.' 'Herein

[1] Tirumūlar, 'Anpum civamum.'

is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' 'And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.' We find this thought in another great passage, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.'[1] This explains why in spite of its limitations the Johannine doctrine has come to occupy such an important place in Christian thought. In speaking of God's love, John does not speak of the innumerable benefits which God gives to man from day to day; nor does he speak of the wonderful universe which He has created and filled with the tokens of His love; nor does he speak of the movements of history which in different degrees reveal His love. Many may be convinced of God's love from a consideration of one or other of these, or all of them. In the mind of John these may have contributed to his conviction of the greatness and illimitable measure of God's love. But he does not refer to them as they are not of primary importance. The main thing which counts with him and which determines the whole mode of his thought is the fact that God sent His only Son into the world. There is no act of God so illumining and so exalted as this whereby He has revealed Himself to men and has shown to them the infinitude of His love. By seeing the incarnate Christ and the circumstances in which He ministered to the salvation of men we are convinced

[1] John iii. 16.

of the depth and power of God's love. There is no other movement or revelation that brings the love of God before men so effectively and powerfully. When we realize this profound truth in all its fulness we are led to impart to our relations with other men some measure of that infinite love which lies in the heart of God.

CHAPTER V

FELLOWSHIP IN SUFFERING

And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honour. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The mullitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes. Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die. The multitude therefore answered him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Jesus therefore said unto them, Yet a

little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.

John xii. 23–36.

In explaining the Johannine teaching on the Atonement, Abbot says: 'The metaphors for describing this giving of eternal life through the uplifted Son of Man upon the cross are various. Life may be regarded negatively as deliverance from sin. In that aspect, our burden of sin may be described as falling from our shoulders as we kneel before the cross, or as taken from our shoulders as we kneel before the cross or as taken from us and nailed to it with the crucified one. But John probably looks at life positively, as a union with Christ, who, when we look to Him with the eye of faith, draws us to, or into, Himself, or passes into us that we may pass into Him.'[1] If this view of Johannine teaching is correct, is John the only mystic who thinks thus or are there others? Does the mystic life inevitably lead to a different understanding of the death of Christ from that which occurs in other types of Christian experience?

The Glorification of Jesus

According to the Fourth Evangelist, the death of Jesus is His glorification. The word 'glory' is a

[1] E. A. Abbot, *Johannine Vocabulary*, Cambridge, 1905; p. 45.

favourite one with him. He tells us that by making the water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus manifested His glory.[1] The 'sickness' of Lazarus was in order that the Son of God might be glorified.[2] But the main occasion for the glorification of Jesus was His passion and death.[3] It is difficult to understand whether the word 'glory' should be interpreted in a purely moral sense or whether it should be taken to imply any of the external splendour which mystics have seen in their visions of God. Such light and splendour are, of course, of no value by themselves except that they show in an impressive way the exceeding greatness and purity of God. We know that the word can be traced back to the days of the ancient Jewish seers, canonical[4] and uncanonical,[5] who beheld God as light and splendour. Even if John did not keep in mind any of the external association of the word in mystic literature with light and magnificence, he certainly did not empty it of all its poetic significance. There seems to vibrate in it a sense of exaltation, beauty, joy and honour. We are surprised when we hear Jesus applying such a word to describe the pain and agony on the cross. It seems appropriate when applied to such a miracle as that at the wedding feast in Cana in which with dramatic impressiveness He manifested His power. It would have appeared still more natural if it had been used to describe Him when He stilled the raging storm or when He stood on the mount of Transfiguration bathed in

[1] John ii. 11. [2] John xi. 4.
[3] John vii. 39 ; xii. 16 ; xii. 23 ; xiii. 31, 32 ; xvii. 1, 5, 21.
[4] Exod. xxiv. 16, 17 ; Deut. v. 24 ; Isa. ix. 1 ; Ezek. x. 4.
[5] Baruch. iv. 24 ; Eccles. xiii. 16.

heavenly light. But in the Fourth Gospel Jesus constantly speaks of the tragic events of His passion as being His glory. Not that He ignored the pain before Him. In the very passage we are considering we have the pathetic words: 'Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.' But Jesus overcomes this rising despondency with the declaration: 'But for this cause came I into this hour.' The agony in the garden of Gethsamene bears witness to the deadly struggle in His heart. But even while shrinking from death, Jesus looks forward to it not merely with calmness but with the conviction that it will be His hour of exaltation. 'When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him.'[1] 'Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again,'[2] 'But now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.'[3]

The glorification of Jesus, as already noted, applies not merely to His death, but to the whole series of events which took place at the end of His life. Till the twelfth chapter of the Gospel 'the hour' is not spoken of as having come. But from that point it

[1] John viii. 28, 29. [2] John x. 17, 18.
[3] John xvii. 13.

has come. And as the Gospel says that the Spirit was not given before the glorification, we understand that His resurrection was part of His hour of glory.[1] Perhaps it was because the resurrection of Jesus was indissolubly linked in His mind and in the mind of the Evangelist with His death that both these events were regarded as His glorification. The death of Jesus, a tragedy taken by itself, is an occasion for glory and exaltation when it is considered in relation to the life which came out of it. The mystery still remains but it is now emptied of its gloom.

The Death of Jesus the Pathway to Mystic Union

It is evident from the next verse that the connexion between His life and death was always present to the mind of Jesus. 'Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. He that loveth his life loseth it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' The grain of wheat sinking to the earth apparently dead but sprouting into newness of life is a symbol at once of the historic death of Jesus followed by His renewed manifestation of life, and of the death to sin of the devotee followed by a new spiritual life. The historic death, followed by life, which took place nineteen hundred years ago is perpetually repeated in the souls of bhaktas. Life, with John, is generally the life of fellowship with Christ. It is this which is of eternal and abiding

[1] John vii. 39.

significance. This kind of existence is called life because it realizes in the highest degree all the possibilities inherent in life. Only he who lives in Christ truly lives. But how do we enter into life through the death of Christ?

Suffering with Jesus

The secret of attaining life with Christ through His death is explained in the next verse: 'If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will the Father honour.' He who would find life in Christ must follow Him altogether. And as His intensest moments were those spent on the cross, the Christian must identify himself with the suffering Lord and even share in His agony. Only such entire and willing identity with Jesus can lead to life eternal. The exhortation to follow Jesus occurs in different contexts. In other places it may mean a readiness to carry out His precepts and to do His will. In our present context, with the solemn end in full sight, the exhortation must mean something more than a willingness to obey His words. It must imply our willingness to follow Him with joy in His suffering.

This conviction has powerfully inspired some of the finest souls in the Christian Church. Francis of Assisi experienced the 'stigmata.' With such intense sympathy and deep agony did he contemplate the wounds of Jesus that they appeared in his own body Julian of Norwich has told us that she fell very ill, and desired to suffer with the Lord Jesus. 'I saw with

bodily sight in the face of the crucifix that hung before me, on the which I gazed continually, a part of His passion: despite, spitting and sullying, and buffetting, and many languoring pains, more than I can tell, and often changing of colour. And one time I saw half the face, beginning at the ear, overgone with dry blood till it covered to the mid face. And, after that the other half was covered on the samewise.'[1] The *Imitation of Christ* exhorts us thus: 'Put thee therefore forward as a good and true servant of Christ to bear manly the cross of thy Lord crucified for thee through love. Make thee ready to suffer many contrary things and diverse incommodities in this wretched life: for so he shall be with thee wherever thou be and so thou shalt find him wherever thou be hid.'[2] It is needless to multiply instances to show that all through the centuries Christian mystics have earnestly sought to realize oneness with the suffering Lord by participating, often literally, in suffering.[3]

This experience imparts a unique character to Christian mysticism which becomes a distinctively moral fact. Communion with our Lord is made possible not by emotional fervour, nor by flights of speculation, or even of intuition, but by the difficult and yet joyous discipline of walking along His path of suffering. The attainment of salvation by suffering is not a specially Christian idea; the moral quality of suffering is. The

[1] Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, London 1917; p. 21.

[2] *The Imitation of Christ*, chapter xii.

[3] For other instances, see E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*, London. 1916; pages 179–195.

highest faculties of man are trained in the school of Christ's suffering. The supreme power of God's love, which forgives and redeems, exerts its irresistable influence. Lofty ideals alone are considered worthwhile and accepted. Hardships are endured with joy and difficulties faced in the pursuit of these ideals. The spirit of unselfishness and service is imparted in a generous measure to the eager soul. The oneness with the Lord reached through such discipline, severe yet happy, must necessarily be different from the oneness realized in a flash of insight or in a moment of ecstacy.

There is not only a difference in the nature of the fellowship attained but also in its depth and intensity. We know how firmly fire welds two pieces of iron. We know how friends, who have passed through the same troubles and calamities, are more closely knit together than those who have been intimate only amidst life's abundant joys. Sometimes, though indeed rarely, we come across two men whose love is thus forged on the anvil of suffering. Someone is suddenly called upon to face public obloquy and the penalties of the law, because he stands accused of a great crime. He loses his work and his career is closed to him. Instead of requiring less money than before, he requires more in order to justify himself in the eyes of the law and to put up a defence, but he has no resources of his own. The friends who gathered around him in the days of his prosperity abandon him, some meanly because they cannot get any more from him, and some with self-righteous moral indignation. But some real friend steps in and disregarding his own name and

comfort, works night and day to save him. Such a real friend cares neither for what others think nor for what he has himself to pay, but in an entirely selfless spirit endeavours to give all the help that is necessary. Need it be said that these two friends will be knit together for life with the strongest possible ties? The one who helps so nobly and to such an enormous extent has nothing to gain, except of course the great joy of seeing his friend on his feet again, but everything to lose. His help is not given for any thought of self whatsoever but finds its roots in the very depths of love. The one in trouble is deeply impressed with his friend's unselfishness and profound love and responds to it with all eagerness. To this is added the spell of emotion which on such occasions comes mightily over men. Such analysis can never fully interpret the magic and might of love but may give us some idea of fellowship in suffering.

We may pursue this analogy into the range of mystic experience and say that the intimacy between a bhakta and his God, who have passed together through suffering, is exceedingly strong. It is only in the Fourth Gospel we are significantly told that, in His hour of utmost sorrow, Jesus entrusted His mother and His beloved disciple—no doubt the two persons whom He loved most dearly on earth—to each other's care. In suffering love finds its fullest expression. But it may be said that while hanging on the cross, Jesus cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.'[1] Jesus might have

[1] Matt. xxvii. 46 ; Mark xv. 34.

been expected in His terrible suffering and sorrow to realize the presence of the Father even more intensely than on other occasions. Either Jesus uttered those words or He did not. From the fact that Mark and Matthew have recorded them we suppose that they actually came from the lips of Jesus. Apparently then Jesus did experience a momentary sense of desertion by the Father. When suffering is regarded as cementing the union of two persons it does not mean that such union never undergoes even for a moment the feeling of separation. Any occasional experience of separation does not do away with the fact of the profound union. The oneness of the Father with the Son must have been deeply felt by Jesus in spite of His passing emotion. For Jesus Himself, as reported by the Fourth Evangelist, declares: 'Behold the hour cometh, yea is come that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.'[1] There is another point of more importance. The Evangelist puts the Farewell Discourses[2] on the eve of the crucifixion. During these critical hours Jesus dwells upon the theme of His oneness with the Father and of His disciples' oneness with Him with unwonted fulness and vigour. However much amplified by the later reflection of the Evangelist, the discourses no doubt, mirror an hour of special fellowship the sense of Jesus' oneness with the Father reaching an extraordinary strength in view of the storm that was gathering.

With the long history of Christian asceticism before

[1] John xvi. 32. [2] John xiii–xvii.

us, we may well doubt the ways of the mediæval mystics who were eager to enter into close fellowship with Jesus by imposing upon themselves penances and mortifications. But self-inflicted suffering apart, there is abundant suffering for those who would follow Christ and every Christian is called upon to pass through it in the spirit of the Master so that his union with Him may become deeper and fuller. To some comes the suffering of poverty when, day after day, the pinch is felt from half-satisfied hunger. Others may have to bear with numerous disappointments which make life dreary; yet others may have to fight with failing strength which at any time may end in painful disease and death or may become afflicted with chronic ill-health which may keep them all day long in pain and sorrow. Others are called upon to face social persecution and to fight their way towards their ideal by trampling upon the susceptibilities of their closest friends. Whatever the character of the suffering, everyone of us has his share of it when we really follow Christ without going out of our way to court it. The spirit in which we pass through it is most important. When we go through it bravely and gladly with the earnest desire to attain unity with our suffering Lord, we shall indeed realize that we are entering into that rich fellowship in a way which would not have been possible for us otherwise.

Can God Suffer?

It is exceedingly difficult for the Hindu religious consciousness to grasp the idea that God suffers with

us and that through common suffering our fellowship with Him becomes deeper and richer. This belief runs counter to most Indian thought. The great modern sage Rāmakrishna-Paramahamsa said:

'When the shell of an ordinary coconut is pierced through, the nail enters the kernel of the nut too. But in the case of the dry nut, the kernel becomes separate from the shell, and so when the shell is pierced the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry nut, i.e., His inner soul was separate from His physical shell, and consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect Him.'[1]

There have been many thinkers even in the Christian Church who have found it hard to believe that the Son of God really suffered on the cross. They have tried in different ways to explain away the reality of the crucifixion; His suffering, they have maintained, was only apparent: but the Christian Church has never accepted their position, condemning it as Docetism.[2]

Why is it difficult for the Hindu to grasp the truth about suffering? The fundamental reason no doubt is the idea that God is joy. *The Upaniṣads* declare again and again that Brahman is Ananda. The followers of Śaṇkara who maintain that God has no qualities interpret Ānanda as the negation of pain and sorrow. According to them God has no qualities and therefore Ānanda can refer to no positive quality which He has but can only mean the absence of suffering and sorrow.

[1] F. Max Muller, *Rāmakrishna, His Life and Sayings*, London, 1899; p. 112.

[2] See art. on 'Docetism' in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

The followers of Rāmānuja understand Ānanda to mean the possession of positive calm and peace. God cannot be moved by the changes in human lives. He cannot be at the mercy of the various tides which flow through men's affairs.

'As the sun, the eye of the entire world, is not touched by the external impurities seen by the eyes, so the one immanent Self of all things is not touched by the sorrow of the world, for He is outside it.'[1]

It would be possible to quote from Hindu religious literature rare passages which speak of the suffering of God. The *Rāmāyana* declares that Rāma becomes deeply grieved with the sorrows of men.[2] Gōvinda-Rāja, the most famous of the commentators on the *Rāmāyana*, finds in the verse depths of meaning.

'"Of men" means "not merely his mother and others." Who then are included? All men whether they are rich or poor, whether they belong to the twice born castes or not. "With the sorrows," with whatever sorrow whether it is insignificant or significant. "Deeply" does not mean "as much as the man grieves." What then does it mean? Like an elephant sunk in mud, he becomes as deeply immersed as possible in grief as is fitting with his magnanimity. And he does not forget it with the lapse of time.'[3]

The Tamil Bhakta Kulaśēkhara Āḻvār believed in suffering with his suffering Lord. He was a king and was filled with Bhakti for Rāma. It was a source of great delight to him to hear the *Rāmāyana* expounded.

[1] *Kaṭha Upanisad*, 5. 11.
[2] Vālmīki, The *Rāmayāṇa*, II. 2. 4.
[3] See his commentary ad loc.

One day the passage where Rāma left his wife Sītā behind and went out alone to fight with his enemies was expounded. The Āḻvār forgot that the incident took place long ago and thought within himself: 'My Lord is in trouble. It is not fitting that I should fail to help him in any way I can.' So he summoned his armies and with them set out to help Rāmā. Not understanding the meaning of this, the people stood confused. But the wise teacher who had been expounding perceived its reason and said to the Āḻvār: 'Singlehanded Rāma defeated all his enemies and returned to his cottage safe and joined his loving Śītā.' On hearing this, the Āḻvār was filled with joy and gave up the idea of an expedition. This is indeed a remarkable case of participation in the pain and agony of the incarnate God. One of this Āḻvār's hymns is a lament of Daśaratha, full of piercing grief, for his son Rāma who was in exile in a forest.[1]

But Kulaśēkhara Āḻvār seems to have been an exception. Neither the idea that God suffers nor the idea that we suffer with Him has really found a place in Hindu thought. On the contrary, the conception of God as joy has been dear to the heart of India. But is it right to say that God rejoices with men but does not suffer with them? God is love and what is love if it keeps separate from man in any particular circumstance? Why do we revere the love of a mother as the highest expression of love in human life? It is not merely because she is with her children and feeds them and plays with them and teaches them. Others

[1] *Perumāl-Tiru-Moḻi*. 9. See also Introduction.

may do these things and yet they would never show the power of human love at its best. But when the critical hour arrives and a child is guilty of some grave moral lapse the mother's heart goes out to the child with an agony which passes expression and which sometimes, though not always, works out by sheer force of sacrifice and suffering a great change in character. A mother's love will not be complete without this readiness to sacrifice. Of course she has joy in her children and basks in the sunshine of their smiles but she has also the deeply rooted love which goes out to them in their hour of trouble. If God has qualities and if He is intimately related to us, how can we draw the line and say that beyond it no suffering of man will affect Him? If God is unconcerned about the world, it would be true to suppose that He has no share in what happens to us. But if, as we strongly believe, God is most intimately related to human souls and the highest bliss consists in the realization and enjoyment of this intimate relation, it must necessarily follow that He will be with us in the hour of dire need, whether it is merely physical or whether it takes the more tragic form of moral failure. Everyone who emphasizes the idea of God as joy must consider this. Almost all men, of whatever creed or nationality, instinctively turn to God in their hour of need. At such times no doctrine can prevent them from lifting up their hearts in prayer to God. Is not this general experience—there are always exceptions—sufficient testimony for the fact that God is touched by our sorrows and responds to our needs? In making suffering and sacrifice central Christianity

certainly proceeds upon a fundamental experience. If we do not understand this but insist that no Divine Being could have been really crucified, we may bolt the heart's door against the gracious entrance of the crucified Jesus.

There is another doctrine of Indian thought which makes it difficult for the Hindu to accept this interpretation of suffering. Centuries ago the thinkers of India, perplexed and bewildered by the suffering and inequality in the world, offered the doctrine of Karma as the solution of these difficulties. The doctrine of Karma has indeed become a most vital part of the thought of our people. Its grim understanding of the realities of life has permeated the lowest layers of the Indian consciousness. In the light of Karma all that we have been saying in this chapter has no meaning. Any suffering that we are forced to pass through is rooted in causes beyond our ken. Our present life is bound up with innumerable lives which we have already completed and its character is determined by what we have done in them. The idea therefore of our following the Master in His way of suffering and of our realizing our oneness with Him through such fellowship has no attraction. But to the Christian the suffering through which he passes gladly is vitally related to the decisions and actions of his present life. The suffering we are called on to pass through is not determined by remote and unknowable causes rooted in our past lives but is very often due to what we ourselves have done. There is, of course, a great deal of suffering in the world due to cataclysms

in nature or in history. Here we are not concerned with understanding these. But the troubles which come to us in following our Lord are what we have in mind. When we resolve to seek the fellowship of our Lord we at the same time resolve to walk along a hard path, for He was 'a man of sorrows and was acquainted with grief.' Are we drawn to the figure of Christ? Has His teaching laid hold of us? Has the spirit which indwelt Him come to abide in us to lead us in the path of love and service? Then inevitably we shall have to face opposition and trouble as He did, though in a very different measure and form, and men will hate us and heap trouble for us. But this suffering will be turned to joy, for through it our union with Christ will become closer and more intimate.

The Moral Order in the World

To continue the exposition of our passage. The union with Christ, cemented by participation in His suffering and death, is no transcendental experience; participation in the death of Christ does not take the bhakta to the serene heights of philosophy or ecstasy but keeps him in this world with its temptations and trials, its obligations and duties. 'Now is the judgement of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' What is this judgement? It cannot be the last judgement described in apocalyptic literature. For it is said to take place *now*. It would be in harmony with the rest of the Johannine teaching to suppose that the judge-

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ment spoken of here is an internal judgement, a greatly modified law of karma, which inevitably brings about certain consequences.[1] He who beholds the uplifted Christ and allows himself to be drawn into Him has thereby set out on the path which will lead him away from wrong doing and sin. Not that he will be incapable of sinning nor even that he will never sin but sin will cease to attract him. The attraction of the cross will be so powerful that the attraction of sin will cease and the prince of this world will be cast out. The reference to the prince of the world being cast out seems to imply that there is a certain solidarity in the way in which the death of Christ operates against the sin of the world. It is not merely a sin here and a sin there that is cast out but the entire power of evil. So powerful and so tremendous is the efficacy of the death of Christ that the whole mass of evil ceases to be. This corporate reaction against the whole volume of evil, besides being in consonance with the Johannine teaching about the solidarity of mystic experience, puts out of the question any random and haphazard, and therefore incomplete, operations against evil.

But this result does not come about without man's effort. The cross of Christ is no talisman. The multitude, perplexed by the teaching about the lifting up of the Son of Man, raised a question: 'We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' To this Jesus replies;

[1] See above pages 53–55.

'Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while ye have the light, that darkness overtake you not: and he that walketh in the darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.' This ought to be earnestly taken to heart by every one. We should not merely comfort ourselves with the thought of the eternal and abiding Christ. He *does* live to-day and move among us with power as of old. But neither He nor His death are of any avail to us unless we strive genuinely to walk in His light. The life and death of Christ are not meant only for another world. The eternal now is of tremendous significance and power. The Christian should constantly walk in the light of Christ as he is a son of light.

We should consider an important passage from the First Epistle of John which supplements and makes clear the teaching given in these verses. 'God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not speak the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all righteousness.'[1] We realize with poignancy the shame and sorrow that have come to us from sin. Try as we will, our fight for goodness is not always a victorious one. Again

[1] 1 John i. 5-9.

and again we fall victims to the temptations that come to us. The frequent and disheartening failures of the moral life continually fill us with grief and there are times when we stand bewildered before the helpless way in which we surrender to evil. These successive moral tragedies are no matters of passing import. They accumulate into a terrible burden and oppress the soul by its constantly increasing weight and terror. We are overwhelmed with the power of the sins of the past and as we contemplate the future we are afraid that we might have to contend, often in a losing battle, with new forms and forces of evil. But the death of Christ reveals clearly that the sins of the past which terrify us and which form a burden are forgiven by our Father out of His infinite and gracious love and that we are given a new strength to contend with the powers of evil. The incubus of the past is removed and we are set at liberty to walk in the light free from its oppressive sense.

The Meaning of the Cross to God

In this all too brief exposition of a great theme, no attempt has been made to understand the relation of the cross of Christ to the mind of God. We have found how the sacrifice on Calvary draws men into closer bonds of friendship with Christ imparting to them forgiveness and strength and all the other gifts which love can give. But we must consider in great humility and reverence what value, according to John, the cross has for God. That John recognizes the supreme importance of the cross for God is evident from certain profound verses

which occur in the Gospel and Epistles. John the Baptist points to Jesus and proclaims, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'[1] In his First Epistle, we read: 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.'[2] Again: 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'[3] Theological controversy has raged around these and other verses in the New Testament which speak of the cross of Calvary as a sacrifice: What is the sacrifice? To whom is it made? For what purpose? These and other questions have been endlessly debated. The sacrifice on Calvary is the uttermost expression of the love of God. God has always loved man, but love is not complete until it issues in sacrifice, in the uttermost giving up of itself. This sacrifice took place on the cross. There is a peculiarly weighty significance in the words with which the Evangelist opens his account of the last days of Jesus: 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.'[4] Through this great sacrifice, God has fulfilled Himself and, if we may say so with reverence, has realized to the full the riches of His love. Without some supreme[5] expression like that on the cross, even the love of God might have been incomplete. The sacrifice of Calvary is the perfecting and rounding out of His great love which so graciously forgives and saves.

[1] John i. 29. [2] 1 John ii. 1, 2.
[3] 1 John iv. 10. [4] John xiii. 1.
[5] See William Temple *Christus Veritas*, London, 1925, p. 280.

Conclusion

The Christian cannot content himself with merely contemplating the sufferings of Christ. There is indeed much to be gained by reverently directing our mind to realize the profound agony which our Lord experienced during His passion. Such a devout dwelling upon His agony and sorrow is sure to exert a wholesome influence on us and to change us for the better. But such contemplation is not enough. We have rather to unite ourselves with Christ in His suffering.

The supreme example of such identity with the sufferings of Christ is given to us by Paul. Paul counted all things to be loss in order that he 'may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death.'[1] Indeed he actually rejoiced in his sufferings which, as every one who has read about Paul knows, were most abundant and supremely hard, and filled 'up on his part that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ.'[2] Paul did not merely realize with a devout imagination the agony of the Lord, nor did he add to his own suffering by purposely and deliberately going out of his way in its quest, but he passionately loved Christ and sought to spread His message far and wide. In seeking to make the power of Christ's love effective in himself and in others, he had to face much trouble. He was misunderstood, criticized, beaten, imprisoned and persecuted. But he did not flinch or whittle down his message or give up his work because of the persecution. Through the anguish and pain of it all he knew

[1] Phil. iii. 8–11. [2] Col. i. 24.

with joy that if he had to suffer a great deal, his Master had suffered before him and suffered intensely. This experience made him realize his oneness with Christ in a wonderful way. He did not achieve any merit by his suffering, but by passing through it gladly, he made himself a partaker of the glorious love that was shown by Christ on Calvary and was united with Him. Fellowship works from both ends. While it is true that Paul sought to become united with Christ in His suffering, his efforts would have been futile if Christ Himself had not out of His great love taken Paul into His fellowship.

This then is the meaning of becoming united with Christ through participation in His suffering. He has suffered on Calvary showing to us unmistakably the wonder and the depth of the Father's love for us. As we realize this love for ourselves and set out to make it known to others all sorts of difficulties will come in our way. The more eager we are to make the spirit and ideal of Christ work in those little spheres over which we may have any influence the greater the difficulties will be. We ought not by any means to give up our message or its completeness in order to make our path smooth and easy. But we should proclaim the Gospel with all earnestness and sincerity and in its fulness as far as we understand it. The trouble which comes to us will be of various kinds and degrees, the mental anguish of choice and failure, the criticism and hostile action of others, the necessity to reduce our wants to a minimum and to live at the point of self-sacrifice and, in these days very rarely, physical pain and

suffering. We should pass through all these kinds and degrees of suffering with joy, realizing that our Lord has suffered before us with greater intensity and with no blame on Himself. We shall not work our way into union with Him by any particular suffering through which we pass or even by any particular spirit in which we undergo the suffering that inevitably comes in following Him. But such a discipline will help us to accept more readily and with clearer understanding the offer of His foregiveness and fellowship with Himself which He has made to us once for all on the cross of Calvary with unlimited generosity and supreme love.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT

I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove one with another, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers did eat, and died: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever. These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? But Jesus knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at this, said unto them, Doth this

cause you to stumble? What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.

John vi. 48–63.

In the preceding chapters we have studied the different ways in which the man whose Bhakti is awakened by the gracious love of God may seek to attain oneness with Him. We have seen how necessary it is for him to place at the feet of God all that he has in a spirit of utter love and we have seen further how this love for God realizes itself in the love of man. Then, in considering the significance of the cross as a manifestation of God's great love for man, we have found that in our conformity with Christ in His sufferings, our union with Him becomes close and intimate. In this chapter we shall proceed to consider another important direction along which we should strive to realize our oneness with the Lord.

Food the Support of Life

The appetites of hunger and thirst are elemental facts in human life. They lie at the bottom of all endeavour and profoundly modify all the activities of men. To quote again, in an abbreviated form, Rāmalinga Swāmi's essay already referred to[1]: 'Even brave warriors who can vanquish their foes in a moment lose their strength when they become hungry. Ascetics who despise the

[1] See page 87.

enjoyments of the world and, controlling their senses, are seated in contemplation, leave it and walk towards the next village in search of food. Men who are ready to give up their lives even if they dream of some insult coming to them complain of their hunger to those to whom they should not do so and lose their dignity. Orthodox religious teachers forget their orthodoxy when they become hungry and wait expectantly for food. Learned men, who possess insight and power, lose their judgement in the presence of hunger. Men who are always under the power of lust turn away from lust with bitter minds when attacked by hunger. The proud and the independent give up their egotism and speak in flattering terms of those who give them food. And spendthrifts lose all their extravagance when they are brought face to face with hunger.'[1] This passage is quoted here not because it says any thing that is new, but because it expresses certain perfectly familiar facts in forceful language, accumulating numerous instances. People who go on hunger-strikes display, it is true, a marvellous capacity to endure hunger, but do not their very strikes indicate the importance of the appetite ? They want to appeal dramatically and impressively to an instinct, of the presence of which all men are overwhelmingly conscious.

If hunger is so elemental and so profoundly determinative of man's activities, there must be some peculiar significance in the food which satisfies this hunger. Whatever importance we attach to the

[1] *Jīva-Kāruṇiya-Oḻukkam.* op. cit., pp. 29–30.

function of hunger in life must reflect itself on food. This idea must have inspired the ancient seer of the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* who says: 'Food is Brahman: for from food creatures are born; by food the creatures thus born live; and into food they enter and perish.'[1] This verse which has deeply affected the course of Hindu thought, embodies an important idea, however much we may differ from its particular formulation.

The Fourth Gospel teaches us that Jesus uses this familiar connexion between hunger and food to bring home to our minds the strength of the connexion between Him, and those who love Him. Jesus speaks of the life that He gives as water: 'Whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life.'[2] Again: 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'[3] Here He uses an illustration which has been rendered immortal by the Old Testament prophets.[4] But he goes much farther in our present passage: 'I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.'[5]

[1] *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, iii. 2.
[2] John iv. 14.
[3] John vii. 38.
[4] Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13; Isa. lv. 1; Zech. xiv. 8; Ezek. xvii. 1.
[5] John vi. 48–51.

According to the Fourth Gospel the words which form the subject of our study in this chapter were uttered by Jesus the day after He had miraculously fed the five thousand people who had gathered together to hear His teaching. The effect of this manifestation of His power was immediate and rather strange. Attracted by this power, the people wanted to take Him by force and make Him king. Apparently they felt that with a person of such supernatural gifts at the head of the realm they would not lack anything. Jesus, of course, could not yield to such a materialistic impulse and withdrew from them probably to meditate on the strange ways of men and to hold converse with God. But on the following day He was in Capernaum and the multitude came to Him again, still obviously under the influence of the ideas which the miracle had given rise to. John tells us that on this occasion Jesus delivered a long discourse in which the words which we are studying occur. There are four other places in the New Testament where somewhat similar words are reported as having been spoken by Jesus.[1] All these four accounts describe an incident which took place on the night in which Jesus was betrayed. The account given in Mark, being the earliest and therefore likely to be the most accurate, may be quoted here. 'And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he

[1] Mark xiv. 22–24; Luke xxii. 17–20; Matt. xxvi. 26–28; 1 Cor. xi 24–26.

gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many.' These words are practically repeated in the other accounts. We should compare these accounts with that in the Fourth Gospel. These four accounts refer in language of varying emphasis to the fact that His blood is shed for many unto remission of sins. In the discourse in the Fourth Gospel there is no phrase pointing to such an interpretation. It is significant that in the long discourse given in the Fourth Gospel there is no reference to an idea so important in the much shorter accounts of the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline Epistle. It is wholly concerned with the teaching that the body and blood of Christ become the food and drink of men. With much repetition and considerable emphasis the body and blood of Christ are taught as being the source of life.

There is another feature of the discourse which calls for thought. Why does John put this teaching not in the context of the last supper but here? Either Jesus spoke these words at the last supper and John has deliberately taken them from that context and put them here; or He spoke more or less the same words after the feeding of the five thousand and on the occasion of the last supper and John has emphasized the former occasion. Spoken at the last supper the words would seem to be closely related to the sacrifice which was to take place immediately on Calvary but spoken after the feeding of the five thousand, they would appear naturally enough as an exposition of the mportance of spiritual food in human life. The whole

setting of the discourse in the Fourth Gospel as well as the line along which it moves show that John understood the teaching of Jesus in some such sense. What has impressed him most is the fact that Christ is the heavenly food of His bhaktas.

It is quite likely that John was influenced in the formulation of his thought by the rites of the mystery religions which prevailed in his day. He was seeking to express in words the influence of the living Christ, particularly as it was felt in the act of partaking of His table. That there was a definite influx of spiritual power he knew from his own experience and the experience of his fellow-Christians. Somehow the reverent worshipper had partaken of a new spiritual energy in this act of exalted communion. This was, of course, the fundamental fact. In giving expression to this fact it is not at all improbable that at least in some dim way John's language was affected by that used in the contemporary religions of his day. In the earlier stages of the mystery religions there was a strong belief that it was possible to partake of the life of a God by eating him in a holy meal. In the Thracian-Dionysiac Mysteries the worshippers were called Saboi or Sabazioi after the name of their god as they partook of his divine life in such a meal. In the Dionysus-Zagreus cult the devotees rushed together in sacred frenzy towards the sacrificial animal and ate it raw in the belief that the god dwelt in the offering. Such a crude semi-physical idea of communion gave place in course of time to a more spiritual understanding. The average communicant in the mystery religions

came to believe that in some real sense he obtained a share of the divine life by participating in a common meal consecrated to the god. He was not particularly concerned to explain how this took place but he knew that in some definite way he had become one with the deity as the result of such participation.[1] Familiar as John is likely to have been with this phraseology, he had no difficulty in developing the teaching of Jesus along these lines.

Is there Enmity between the Flesh and the Spirit?

The question forces itself upon us: Is it right to convey something so essentially spiritual as our relation to Christ in terms of the flesh? Is not the flesh the source of sin? The Hindu Bhaktas have often sung of the degrading power of the flesh.

Tukārām asks:

'The body given us by God is excellent for his service;
Yet it has become a field fruitful in error and confusion.
When a man stiffens and straightens his neck through self conceit, there is no bending it.
Such a man cannot frame his tongue to call himself a servant of God, but he opens wide his throat for wanton speech.

[1] S. Angus, *The Mystery Religions and Christianity*, London 1925; pp. 127–133.

Tukā says, Where shall I go to leave this filth behind me, and purify myself by ablution?' [1]

The Bengali poet Rāmprasād Sen complains:

Tārā, my mother, listen to the story of my woe. Thou who art all supreme, behold this house of mine, how poor a thing it is.

Thus do these live, my mother, with whom I share the house!

Five of them are there with five different wills, and all seek nothing but to please themselves.

Eight million houses have I lived in heretofore, and now am come again to occupy the house of Man.

A fool's part do I play upon the stage of life, the cup of sorrow brimming over. That is reality for me, my mother!

Heed then, O mother, the word of Rāmprasād. My mind is not at rest.

No longer would I live here in this house; those six, the masters of the house, have made an end of me.' [2]

The idea that the flesh is the source of evil is found in other countries besides India. When John was writing there were many Gnostics who taught that matter was evil and believed that Jesus did not really

[1] J. Nelson Fraser and K. B. Marathe, *The Poems of Tukārām*, Madras 1913; vol. iii. p. 231.

[2] E. J. Thompson and A. M. Spencer, *Bengali Religious Lyrics, Sākta*, Calcutta, 1923; p. 58. The five fellow tenants in this poem are the five senses; the eight million houses are the bodies occupied in previous incarnations; and the six masters of the house are the six passions.

have a human body. They supposed that if He had one it would have contaminated Him. But from the vigour with which he bears testimony to having seen the actual Jesus it is clear that John did not agree with them: 'That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life. (And the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us.'[1] These emphatic words reflect the strong conviction of the Fourth Evangelist that the Jesus with whom he had come into contact was no phantom but a real human being. In fact it is often thought that one of his chief aims in writing the book was to oppose Docetism. John's idea was that the Logos had become flesh. As has been pointed out, this conception ran counter to much philosophic thinking in John's day.[2] Contemporary thinkers would have been shocked at the way in which John taught that the Logos became flesh. This startling conclusion was the result of his familiarity with the life and death of Jesus and of the thoughts which were forced upon his mind by them. The daring assertion of the Evangelist that the Logos became flesh shows how the incarnation of Jesus had illumined for him the whole process of human life and history. The body of man is no base thing to be despised. If it has been the medium

[1] 1 John i. 1–3. [2] P. 44.

for revealing the Divine, its capacities are indeed of an infinitely high order. The flesh therefore possesses in the mind of the Evangelist a different value from that which it has for others.

Another characteristic idea of John is that life with Christ can begin now.[1] There is no hard and fast distinction between life and eternal life. Death does not introduce any violent change into the character of our fellowship with Christ. The implication of this teaching is that life here is not as low as might be imagined. If we can enter into fellowship with Christ even now, there must be some inherent capacity of goodness in the flesh ; it cannot be altogether evil.

But the heart of the Johannine teaching on the subject is not yet reached. We come to it only when we consider John's further teaching about life. We are in the habit of speaking and thinking of life in physical as well as in spiritual terms. Life in its physical aspects, we think, is the special subject of study of the biologist. Life in its spiritual aspects, we think, comes more within the range of the religious teacher's knowledge and work. Life of these two kinds, we consider, are absolutely different. We therefore ask in what sense John uses life. Does he refer to physical or to spiritual life ? But John seems to have no such distinction in his mind. Life to him is all one. It is we who are in the habit of marking off physical from spiritual life. But he regards them as cohering in a larger unity.

It is perhaps not difficult to see the facts from which

[1] John v. 24 ; 1 John iii. 14.

the Fourth Evangelist drew his conclusion that the physical and the spiritual are not so widely-sundered as they are ordinarily taken to be. To begin with, the very importance attributed to food in the Gospel shows us that the physical and the spiritual lie close to each other. The same food which creates in one man the brutal strength which leads him to do all kinds of wild deeds gives to another the vitality that spends itself in love and devotion and service. The one man develops with the food which he takes nothing but the muscular power which is capable of mischief and violence. The other transmutes the physical food that he takes into the energy that sustains him in a course of noble living. Again it is the same instinct which under certain circumstances shows itself as lust and under certain other circumstances as love. The passion which draws men and women together may with a man dominated by the physical become nothing else than savage lust, whereas in another it may be refined and spiritualized into the highest kind of love purged of all that is base. Again the strongly embedded instinct of self-preservation which renders many a person narrow and unmindful of others often becomes the devoted love of the mother, who, exercising the instinct of self-preservation in a nobler way, forgets her own self but guards and protects her children. The instinct of self-preservation we consider as belonging to a purely physical category but its refinement as the love of the mother we exalt to the lofty sphere of the spiritual. There is then no chasm between the physical and the spiritual. The two indeed are not one

and yet the transition from the one to the other is not impossible.

That with John and the early Christian thinkers there was no clear and marked distinction, such as we are apt to draw, between the physical and the spiritual, is evident from, among other things, the narratives of the resurrection of Jesus.[1] The Fourth Evangelist tells more clearly than the Synoptic writers of the wonderful body of Jesus which was at once physical and hyperphysical.[2] The disciples were together and the doors were shut; yet Jesus came and stood in their midst and showed unto them His hands and His side. One of the disciples, Thomas, was absent and doubted the report of the other disciples who told him that they had seen the Lord. But he said unto them, 'Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side I will not believe.' So eight days later Jesus appeared again in the same way and said to Thomas, 'Reach hither thy finger and put into my side and be not faithless but believing.' Apparently the body of Jesus after His resurrection was not subject to the limitations of the ordinary physical body and yet it was within the reach of the senses. In some way the boundary line between the physical and the spiritual became obliterated. This record of the resurrection experience shows us that it would not have been as hard for the Fourth Evangelist as for the modern man to make the transition in thought from the physical to the spiritual.

[1] S. Angus, op. cit., 133. [2] John xx. 19–29.

The course which Johannine thought on the subject is likely to have taken may now be suggested. John was no doubt an earnest observer of men who saw clearly the importance which the deeply-rooted instincts of hunger and thirst have for them. It needs no philosopher to understand how firmly these appetites form the basis of human life. But to the keenly spiritual mind of John they were not merely low appetites to be considered as inevitable necessities and to be treated with scant attention but were indication of certain vital needs which held as true of the soul as of the body. In fact he conceived of life springing from these appetites as one. And therefore it was most natural, particularly in view of contemporary religious phraseology, that he should have stated our close connexion with Christ through these means in language more clear and more emphatic than anywhere else in the New Testament. Behold, the living Christ enters into us and forms a part of our inmost self in the same organic way in which food and drink become a part of our being. Through Him all our life is sustained and without Him our energy wanes and droops in a moment. His activities are interwoven with our life-processes and at every moment both of them occur together. Our argument has made it evident that there is no reason why the vital relation which food and drink bear to our life need be despised. On the other hand, it may show unmistakably to every one the vitality and closeness of the connexion between man and God.

Examples from Hindu Bhakti Literature

Some realization of the close connexion between the physical and the spiritual might have lain behind the utterance of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gīta*:

> 'Becoming fire, I inhabit the bodies of creatures, and mingling with the life-breaths, I digest the four kinds of food.'[1]

Would it be wrong to suppose that to the seer who wrote these words the thought of the food that we take sustaining merely our physical existence was difficult and that therefore he taught that the food we take does not result merely in a physical process but that the physical process itself is indwelt and energised by the Divine. The food that we eat is, therefore, assimilated not only by the body but also by the inner spirit.

There is a well-known Tamil legend of a saint, often referred to by the Saiva poets. He was called Siru Thondar or 'the lowly devotee' and it was his habit never to take any food until he had fed that day a Saiva devotee. One day Siva himself came to his door disguised as a mendicant. On Siru Thondar urging him to take a meal in the house, Siva pointed out that he ate only once in six months and on that occasion only a meal prepared of a human being, five years old, faultless in limb and the only child of his parents. With joy the mother must hold the child and the father must cut it up. Siru Thondar and his wife had a child answering to that description and gladly killed him and prepared a meal from his flesh. The guest sat down and insisted

[1] *Bhaghavad-Gītā*, xv. 14.

on the father joining him. Then he demanded that the son also should be invited. Siru Thondar went out and called out the name of his son and the child came running as if he were coming back from school as usual. By this time, the strange guest had disappeared leaving the meal uneaten. He appeared in the sky seated on a bull and took Siru-Thondar, his wife, his son, and his son's nurse to heaven. It is rather strange that the meal remains uneaten and the participation in the flesh and blood, though it be not that of the Lord, but that of the offering, never takes place.[1] The immense popularity of this legend shows clearly how participation in flesh and blood, strange as it may appear at first sight to the Hindu mind, may yet appeal to it and stir in it a genuine response.

Tāyumānavar gives a striking exhortation :

> 'The experience of Śiva is an all pervading flood of infinite joy.
> It foams and overflows and is one whole mass of water.
> Before our mortal bodies fall off, come, O ye of the world, let us taste it together to gain future bliss.'[2]

At this point we must note a striking contrast between Hindu Bhakti Literature and the Fourth Gospel. For the Bhaktas, the God within is infinite joy. He is milk, sugar-cane, nectar, luscious fruit, the finest of delicacies.

[1] Ārumuga-Nāvalar, *Periā Puranā Vacanam*, Madras ; pp. 192–198.

[2] Tāyumānavar, 'Kakamuravu.' The first line of this stanza has not been translated.

Bhakti hymns use these terms again and again to describe the immanent God. Rāmalinga-Swāmi piles idea upon idea to bring out the sweetness of the Lord :

'One by one squeeze and strain three kinds of fruit.
Mix well with sugar and powdered candy.
Pour fresh clear honey with milk and pure coconut juice.
Then add sweet pulse and melted fragrant ghee and cook it over a slow fire.
Thou art finer than such a sweet, Thou Nectar Pure.'[1]

On the other hand, the Fourth Evangelist speaks of the Christ within as water, bread, the staple of human food. What the Bhaktas desire is rapture, ecstacy-flights of emotion reserved for the few and that in extraordinary hours. What the Fourth Evangelist emphasizes is the moral strength which all men and women need to exercise every day of their lives. The Bhaktas would sing and dance, using highly aesthetic means for expressing their emotion. According to the Fourth Evangelist, the Christian brings forth 'fruits'—deeds of love and help. In the Fourth Gospel, mystic union is 'union' with Christ, dominating our normal moments and providing us with the strength and peace necessary for our daily life. The in dwelling Christ means enhanced energy for ordinary tasks, increased vitality for daily work. Mystic union for the Bhaktas spells sweetness, joy, all those feelings

[1] Rāmalinga Swāmi, 'Tanittani.'

and thoughts and activities which belong to the realm of emotion.

The Body and Blood of Christ

We may now resume our study of the passage at the head of this chapter. If the line of thought here suggested is followed to its conclusion, it will be found to mean that *all* food is not merely the source of physical life but after being transmuted by various fine processes passes into spiritual energy. But this conclusion is not by any means intended by the Fourth Evangelist. If there is anything which is more clear than any other in the passage which we are studying, it is that there is a fundamental difference between Christ the living bread and all other kinds of bread. The Jews were deeply impressed with the story of the miraculous manna which their fathers ate in the wilderness.[1] The manna was no ordinary food according to the ancient accounts. It came down from heaven to supply the special need of the people. But the Gospel makes it quite clear that Christ as the living bread is infinitely superior to even the manna. 'Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread (i.e., Christ) which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.' It is absolutely important that this distinction should be carefully grasped. Why is it wrong to say that every time we take food Christ enters into our being to energise all the activities which take place in it? This question is answered in the words, 'He that eateth my

[1] Exodus xvi.

flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me.' We cannot suppose that the Johannine formula about Christ abiding in the Christian and the Christian abiding in Christ occurs in this context also without some special significance. There *is* a difference between ordinary food and the food of the soul. This difference is not due merely to the believer's attitude. It is not because the Christian kneels reverently along with other devout persons in a place and in a manner that are hallowed by every means devised by the piety of man that the bread and wine have a different value from ordinary bread and wine. But it is because Christ himself comes into our souls through the elements and abiding in us endows us with His spiritual energy. Through faith we abide in Him. We turn our thoughts to Him in prayer surrendering all we have into His sacred keeping and He comes unto us and directs us from our inner self. Just as Jesus Himself lives because of the Father, so we also shall live because of Christ. He will take possession of our souls and, using any power of thought and love which we may have, infuse into us His own spirit.

It is important to note that this passage lays stress on the personal element in religious experience. 'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in Him.' Here the experience of the living Christ is stated in most intimate and personal language. The value of the common meal is not due to priestly

mediation or sacred fellowship but to Christ abiding in us. Some, at the one extreme, have seen its importance in the consecration of the elements by the accredited priests of the Church; and some, at the other extreme, in the fellowship of believers who devoutly join in it together. This passage has nothing to say about these but lays all the stress on the Lord's gift of Himself in direct response to the love and faith of the bhakta. The difference between this and other meals then is that in some special measure the Lord comes into our souls through this. It may be asked why He should make this a special channel of His grace and not every meal that we take. Here we enter the region of mystery in which we can walk but with faltering steps. That in the divine over-ruling of the universe the law of choice obtains everywhere, eliminating this and favouring that, is an experience with which all of us are familiar. Some men, for instance, are chosen to be teachers and prophets so that they might lead their fellowmen into a fuller understanding of the Divine Will and a greater readiness to carry it out in their lives. It would not be right to ask as to why these only should have the privilege. In the same way Christ imparts Himself to His followers in a special measure while they participate in the act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

We have endeavoured to understand in what sense we eat the flesh and drink the blood of our Lord. We have found a probable reason for such strange language in the close connexion of the physical and the spiritual. But in doing this we have gone beyond the

purport of this passage. According to the account we have here, the Jews themselves strove one with another saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' In arresting language Jesus had declared that He was the bread which man ought to eat in order to get eternal life. The Jews found it exceedingly hard to understand Him. When Jesus saw their perplexity He said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves.' This is quite strange. He does not care to answer the question which they have raised. It seems as if he tells them not to trouble themselves about the explanation but to accept the fact. In the history of the Christian Church the question of the Jews has been asked again and again by other men. A great deal of theological controversy has centred around this very question. Christian denominations are separated because they insist on the acceptance of this or that particular explanation of the doctrine. But this passage seems to teach us that it is less important to understand the reason behind the fact than to accept the fact itself. After all an explanation is not so important as the fact which it explains.

The Supremacy of the Spirit

Jesus, as interpreted by the Fourth Evangelist, has been describing His relation to His devotees in terms of the flesh. With considerable emphasis and in striking phrase He has brought before His hearers this great idea that they must accept Him as a part of their inmost self. He then concludes with the words:

'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.' The conclusion of this remarkable discourse provokes thought even more than the body of the discourse. At first sight it looks as if in the conclusion He gives away His entire teaching and starts an absolutely different line of thought. But on deeper reflection it will be evident that He is uttering in the conclusion a warning which profoundly modifies its meaning. The conclusion does not contradict the discourse but like a blaze of light at the end of a long road illumines it. The radiance which it throws spreads far and wide. It is with the help of its powerful light, clear and penetrating, that we must find our way through the entire discourse. According to the Fourth Evangelist, Jesus seems to say: 'All that I have been telling you about the importance of the flesh of the Son of Man and of its relation to man is true. You have indeed to eat His flesh and to drink His blood But do not be misled. The flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and life.' In the light of subsequent history these remarkable words gain in significance. There have been millions of Christians who have dwelt so exclusively on the thought that they participate in the life of Christ that they have been ready to emphasize its importance at the expense of everything else. To them the flesh has seemed to profit. They have forgotten that the spirit quickeneth.

The Fourth Evangelist's attitude towards baptism is the same. A detailed consideration of the value

which he attributes to it is not necessary as the idea which underlies it has been sketched in this chapter. Jesus says: 'Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'[1] Water and the Spirit are brought together here as if they are of equal importance. The physical and the spiritual are not so different as we make them out to be. And yet the next verse goes on to correct any wrong impression which this teaching may give: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.'[2] Here again Jesus insists upon everything having its own character while not forgetful of the wonderful unity that pervades life.

Many have regarded the Fourth Evangelist as an ecclesiastic with a bias for ritual and cult. The interpretation which has been suggested in this chapter of two important passages from his writings would seem to show that his view of the Christian life is profoundly ritualistic. While it is clear that participation at the Lord's table and baptism with water are with him no mere symbols, yet he does not attach any magical efficacy to them. With Jesus he sees clearly that the physical and the spiritual keep close company. That is why he attaches to them something more than a symbolic value. That is also why he does not attach to them any magical efficacy that operates by itself without involving the higher laws of the spirit. We find in another passage a remarkable confirmation of this idea. The Jews and the Samaritans had for a long

[1] John iii. 5. [2] John iii. 6.

time disputed over the right place of worship. The Jews, proud of their cult and temple, insisted upon Jerusalem with all its ancient history and all its rich and carefully maintained ritual as the place of worship. The Samaritans preferred Mount Gerizim. When this controversy was referred to Jesus by a Samaritan woman, Jesus said unto her: 'Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' [1]

It is fitting we should close a consideration of the teaching of Jesus on worship as recorded in the Fourth Gospel with these words. A more profound or more inspiring utterance has not been made. We are here led away from all controversy about temple and ritual into the very heart of religion. Over every church and temple these words should be inscribed in large letters. Every man seeking to approach the Divine and to realize His presence must treasure them in his heart. No idolatry of any sort, whether it be that of image or rite or liturgy, is permissible in the holy shrine in which we meet God face to face.

[1] John iv. 21–24.

CHAPTER VII

THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE

And the Father which sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not. Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life. I receive not glory from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not? Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

John v. 37–47.

There are different ways of loving God and of enjoying His fellowship. We have already considered the way of devotion along which we may seek Him, surrendering ourselves entirely to Him. Love for God is a mere phrase unless it expresses itself in concrete

deeds of love directed towards men. Such love finds its supreme expression in its readiness and eagerness to suffer with the Loved One. Through such suffering the love itself is ennobled and filled with a new content. After speaking of the love we should have for God, all the time remembering fully that the very capacity to love is given to us and stirred in us by God Himself, we went on to consider one of the means of giving expression to this love. We saw that we should draw nigh to Christ and become one with Him by participating in His body and blood. In this chapter we shall proceed to study yet another means of realizing our oneness with Christ, namely, the study of the Christian scriptures which speak of His life and death. We shall see how the written word of God helps us to understand and realize the Divine presence and to enter into the fulness of joy.

The Value of Direct Contact with God

In this context Jesus is speaking of different kinds of witness. John the Baptist, His forerunner, has borne witness to Him. He has recognized in Jesus a greater than himself who has come to the world as the Sacrificial Lamb. But his witness, Jesus declares, is not of such great importance as the witness of the Father Himself. The works which the Father has given Jesus to accomplish, and the Father Himself bear witness of Him. Who has heard the Father bearing witness? No one. 'Ye have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen his form?' What then is the meaning of saying that the Father hath borne

witness? The witness of the Father is not so much in any direct and immediate revelation which He gives from time to time as in the historic revelation which has been embodied in the scriptures. When we turn to the scriptures, however, we find the seers who wrote them declaring that they have heard the voice of God and seen His form. They do not speak for themselves but definitely assert that the Lord has spoken to them 'Thus saith the Lord.' Then have we to depend upon a second-hand revelation of God, a revelation given to seers of old and passed on to us and not wait expectantly to hear day by day for ourselves the voice of the Lord? If the scriptures contain an authoritative and final revelation of God and we are taught to accept it, then are we in no danger of ceasing to expect immediate and direct communion with God? Let us acknowledge frankly that there are occasions when we are most eager to hear some immediate pronouncement of the Lord on the questions before us. Every man is placed in peculiar circumstances which force upon him from time to time acutely specific and individual problems. The difficulties which he feels no one else feels or perhaps has felt. Face to face with problems, so vital and yet so elusive because of their individual character, we are asked to look for help from ancient writings which themselves are full of problems. Written in languages which all cannot read, and surrounded by numerous conflicting interpretations which have already been offered, the scriptures often raise a great many difficulties. How much more satisfactory would it be if we could hear directly the pronounce-

ment of the Lord on the particular issue before us without having to seek for a clue from such difficult ancient writings! If God could speak to us now and directly, all these difficulties would disappear and we could have a clear verdict, exactly suited to the particular situation in which we are placed. Instead of seeking, sometimes in vain, to find our way among the mazes of an ancient revelation, we should be experiencing God directly and seeing His form.

Again such an immediate and direct revelation imparted to us by the Father would not only prove quite suited to the particular occasion which we might be called upon to meet but would come to us with an impressiveness which no study, however earnest and reverent, of the revelation already given to others and permanently written down in books, can possess. One's own experience has a force of conviction which no other man's will ever give. The voice of the Lord heard by us in the inner sanctuary of our souls will have a clearness which it cannot have coming to us through another person.

The Function of a Historical Revelation

What then is the object of reading the scriptures? 'Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.' The fundamental import of the Christian scriptures is that they record the story of Jesus. They enable us to get in touch with the historic manifestation of the Divine. It is true only the four

Gospels narrate the life of Jesus. But these Gospels are to the Bible what the keystone is to the arch. The whole structure rests upon the keystone. Take the Gospels away and the massive edifice of Christian revelation tumbles down immediately.

We know from the prologue what a secure place the idea of the eternal God appearing in time has held in the mind of the Fourth Evangelist. To him the fact of profound importance is that the Logos, who was with God and was God, began His work of creation and after manifesting Himself through the processes of nature and of history, finally took human flesh and dwelt among men. This is the very starting point of Johannine thought. How thoroughly the entire argument of the Gospel is affected by the initial idea that Christ existed before all time is evident from several verses. Speaking to the Jews, Jesus says, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto him, Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.'[1] In the great prayer, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel, He says: 'And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.'[2] And again: 'Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.'[3] The First Epistle of John

[1] John viii. 56–58. [2] John xvii. 5. [3] John xvii. 24.

begins with the same note: 'That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life.' [1]

According to the Fourth Evangelist, it is not possible to see the eternal, ineffable and transcendent God. If we attempt to see Him we shall only fail. This thought has often found noble expression in the religious literature of India; noble because it reveals the thinker in all his sincerity and humility. Kabīr, who lived in the fifteenth century, has a poem which may be considered a good specimen of such utterances:

'There within Him creation goes forward, which is beyond all philosophy; for philosophy cannot attain to Him:

There is an endless world, O my Brother! and there is the Nameless Being, of whom naught can be said.

Only he knows it who has reached that region: it is other than all that is heard and said.

No form, no body, no length, no breadth is seen there: how can I tell you that which it is?

He comes to the Path of the Infinite on whom the grace of the Lord descends: he is freed from births and deaths who attains to Him.

Kabīr says: "It cannot be told by the words of the mouth, it cannot be written on paper:

It is like a dumb person who tastes a sweet thing—how shall it be explained?" '[2]

[1] 1 John i. 1.

[2] *Songs of Kabīr*, tr. by Rabindranath Tagore, p. 121.

Who can know the eternal Being as He is in Himself? John teaches us that it is only through the world which He has made and through the movements of men whom He guides that we can obtain a glimpse of His personality. And even this can only be tantalizing and vague, enabling us to see but partially and as through a veil the majesty and love that are His. It is only when we realize that the Eternal has become flesh and dwelt among us that we can behold His glory, 'glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.' We cannot see or know the Father but we can see Jesus and through Him we can know the Father. How emphatically and frequently is this thought reiterated in the Gospel and in the Epistles of John. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.'[1] 'Philip saith unto him, Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?'[2] 'No man hath beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love is perfected in us.'[3]

As the appearance of Jesus on earth is the supreme moment in history, all the movements of men before and after find their real meaning in His life and teaching. History is important as it prepares the way for this supreme manifestation of the Divine. If God is

[1] John i. 18. [2] John xiv. 8, 9.
[3] 1 John iv. 12. See also John vi. 46; xii. 45.

to reveal Himself to men at a particular point in history it is but reasonable to suppose that through long ages and by various methods they should be taught to recognise the divine manifestation when it did take place. It was necessary that their eyes should be cleansed. All the ignoble fancies and idolatries to which they had yielded or were likely to yield should be deprived of power and charm. Their hearts should be ennobled so that they might realize the purity of God when they saw it. For any real understanding of the meaning and inner significance of the incarnate God such a long process of training and discipline was necessary. A peculiar people, that is, a people with a keen sensibility to the things of the spirit and an eagerness to answer the call of the Divine when it sounded, was chosen. Through numerous lawgivers, teachers, psalmists, and prophets, their hearts were prepared to receive the Light and, in the ages which followed the revelation, it has been the work of the Church to interpret it.

And, moreover, no individual starts afresh. His mind is formed on traditions and ideas which have come down to him through long periods of time. No man can pretend to stand aloof from the mighty stream of history. As all these facts and forces of history have moulded him it is but right that, for this supreme matter of seeing God and holding communion with Him, he should try, in spite of all the difficulties connected with it, to understand the real teaching of history, in the mighty power of which he is already caught for good or evil.

For such an understanding of history a written revelation like that which we have in the Scriptures is necessary. The Scriptures themselves do not possess life. It is folly to think that there is some inherent power in them to give us life. Their most important function is to lead us to the manifestation of the Divine in time. It is with the incarnate God Himself, who has come within the range of human experience, that we have to hold communion. Through Him we can come in contact with the eternal and exalted and loving God of whom He is but the expression in time.

The Preparation for Christ

In what sense was there a preparation for the coming of Christ? How were the chosen people disciplined to recognize and to proclaim the incarnate God when He appeared among them? According to the passage at the head of this chapter, even Moses has written of Him: 'Think not that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?' Biblical scholarship used to maintain that the very first books of the Bible contain definite promises of the coming of Christ. For instance, the third chapter of Genesis contains the words 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'[1] Biblical scholarship

[1] Genesis iii. 15. See also Genesis xviii. 18, Numbers xxi. 9, Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.

used also to maintain that a great deal of the history that is recorded in the Bible is definitely symbolical of the advent and work of Christ. The feast of the Passover in which the Paschal lamb was slain and offered was a continuous and yearly prophecy of the sacrifice on Calvary. The lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness symbolized the lifting up of Christ on the cross.[1] Modern scholarship questions these and similar interpretations of definite events. It is being debated at the present day whether these events and ceremonies were purposely instituted in order to foretell the sacrifice of Christ or whether the devout piety of a later generation has read new meanings into ancient history. Whatever may be their particular significance the point to note is that through ceremony and ritual, through prophetic teaching and priestly exhortation, the children of Israel were led slowly and by degrees to accept those truths and doctrines which prepared the way for the coming of Christ and found their highest fulfilment and consummation in Him. By degrees they were taught that there is only one God and that He is high and pure and exalted and demands righteous service from his worshippers. This doctrine provided a fitting environment for the advent of the incarnate Christ. If anywhere people were at all ready to recognize in Jesus an expression of the Divine, it was on this Jewish soil which had been so carefully prepared for centuries. If this was not the object of the Mosaic dispensation we cannot understand the severity of Jesus' rebuke. The words attributed to Moses do not warrant it. But the Mosaic

[1] Numbers xxi. 8, 9.

discipline had imposed on His contemporaries a special obligation to recognize Him and He therefore says: 'Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope.' Jesus judges them by the criterion which they themselves accept and points out that Moses himself will blame them for not coming to Him.

If the interpretation here offered is correct, namely, that it is not any particular saying or action attributed to Moses which points to Christ but rather the spirit developed by his teachings and laws, then there is a lesson of profound significance for us in India. In India also there have been prophets and teachers who have prepared the way for Christ, not in the sense that anything they have written refers prophetically to any particular word or deed of His, but in the sense that they have trained the people in noble ways of living and taught them by word and example receptiveness to the ministry of Jesus. The Ṛṣis, Bhaktas and Yogins of India have striven hard to make the people respond to the summons of Christ when it is uttered. It may be asked in what sense the people of India have been prepared for the coming of Christ. There are many utterances of the seers of India which dwell upon the necessity for a teacher to lead and guide us. They point out that real progress in religion is possible only with the help of a spiritual teacher which is far more effective than reading. Though these utterances refer only to human teachers, their insistence on the necessity of personal guidance finds its highest fulfil-

ment in the supreme religious teacher, Jesus Christ. He Himself comes to us with a unique authority claiming to unfold the highest truths concerning God whom no man has seen but with whom He Himself has been intimate. The whole trend of this book is intended to point out the several other directions in which the Hindu soul has been trained to come to Christ. We have recognized that the very longing in our souls for God is His own work. This truth has found remarkable expression in some of the hymns quoted above [1] though such passages are not as common as one could have wished. We have next been led to the conviction that there is nothing in the world, not wealth, nor prosperity, nor even the fruits of the spiritual life which are of such paramount importance as the Lord himself. Union with Him stands far above all the gifts which men desire. In order to attain this union we have to come to Him offering to Him with utmost love all that we can call ours, body, mind and soul. This devotion is a continual attitude of love. The following of God is not an irksome task but a great joy. There is no higher delight in the world than to seek after and to experience the Eternal every moment of our lives. In comparison with this joy all the pleasures of the world are as nothing. In these and in many other ways the Indian soul has been prepared by the doctrine of Bhakti to recognize the truth and supreme grandeur of the message of Jesus. An Indian Bhakta cannot but recognize in Jesus a perfect expression of Bhakti. The deep love of Jesus for the

[1] See p. 50.

Father, the completeness with which His consciousness of the Father controlled all His thought and life, the zeal with which He carried out the will of the Father and the eagerness with which He sacrificed all that men consider dear for the love which He bore His Father—all these combined to make Him a supreme Bhakta carrying to its highest expression the ideal of Bhakti which has been taking shape also in our country slowly and gradually through the centuries.

There are many things in the teachings of the Indian seers which have to be thrown away just as there are many things about Moses which have to be thrown away. We know from this and the other Gospels that Jesus was ready to eliminate from the ancient Scriptures what was undesirable though He was second to none in recognizing their supreme importance as a whole. 'Jesus therefore said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you. It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven.'[1] The Fourth Evangelist declares: 'The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'[2]

The modern Christian in India has to take up a similar attitude. There are elements in the ancient Scriptures of India which have to be fearlessly given up. But there are also many doctrines and ideals in them which have to be as zealously assimilated and carried on to their natural culmination in Christ. If Jesus blamed His contemporaries for not listening to the voice of Moses, with equal power and vehemence

[1] John vi. 32. [2] John i. 17.

will He condemn us for not listening to Rāmānuja, Māṇikkavācakar, Tukārām, Kabīr and Chaitanya who have left behind them teaching of such undying value, pointing the way to Christ.

This is not to say that the scriptures of India will be to the Christian in India what the Old Testament now is. To the Jew the Old Testament contains the entire revelation of God to mankind. The Christian does not accept that position. He feels that the Old Testament is only the background for the New. But this background forms such an integral part of the picture that it cannot be separated from it in any way. To understand the New Testament aright it is therefore necessary to understand the Old Testament as well. There are parts of the Old Testament which may have to be discarded, but the entire Old Testament has a profound significance as leading up to, and as preparing the way for, the New. The attitude of the Indian Christian to the scriptures of India would be very different. He will learn from them. Fresh light will be thrown by them on different parts of the Bible. New emphasis on different truths of the Christian religion may be suggested by them. But they will not take the place of the Old Testament. In a word, they will supplement, not supplant, the Old Testament.

The Right and the Wrong Use of Scripture

This passage certainly implies a strong criticism of the Jewish devotion to the Scriptures. The Jews were attached to their ancient and sacred writings with an almost fanatic zeal and spent infinite skill and care in

interpreting and applying them to the needs of their daily life. Jesus condemns a blind faith in them. He realizes their value; He knows, according to the Evangelist, that the Scripture cannot be broken;[1] and yet He has no sympathy with a fanatic devotion to it. There have been Hindu Bhaktas who have likewise boldly revolted against any fanatic zeal for the scriptures of India. Appar asks vehemently:

'What though you teach scripture and offer sciences?
What though you study ethics day after day?
What though you read and understand the six services?
These avail nought except to those who think on God.'[2]

Kabīr sings:

'If you have not drunk of the nectar of that One Love, what boots it though you should purge yourself of all stains?
The Kazi is searching the words of the Koran, and instructing others: but if his heart be not steeped in that love, what does it avail, though he be a teacher of men?
The Yogi dyes his garments with red: but if he knows naught of that colour of love, what does it avail though his garments be tinted?'[■]

Chaitanya quoted with approval this passage from the *Haribhaktivilāsa* which is put into the mouth of Kṛṣṇa:

[1] John x. 35. [2] Appar, 'Vēdamōtilen.'
[■] *The Songs of Kabīr, tr.* by Rabindranath Tagore; p. 100.

'One cannot become my disciple merely by being a reader of the Vēdas. Even a Caṇḍala is loved by me if he only has faith. I bestow love on my devotee and accept his love.'[1]

The Scriptures have an important function in that they prepare the heart to love God wholly. But to suppose that they form an irrevocable standard of morals and religion which holds true for all time and for all men whatever might happen is to go too far. The letter kills but the spirit quickens. It is then the spirit of the Scriptures which we should seek with all eagerness to understand and practice and not the letter. To follow the letter of the Scriptures at any cost is to go into slavery.

The Holy Spirit and His Interpretation

This Gospel speaks emphatically of the guidance of the Spirit who shall guide us into all truth. There are occasions when we are tempted to live on the past. In the difficult task of interpreting the historic revelation we have to depend on the help which the Holy Spirit alone can give us. What is meant by saying, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come'?[2] What are these 'many things'? Are they merely interpreta-

[1] M. T. Kennedy, *The Chaitanya Movement*; p. 120.
[2] John xvi. 13.

tions of what is already recorded in the historical revelation? Or are they the logical consequences of truths already set down in revelation but not worked out fully? Or are they absolutely new truths not found at all in the Scriptures? If they are absolutely new truths, what reason have we to suppose that they may not supersede some of those which have already been embodied in the Scriptures? These words of Jesus give to our conception of revelation a spaciousness like the immeasurable expanse of the open sky, and our spiritual horizon gains illimitable breadth. As we follow this course of thought, the heavens seem to move along with us and we are impressed by their vastness. Our feet must be firmly planted on a historical revelation as on solid earth, but our eyes must wander over the boundless spaces here opened to us. We must not be limited by the past, but inspired and guided by it to realms of infinite grandeur. The Holy Spirit, with whom we may directly commune, not only interprets the ancient Scriptures but leads us to unexplored realms of thought, enabling us to deal with new problems in new ways and opening up vistas of endless beauty.

Revelation for All

There is a certain danger attached to a revelation in history. Given at a particular time, to a particular people and at a particular place, it has naturally a local character. Those who think they have a revelation readily come to despise all those who do not accept it. But it is a mark of the breadth

of thought characteristic of the Fourth Gospel that it recognizes that the Logos is the light 'which lighteth every man coming into the world.'[1] Jesus quotes with entire approval the words of the prophet, 'And they all shall be taught of God' and gives them a wider significance than the prophets who were referring only to the children of Israel.[2] In all men there is a capacity to see goodness and to follow it though in some it is obscured by training or innate darkness. This inner capacity to see and to recognize goodness is the work of the Logos. Let no one who believes in a historical revelation deny to others any such capacity.

This, then, is the point at which we have arrived. There are indeed dangers and difficulties connected with a revelation in time. The dispensation of the Old Testament prepares the way for the supreme event in human history, the tabernacling of God in human flesh. The New Testament first records this event itself with numerous details and then interprets its tremendous meaning for all human history. But we must guard ourselves against three dangers:

I. The danger of casuistry. There ought to be no merely intellectual understanding of the letter which results in quibbling.

2. The danger of literalism, which comes from expecting detailed rules instead of a guiding spirit. A historical revelation does not give us ready-made moulds into which all our thought has to be cast. All the ingenuity of commentators has arisen from an

[1] John i. 9.
[2] John vi. 45; cf. Isaiah liv. 13, Jer. 33, 34.

anxiety to discover new modes of thought from the ancient Scriptures. We should study the Scriptures with the greatest care and diligence but should also be prepared to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God as He beckons us to follow Him through unknown paths into new realms of understanding and practice.

3. The danger of pride in a revelation already possessed, which may blind us to the light granted to others. We should be ready to recognize great religious teachers wherever they are found.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word. Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine: and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them. And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are.

While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me. Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst sent me; and I made known unto them

thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them.

John xvii. 1–26.

In entering the vast precincts of a temple we first pass through the outer gate, high and massive, supporting the lofty tower that is seen for miles around. Then come the extensive courtyards through which we wend our way attracted and impressed by their spaciousness. Then there are the halls with their stately and beautiful pillars preaching their 'sermons in stones' in graphic and striking imagery so as to appeal to the imagination of young and old alike. It is only after passing through these different parts of a temple that we come to the central structure. In it again we walk through more halls with lofty columns before we reach the great sanctuary. It takes us a long time to come to this central shrine. In some such way it has taken us a good deal of time to come to prayer, which is the inner shrine of all religion. We have considered a great many matters which pertain to the structure of religion. These are all essential just as the gates and the courts and the porches of a temple are essential to it. And yet more important than all these is the central structure of prayer in which the soul holds direct and joyous fellowship with God. There is, however, this fundamental difference between prayer and all other inner shrines. Into other inner shrines, as a rule, it is only the followers of a particular religion or creed and even among them it is only the priests who

are allowed to enter and officiate. The mass of the people have to stay in different parts of the temple according to their various grades of spiritual progress and capacity. Into the holy sanctuary of prayer, on the other hand, all may enter. In the outer courts of duties and creeds and sacraments there may be differences which divide men. All may not find it possible to unite wholeheartedly in these outer courts, because their spiritual eyes are dim with the veil which the external things of religion have cast upon them. But in the inner shrine of prayer there are no such differences to divide them. Men of all creeds and religions can step into its sacred enclosure and partake reverently in its worship.

This, however, does not mean that prayer is an experience which can be spoken of lightly or shared carelessly with others. Jesus Himself has taught us that when we pray we should enter into the inner chamber and having shut the door pray to the Father in secret. It is impossible for one man to reveal to another his experiences in the deepest moments of prayer. And yet we are fortunate in possessing in the long passage quoted at the head of this chapter a record of a prayer which Jesus offered on a solemn occasion. Even if, bearing in mind the usual method of the Fourth Evangelist, we consider that the account of it is not a verbatim report but is interwoven with the Evangelist's own meditation, there is no reason to suppose that we have not in the main a true outline, close enough for us to learn from it something at least about Jesus' method of prayer.

There is, however, a great difficulty about this prayer with which we ought to deal at the very outset. The relation of Jesus to the Father was unique. His attitude to the Father and the confidence and assurance with which He speaks of His work are so entirely distinctive of Him that we must, at least at first sight, be more bewildered than helped. It was possible for Jesus to pray thus. Can every one follow in His footsteps and make this his own private prayer? It is quite true that one aspect of this prayer fills us with a sense of awe and makes us stand off at a distance in the utmost humility. We realize that it is not for us to make it wholly our own even as Jesus did. And yet this does not mean that it has nothing to teach us. If we have to follow Jesus—and we know how difficult it is—we have to follow Him in His way of prayer too, which is the heart of His religion. Imperfect and weak as we are, we have to learn from His example and to make His prayer the norm for our life of prayer.

Prayer as Communion

What strikes us first is that much of the prayer is in the nature of an intimate conversation with God. If a son is engaged in doing his father's business, and returns home after a long and crowded day's work, he will tell his father in the evening all that has occurred that day. If we could listen to such a conversation, we should find that there is, in the first place, a good deal of narrative in it. The son will tell the father all the important things which he has done or which have happened to him. Occasionally narrative may give

place to reminiscence and he may speak not merely of the things which have happened to him that day but of events in the past which have a bearing upon the day's events. But he will not stop with narrative and reminiscence. His experiences may have given rise to certain reflections. He may have received certain impressions, and learnt certain principles. These also he will tell his father. As he goes on describing his work he may actually ask his father to do certain things which are beyond his own power. A conversation between a father and son will range among all these subjects, now dealing with this and now with that, in no very particular order but simply as they arise.

Jesus' prayer has all these different elements. A good deal of it is taken up with an account of the work which Jesus has done while on earth.[1] He says that He has manifested the Father's name to the men who were given to Him. While He was in the world He kept them and as the Father has sent Him into the world, even so He has sent them into the world, sanctifying Himself for their sake. A narrative of His present work leads to a recollection of the authority which was given to Him over all flesh and of the glory and love which He had with the Father before the world was.[2] The present is intimately bound up with the past and His memory goes back to former things which have such a profound bearing on the present. There are in this prayer not merely narrative and reminiscence, but also the statement of new ideas. Philosophy, that is

[1] Verses 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25, 26.
[2] Verses 2, 5, 24.

man's reflection upon life and his conclusions, has an important place in all conversation. It is not merely the philosopher who deduces laws from experience and formulates general propositions. All of us are doing it all the time in our conversation. Jesus passes naturally from narrative and reminiscence to reflection.[1] 'This is life eternal that they should know thee the only true God and Him whom thou didst send even Jesus Christ.' 'Thy word is truth.' The occurrence of such words in the course of the prayer have given rise to much discussion. It has been asked why they should appear in a prayer and they have sometimes been regarded as the Evangelist's personal comment. If prayer means a continuous petition it is indeed difficult to understand why other matter should occur in it. But if prayer is considered as communion these difficulties will disappear. Petition also has its place here.[2] Jesus prays for Himself that He might be glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. For His disciples He prays that they may be kept in the Father's name. They need not be taken from the world but kept from the evil one. They need to be sanctified. He prays also for them that believed on Him through the word of the disciples, that they may all be one even as He and the Father are one, Christ in them and the Father in Christ, so that they may be perfected into one. He wills that they may be with Him to behold His glory. Thus Jesus tells the Father about Himself, His work,

[1] Verses 3, 10, 11, 16, 17.
[2] Verses 1, 5, 9, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21 and 24.

His disciples and their future. Not that the Father did not know all these things nor that Jesus wanted to deliver a discourse to Him about them. All that Jesus wanted to do was to think aloud in His Father's presence and to share with Him His own highest experiences and ideals. Such was the love He bore to the Father and such the eagerness with which he sought His presence that it led Him to speak of the deepest things of His life as naturally and as intimately as a man would share all His most cherished thoughts with some good friend.

But it may be said that this prayer reflects the Fourth Evangelist's own conception of prayer rather than Jesus'. We are told in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus spent whole nights in prayer, retiring to a mountain or to a solitary place.[1] We may well ask what He did on these occasions. Though we have no account of His prayers we may suppose that He did not keep on feverishly asking for different gifts whether for Himself or for others but stayed quietly in the fellowship of His Father deriving from such quiet communion the insight and strength and power He needed. We learn that Jesus went out of His way in quest of solitude though He returned to His work as soon as His prayer was over. He felt that among men or near the haunts of men He could not as effectively commune with the Father as when alone. Even more than the prayer of petition, the prayer of communion is jealous in its demands and requires absolute outward peace and quiet, though there are

[1] Mark i. 35; iv. 46; Luke ix. 18; ix. 28; xi. 1.

occasions when we have to seek the presence of the Father in the midst of disturbing external circumstances. Again, we learn that Jesus took much time over his prayers; this also implies that His prayers were largely prayers of communion. It takes time to still the mind into repose and when once that is done, communion is such a great joy that it is an effort to break it off. To continue in prayer becomes a source of steady joy and, to some minds, even a source of temptation. Yet again, the prayer which we are studying in this chapter cannot, on one point, adequately reflect the habits of Jesus for it is expressed in words. The finest and most devout men have taught us that in the highest flights of prayer the soul feels itself one with the Divine so intimately and profoundly that it is impossible to set its experience down in words. Even in human intercourse every one of us has felt the friendship or love of a devoted person in some solemn moment with an intensity and passion which it is impossible to express in language. As we have no records to tell us what Jesus actually did during those nights of prayer we can only reverently conjecture, taking a clue from the experience of some of the greatest of His followers, that He must have spent them in prolonged and joyous fellowship with His Father.

But we proceed from conjecture to fact when we study what we call the Lord's Prayer. Though very brief this prayer lays great stress on prayer as communion. In it Jesus teaches us to invoke God first, affectionately and yet reverently, as 'Our Father which art in heaven' and then to say, 'Hallowed be

thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'[1] Do not all these emphasize the necessity of forgetting our own needs and difficulties and letting our minds dwell upon the thought of the Father and of His name, His kingdom and His will? We have always to live in the consciousness of the Father's presence, praying that His will may become effective in the world and reach down into the hearts of men as profoundly as it does in heaven. This fervent desire to share in the life of the Father and to make it operative in and around us should form the keynote of all prayer. Only after thus directing our thoughts and minds towards this ultimate interpenetration of human life with the spirit and power of God should we ask for help or guidance, and place before our loving Father our need of daily bread, of forgiveness and of deliverance from evil.

The aspect of communion is not so clear in the Lord's Prayer as it is in the prayer recorded in the Gospel of John, perhaps, because of its brevity. This prayer is a record of Jesus' own experience. It reveals Him in one of His most exalted moments, and takes us to loftier heights than the prayer which he taught His disciples on an occasion which, as far as we can see, was not particularly solemn and to an audience which was not in any way especially prepared for exalted prayer. This prayer in the Gospel of John stands far apart from all the prayers which have been prayed by the best of men; it reveals an experience above all other

[1] Matt. vi. 9, 10.

religious experience. If at all we seek to learn anything from it, it must be with the greatest humility, for though we are bound to walk in His footsteps we cannot enter into all His immeasurable and infinite life with the Father. We should strive to make that experience ours and yet we know that it can become ours only in a limited measure and not in the profound fulness which it was the unique privilege of Jesus to enjoy.

It is easy to see the wisdom of giving such a large place in prayer to communion. The general habit of making prayer a continuous petition tends to give us an ignoble conception of God. We come to look upon Him as an omnipotent philanthropist of infinite resources and endless patience who is ever ready to help us in the least things of life and whom it is our duty to besiege with requests for all possible gifts. It is not possible even to imagine any satisfactory relationship of love existing among men on such a basis. What would a father think of his son if that son only made him pay all his bills and help him in all his difficulties and yet did not care to live a life of filial love and friendship? What would a husband think of his wife, if she regarded him all the time merely as the one who would help and put out all his resources to relieve her troubles, and yet did not seek his company with the sole aim of participating in it and being filled with its joy? What would a man think of his friend if he made friendship the pretext for always asking for help and never enjoyed it for its own sake? If we look into our minds, shall we not find that the person whom we love

most is the person whose company we enjoy most without any thought whatsoever of anything he or she can do? If we are devoted to a friend we love to be in his presence, to confide our thoughts in him, to listen to his words, to share our experiences with him. Of course if he is a real friend he will help us when we are in trouble and we shall naturally appeal to him. But do we think of making our relation with him nothing but an opportunity to press him with requests and to gain from him all the help which he can give us? To think of prayer as an opportunity to place all our troubles before God and to ask him for all the help which it is possible for us to imagine, is to have a wrong notion of our relation to God. If we continue to make prayer an opportunity only for petition, we are not likely to aspire after the steady life of communion with God, so full of bliss, for its own sake. Our life of prayer is likely to be a matter of duty and work rather than a source of infinite delight. It is only when we seek the presence of God for the sake of its own unutterable joy without constant thought of the needs and troubles of our lives and of those with whom we are closely connected that our communion with Him can become a reality. Those people are obviously wrong who have made communion with God a matter of narrow and selfish piety withdrawing from the duties they owe to Society in order to indulge it. So also those who have made prayer merely a matter of seeking help in distress have degraded it. Is it not because many people consciously or unconsciously define prayer as petition that they neglect it? If it is considered

as an opportunity for holding intercourse with God it would become the noblest business of our lives.

Bhakti Teaching on Prayer as Communion

One of the striking things about the religious life of India is the clear recognition that life with God is alone of value and that no sacrifice can be too high for that exalted purpose. Hindu Bhaktas have again and again expressed their longing to attain the Divine. For instance, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* puts into the mouth of the Lord the words:

> 'Not the position of Brahmā, not the seat of Indra, not dominion over all the earth, not sway over the lower world, not the powers of Yōga, not freedom from births, nothing but me does the one, who has dedicated himself to me, desire.'[1]

Unfortunately many men in India have been attracted too much by some of the bye-products of a life of communion with God, such as immense physical and psychical power. But the teaching given here shows us that there has also been the emphatic assertion of the supreme importance of God as compared with everything else.

The Rāmāyana of Tulsi-Dās contains this prayer:

> 'Glory to the supporter of the earth, peerless in his splendour; the uncreated, of whom there is no beginning: the fountain of wisdom; the immeasurable; the bestower of honour;

[1] *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, xi. 14. 14.

Whose holy fame is the theme of the Vēdas and Purāṇas; the all-wise, the all generous; the destroyer of ignorance; the many-named, the nameless; the emotionless universe itself, the universal spirit; the indweller of every heart.

Abide with us and protect us for ever, O Rāma; dwell in our heart, tearing asunder the bonds of the world and its miserable contentions and destroying our sensuality and conceit.

O holy Rāma, all blessed and all merciful, fulfiller of every desire of the soul, bestow on us the boon of constant love and devotion.' [1]

The Bhagavad-Gītā places considerable emphasis on the performance of action without desire for results. Why must desire be annihilated? One reason is the dread of the tumult and storm likely to rage in any man whose desires are encouraged. He is apt to find himself torn between longings of various kinds. Likes and dislikes will contend for supremacy in his soul giving rise to doubt, hesitation, disappointment, bitterness and multitudinous evils. By training himself to subdue all his desires a man can avoid this unhappy strife. There is a further reason. Desires lead to actions and actions produce further births and deaths; the victim of desire is entangled in the restless wheel of births and deaths. Freedom from entanglement is the great goal before the mind of the seer who wrote the *Gītā*. It is laid down with such impressive power as the paramount duty of man

[1] *The Rāmāyaṇa of Tulsi-Dās*, tr. by F. S. Growse, Allahabad, 1914; p. 643.

because it will ultimately mean freedom from the weary round of births and deaths. These two reasons must not be ignored, but there is another which should not be forgotten. It is the teaching that desire is right when it is directed towards the Supreme Lord. If Hindu seers were sometimes too sensitive to the evil consequences of desire, they were also quite aware of the supreme importance of desiring nothing but God. If they taught that no desires should be encouraged, it was because, along with other reasons, they realized that the encouragement of other desires would mean that the desire for God would become less compelling. They knew that the only effective way of vitalizing and energizing their passion for God was to cut themselves off from the many alluring things which drew them away from Him. When the rains pour down, water flows all over earth cutting little channels for itself, but a river collects all these streams which spread over the earth to no purpose and steadily adding to their strength and momentum sweeps them into the ocean with all their accumulated energy. So should all our desires flow into God. Otherwise they will become scattered and cut for themselves little narrow channels which will be lost in the earth. This recognition that God is the supreme goal of all desire is a powerful impulse behind much of the religious thought and activity of India. With all eagerness and sincerity we should assimilate this great and dominating impulse of Indian life.

The emphasis laid upon meditation in India shows us this impulse in another form. The desire for

meditation has sometimes been sneered at as an attempt to escape from life with all its obligations and demands; because of it some of the best minds in India have turned traitor and fled from the field instead of fighting a manly fight, grappling effectively and fearlessly with the difficulties of life. It is true that they have carried the practice of meditation to extraordinary lengths and sometimes for selfish reasons. It is also true that they have sometimes sought, not communion with God but the attainment of delightful peace. But these errors should not hide from us the value of right meditation as a means of communion with God.

The Place of Petition in Prayer

If prayer is to be a means of holding fellowship with God, does it mean that we should never ask God for help and strength and guidance? The Fourth Gospel itself says, 'If ye shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do.'[1] And again, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name.'[2] In the prayer we are studying we find Jesus Himself asking the Father for certain things. 'Glorify Thy Son.'[3] 'And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.'[4] In the Synoptic Gospels we find clear exhortations to pray for all that we need, especially in the parable of the importunate friend.[5] If a friend is asked in the

[1] John xiv. 14. [2] John xvi. 23. [3] John xvii. 1.
[4] John xvii. 5. [5] Luke xi. 5–8.

course of the night to give bread, he may hesitate and refuse. But if the man persists long enough in asking he will get it at last. So, Jesus teaches us, we should persist in our prayer to God. He repeats the lesson in the parable of a widow who wrested justice from a judge by her importunity.[1] Jesus Himself prayed on different occasions.[2] Both from the seventeenth chapter of St. John and from the scattered references in the Synoptic Gospels about prayer we are led to the conclusion that there is a place—an important place—in prayer for petition. Each man should settle for himself the exact proportion which petition may occupy in his prayer. According to the intensity and strength of a man's dominant desires will this be decided. There may be a stage when, in the full belief that God is a God of love and that it is our privilege to confide our troubles in Him, we may be led to place before Him all the personal needs we feel with their insistence and urgency. But later we shall probably be wholly unwilling to recite all the petty round of our duties and only wish to concentrate our thoughts on the full realization of the presence and power of God. The things for which we ask in prayer will as surely reflect our love for God and our confidence in Him as our value-judgements of the things for which we ask. It is because we attach importance, sometimes inordinate importance, to certain things that we take them to God in prayer. If

[1] Luke xviii. 1–8.

[2] Matt. xiv. 19, xvi. 36, Mark xx. 34, Mark xiv. 36, Luke xxiii. 46.

our love for God deepens, prayer will become a constant opportunity to receive His spirit flowing into us and to realize that all things work together for good to them that love God, without our stopping at every point to articulate our desire for this or for that.

Whatever our practice may be during normal times, is it possible to refrain from petition when we are face to face with a crisis? If, for instance, some loved one is passing through an agony of pain is it possible to refrain from begging God to relieve it? An attempt to refrain from petition on such an occasion might mean one of two things. Either our belief in the love and readiness of God to help would be impaired—how can God be love if He cannot or will not help us in such distress?—or we would have adopted a stoic indifference which accepts calmly whatever comes. Both these results will be wrong. Even Jesus prayed intensely during His hour of trial and suffering. We are told that that on the eve of the crucifixion He went to the Garden of Gethsamene and prayed most earnestly. His prayer in the midst of such agony was characteristic: 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.'[1] He did not selfishly beg that He might escape the crisis but with the utmost love He surrendered Himself into the Father's hands and prayed for deliverance if that was according to the Father's will. But He did not allow His prayer in this crisis to be obsessed with this one desire for deliverance. He was not so absorbed in His own agony that He had no thought

[1] Luke xxii. 42.

for anything else. In the seventeenth chapter of John too the tremendous crisis is awaiting Him and yet He prays with a calmness and detachment and assurance which are inspiring. He not merely prays for Himself but prays far more for others. And this leads us to our next point.

The Necessity for Intercession

This prayer of Jesus in John xvii. shows the urgency with which Jesus prays for others. In prayer we recollect our oneness with God and remain in the joy of that wonderful power and presence. Our seers in India, as already pointed out, have realized the truth of this and have practised it with fine zeal and full devotion. But they have not to the same extent used prayer as an opportunity for lifting others into that exalted experience. A Sanskrit writer even goes to the length of asking: How will it help a hungry man if *you* eat rice pudding? How will it help another man if you pray for him? This reflects the general trend of religious thought in India. The privilege of interceding for others has not been realized or used in any large way in our country. But if, as we have already seen, our love of God is real only in so far as it becomes actual in our love of man, prayer too, that highest of all religious experience, must be as much for others as for ourselves. Selfishness in prayer is the worst form of selfishness. With a great tragedy before him, Jesus sets aside His personal needs and beseeches His Father in this prayer for His disciples.

This prayer on behalf of others emphasizes the need for their oneness in God. 'Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.' In His own personal experience oneness with God was a profound fact. He lived in the consciousness of it all through His life. It inspired and filled Him with energy and joy. And so He asks with deep love that this same experience may become possible for others. The refrain of His prayer on their behalf is that they might become one with Him just as He is one with the Father. That same profound union which exists between Him and God is to bind the disciples together one with another and with Him. In the same way our prayer must be not merely an abiding in God for ourselves but a beseeching Him to give to others that same great experience. If we love God and know that our highest life consists in being one with Him and if we love man really, we should count it not a task but a joy to pray that others too may share in that wonderful life and become one with the Divine.

But this becoming one with Divine does not mean the annihilation of personality. Even such a master

of the spiritual life as Eckhart interprets the doctrine of oneness in such a way that intercession becomes impossible. He says: 'Praying for aught save God alone is idolatry and unrighteousness. They pray aright who pray in spirit and in truth. When praying for someone, for Henry or Conrad, I pray at my weakest. When praying for no one I pray at my strongest, and when I want nothing and make no request I am praying my best, for in God is no Henry nor no Conrad. To pray to God for aught save God, is wrong and faithless, and, as it were, an imperfection.'[1] But the example of Jesus shows us that this idea is wrong and that praying to God for God necessarily implies prayer for others too. Intercession is as essential a part of prayer as communion or petition. To pray for others is as great a joy as to live in the constant awareness of our intimate dependence and humble relation to Him who is the source of all light, life and love.

[1] *Meister Eckhart*, translated by C. De B. Evans. London, 1924; p. 27.

CHAPTER IX

THE SENSE OF AWE

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh: he that cometh from heaven is above all. What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness. He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John iii. 31–36.

This and the following chapter are necessary in order to complete our account of the doctrine of Bhakti as it is taught in the Gospel and Epistles of John. The way of Bhakti is the way of love. We have seen with what eagerness we should abide in God. This eagerness should mould our entire character Love for God should not be one of the many interests in our life lying somewhere in the margin of our consciousness but should always remain in the very focus of our thought. If we are to love God so

intently, of what character is this love to be? Some religious teachers have insisted with tremendous power on the awfulness of God. They have taught us that God is a stern and righteous being and that the only fitting way of approach to Him is that of great fear. If we love God, should we love God always or should our love for Him give place on occasions to an awful consciousness of His overpowering might and unbending rigour? Should our love be deep and strong, free from all restraint, or should it be held in check by a consciousness of His holiness and majesty?

The first Epistle of John contains a verse which states John's position in no uncertain language. 'There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love.' [1] There is no mistaking the meaning of this emphatic utterance. It teaches most clearly that love and fear cannot exist together. Was John influenced in his thinking by Philo's discussion of the relation between fear and love? According to Philo fear and love are two forms of piety. Fear springs from an idea of God which tends to stress the human aspects of His character, and love out of a pure idea of God. Fear is the earlier and more original relation to God. Love is more difficult to attain and therefore comes later; it is possible only for those who are adorned with virtue.[2] Even if the Fourth Evangelist was not acquainted with the discussions in Philo, he

[1] John iv. 18.

[2] D. W. Lütgert, *Die Liebe in Neuen Testament*, Liepzig. 1905; pp. 43–45.

might well have been acquainted with the discussions in the Apocryphal literature written between the Old and New Testaments. In this period the relation between fear and love is often discussed. The fear of the Lord comes first and is a gift from Him. It is the beginning, and love is the whole, of piety. Fear of the Lord and love for Him are at first recognized as of equal value. Later love for Him comes to be regarded as of greater importance. This is clear, for instance, from the anecdote told of a king who confides a secret to two of his servants, one of whom feared him and the other loved him. The one who loved him kept the secret better.[1] Such ideas may well have shaped John's teaching on the subject.

But we must always try and understand the Johannine writings in the light of the fundamental character of the Old and New Testaments. We study an organ by itself as well as in its relation to the whole organism of which it is a part; the life of a particular fruit is best seen, its purpose and function are best understood, only when the vital relation which it holds to the rest of the tree is taken into account. Likewise the meaning of the Johannine writings is most clear when the fact that they form an integral part of the Bible is sufficiently and clearly recognized. If in this book we have not constantly referred to the teaching given by the other writers of the Bible who in one way or another illumine and support the teaching of John, it is mainly for lack of space. In order to see clearly the characteristic message of John

[1] Lütgert, op. cit., p. 9 ff. cf. Ecclesiasticus i. 10, 11; ii. 15.

it has been necessary to separate him from the rest of the organism. But to understand him aright we should understand the entire organism.

Every student of his writings must agree that John was considerably influenced in his thinking by Hellenic philosophy. But in our eagerness to recognize the Hellenic strain in him we must not forget the Hebrew. If he had assimilated Hellenic culture, he was also at home in Hebrew religion and we have to accept the fact that in his writings we have evidences of both strains. Let us then recall for a moment the background of his Hebrew thought. From first to last the Old Testament is full of the glory of the Lord. Now it is a weird legend, now it is a stirring psalm, now it is a magnificent prophecy which brings before our minds the majesty and power of God. Moses prayed that he might see the glory of God, but that was denied him.[1] David and the Psalmists have left in writing their reverent understanding of the awful power and holiness of God. Here is a Psalm:

> Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty;
> Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
> Or in things too wonderful for me.
> Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul;
> Like a weaned child with his mother,
> My soul is with me like a weaned child.
> O Israel, hope in the Lord,
> From this time forth and for evermore.[2]

[1] Exodus xxxiii. 17–23; xxxiv. 5.
[2] Psalm cxxxi.

Isaiah saw God high and lifted up, with His train filling the entire temple. This glimpse of the Divine, so pure and lofty, filled him with shame and penitence and he cried out in an agony for purity. These and numerous other passages in the Old Testament reveal to us the exalted idea of God held by the Hebrew seers. They knew clearly that God is supremely high and holy and that the way of approach to Him is that of fear and trembling. No light-hearted, irreverent, unclean worship does He desire or tolerate. He Himself is an utterly righteous being working out His purposes for mankind with supreme power and it is the duty of all those who call themselves His children to cleanse themselves and to approach His awful presence in a spirit worthy of Him. He does not permit any easy-going sentimental attitude from His worshippers but expects from them the deepest humility and the greatest reverence. Now John comes in the line of these seers. More than they he has realized the supreme power of love and expounded its workings with great depth and clearness of insight. For all ages his name is associated with the doctrine of love. But it is our task in this chapter to find out whether he has in any way retained a sense of this awe which impresses us in their writings and how he has changed or modified it so as to make it compatible with his doctrine of love.

Christ is from Above

The brief passage quoted at the head of this chapter indicates John's teaching on our present subject

more clearly than any other in his writings. The words are put into the mouth of John the Baptist but as elsewhere they are strongly coloured by the Fourth Evangelist's own vocabulary and thought. In this brief passage there is a progress of thought reaching its climax in the final declaration about the wrath of God. As is usual with him, the writer here focusses all his thought and makes it illumine his central idea of the wrath of God. John the Baptist of the Synoptic Gospel preaches the message of burning wrath, but for other reasons than those of the Fourth Evangelist. The Baptist's insistence on the wrath to come was a clear recognition of the sins of the people and of the doom that awaited them if they did not repent. He was keenly sensitive, as a prophet should be, to the failings of his countrymen, and this gave intensity and pathos to his consciousness of the terrible destiny that was before them. In his case it was a single moral conviction which threw into lurid light this thought of the awfulness of God. The Fourth Evangelist is more complex and more subtle in his thinking. He too has a lofty ethical standard in the light of which he sees the terrible punishment that awaits men, but he sees further aspects of the matter which we must try to analyse.

The first of these aspects appears in the verse, 'He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh: he that cometh from heaven is above all.' Here is a distinct and emphatic recognition of the exalted character of Christ. Translated into ordinary speech

it means that Christ has a different kind of existence, a kind of existence which is far superior to ours. He is made of finer stuff. This thought finds frequent expression in the writings of John. 'Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world.'[1] 'Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do.'[2] This sharp distinction between Himself and the world does not, however, hold true in the same measure of Himself and His disciples. 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.'[3]

Bhakti is primarily a movement of love. But in our eagerness to enjoy God we should not forget that He is from above and that He is above all. He does not belong to the earth. The constant recollection of this fact will infuse into our Bhakti a deep sense of reverence. We should not, we dare not, draw nigh unto God with the same easy familiarity with which we seek the company of a man. Far higher in purpose, far nobler in deed, the eternal Christ demands from us an allegiance that is at once loving and reverent.

The Element of Mystery

'What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness.' The second

[1] John viii. 23. [2] John viii. 42–44.
[3] John xvii. 16.

aspect in the Johannine conception is his recognition that Christ's knowledge is higher than ours. What baffles us so often and fills us with such despair is our ignorance. On all sides we are surrounded by mystery. There are realities which seem hard and terrible but which we know have their meaning in the mind of God The fact of existence, so perplexing to us, must be wholly clear to the eternal God who has given rise to it. The more we contemplate the wisdom and knowledge of God, the more we feel our appalling ignorance. The complex history of human thought is a witness to the earnestness of man's search into the dim beyond. From of old the best of men have forsaken all that the world prizes highly, and have sought earnestly to understand the why and the wherefore of life. The anxiety with which they worked at this task, the joy with which they have welcomed its solution, and the eagerness with which they have spread it among others reveal the longing of the human mind to understand the world. Now Jesus has a means of access to the Father of which we are not aware. All the illimitable knowledge and understanding of God is open to His gaze. He has Himself seen and heard and therefore He speaks with an authority which no one else has. The more we come to understand this, the more our souls will become subdued and overwhelmed in His presence and the deeper will be the reverence with which we shall draw nigh to Him.

God is Truth

'He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this that God is true.' This gives us a further element in John's thought. He believes that God has established a completely effectual moral order. This meets the need of man as a free agent. God has made the world a system in virtue of which the choice of good inevitably leads to goodness and light and life, and the choice of evil to evil and darkness and death. God does not arbitrarily decide to send some men to life and others to death. He has placed before all the choice between life and death.

In primitive religion the caprice of the gods is a constant source of dread. Men on a low level of spiritual culture are apt to consider that the gods in whose hands they are held have their wild whims. In their fear they offer sacrifices and oblations to ward off the strange fury of the gods.

On the other hand, the idea that we live under a fixed system working mightily and steadily towards its ultimate purpose does not evoke craven fear but may well create a sense of awe. God's love not only permits but necessitates the liberty of man. The unfailing operation of the law which leads men now to life and now to death, according to the choice they make for themselves, inspires with awe our quest after the God who is its author. Our love for Him should not be sentimental and self-seeking but awful and reverent.

The All-Comprehensiveness of Christ

'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things unto his hand.' Here we find another aspect of the teaching of the Fourth Gospel. There are other passages which teach that Christ has power and authority over everything. 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he shew him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son also quickeneth whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgement to the Son; that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father.'[1] This insistence on the power of Christ calls for depth and seriousness in our thought about Him. The sphere of Christ's authority is not limited. Our spheres of influence are exceedingly narrow. A man of supreme intellectual gifts often fails in the practical problems of politics and social life. Another who has a genius for dealing with practical problems has nothing to contribute to the deeper life of the spirit. In fact, the limited character of human achievement constantly impresses us and fills us with deep humility. When we believe that Christ has authority over everything, that all human history is shaped by Him, that the very elements do His bidding, we cannot but regard

[1] John v. 19-23.

Him with a deep sense of awe. It will be remembered how when Christ was travelling on the Lake of Galilee a storm burst and the boat was tossed to and fro and the disciples were filled with anxiety. But when He woke He commanded the waters and they obeyed His word and there was peace. So the disciples 'feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'[1] This Synoptic incident is told with a slight but significant variation in the Fourth Gospel.[2] Jesus comes walking on the sea and gets into the boat and the boat reaches the shore straightway, thus implying that the fury of the storm has abated. Does this mean that the Fourth Evangelist thinks that the mere presence of Christ is enough and that it is not necessary for Him even to speak the word of command?

There is an outstanding chapter in the *Bhagavad Gītā* which seeks to express in its own way the tremendous truth that God comprehends everything. After listening to a good deal of Kṛṣṇa's teaching, Arjuna wanted to behold his Lord in his universal form, in the form in which he comprehended everything. Kṛṣṇa, we are told, revealed his universal form. A majestic figure stood before Arjuna blazing with light as of a thousand suns. He had many mouths, hands and breasts. All the universe was found in his tremendous body. Men rushed into him as rivers rush impetuously into the sea and are lost, and as moths hover about a burning flame and are killed. The immediate purpose of this vision was to

[1] Mark iv. 35–41. [2] John v. 16–21.

teach Arjuna that, whether he killed his relations or no, they would all in any case go into the Lord. But the vision has a deeper import just as the whole *Gītā* has a wider message than that which it gave to Arjuna. This vision is meant to teach us that God comprehends everything. All life is derived from Him, exists in Him. In order to impress this great truth vividly before the eyes, it is described in a physical form. This particular form may or may not appeal to us, but we realize that it conveys the teaching that God comprehends everything.

'He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life, but he that obeyeth not the Son, shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.' It is now possible for us to follow the course of thought which has led John to this ultimate conclusion. We have seen already that according to him there is an unchanging moral order in the world in which man's own choice brings about life and death. God does not arbitrarily give life to one man and impose death on another, but He lovingly places before men the alternatives which lead to life and death, and using their individual judgement they choose either the one or the other. It is also evident that in his own personal life John had realized that Jesus was the source of life. That thought is implicit in the Gospel and in the Epistles of John. From these two facts, the conclusion which John draws is reasonable. John does not teach us that salvation depends on a merely intellectual belief. By believing in the Son it is not meant that we have to accept with our minds and to confess with our lips some creed about

Him, but it is meant rather that we should relate our entire personality to Him. We must entrust all that we have into His keeping. His ideal should be the norm to which our life should approximate and his outlook upon the world must be ours. This constant contact with Christ is life but its absence is death. We do not need to imagine that John speaks of a stern God who metes out penalties with unbending rigour. His mind is too fully saturated with the doctrine of love to believe in such an almighty potentate who exercises His authority in relentless fashion. John's doctrine of love leads him to speak of a God who controls and directs the manifold forces of men in a spirit of love.

Now we may come back to the interpretation of John's utterance, 'Perfect love casteth out fear.' Our first idea is that if God is a holy being knowing everything, comprehending everything, ruling over everything, at least those who do not accept Him may be filled with fear, but not those who do. We may think that God has two aspects, one an aspect of love seen and appreciated by His bhaktas, and another an aspect of terror for unbelievers. This idea is found in the legend in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* where Viṣṇu appears to Prahlāda, his faithful devotee, with great love, and to Prahlāda's father, an unbeliever, in a terrible form.[1] But John teaches that even those who accept Him must revere Him as holy and exalted. We know that Jesus Himself speaks of Him as 'holy Father.'[2] The word

[1] *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, vii. 8.
[2] John xvii. 25. Authorized Version.

'holy' has a long and interesting history among the Hebrews.[1] At first it meant only separate, aloof but afterwards pure, righteous, and the phrase 'holy Father' combined both meanings for one who stood in the direct line of Jewish seers. If we can recall to our memory the attitude which Jesus took to His Father all along, we shall see with what deep reverence and great humility He always regarded Him.[2] Unique as Jesus was in His relation to the Father He was ever most humbly conscious of the exalted character of His Father.

The fear which is cast out by perfect love is not this reverent awe but slavish dread. A slave fears or even dreads his master. Through want of understanding or of ability or through forgetfulness he may incur punishment at any moment. But we learn that our relationship with God is not that of servant to master but of friend to friend,[3] where love is hallowed by awe. Only thus can we effectively realize His presence.

The Need in India for Emphasis on Awe in Religion

It is particularly necessary in India to emphasize the element of awe in religion. A comparison of the Fourth Gospel with Hindu Bhakti writings makes this need quite clear. Hindu Bhaktas emphasize the emotion of love so much that they lose sight of the

[1] Rudolf Otto. *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford, 1925.
[2] John xiv. 28; v. 19–30; vi. 37 ff; 44 ff; vii. 17; viii. 28 f, 38.
[3] John xv. 15.

sterner qualities of God. In their anxiety to love and be loved they have approached God with a familiarity degenerating into carelessness. Love, that way of approach which has proved so facinating to the Bhakta, easily lends itself to such development. In some indefinable way, love melts down all barriers, and there seems to be the utmost familiarity between God and the devotee. From fondness the Hindu Bhaktas often play with God and rebuke Him and make fun of Him. Where many instances could be given, one must suffice.

'If we want to quarrel, let us quarrel with God and fix our thoughts on Him. Thus the best of men have told us.

'Why should we hide ourselves from God? If he will not meet us, he is welcome not to meet us.

'Let him enjoy his love of place in Vaikuntha. He is welcome to keep us moving from land to land.

'If God has filled His heart with pride, there let Him dwell by Himself.

'As long as we grasp his nature in our minds, we shall live happily here; we shall sing joyfully songs about Govindā.

'Tuka says: This is God's way of letting things astray; see we rock ourselves to and fro with joy.' [1]

No ancient Hebrew saint would have written such lines. Far be it from us to decry the enthusiasm or the love which Tukārām and the other Bhaktas bore for God. But it is necessary to make it clear that the tendency to forget the sublime aspects of God results in such passages.

[1] *The Poems of Tukārām.* Op. cit., vol. iii; p. 181.

The Hindu tendency to neglect the more awful side of God's character arises often, as has already been said, from the tenderness of their love. There are also other reasons. The doctrine of love teaches that God comes into our hearts; such a feeling, borne out by experience, is apt to emphasize the nearness of God rather than His aloofness and greatness and majesty. An indwelling God, a God who is ready to live in the hearts of men, is more apt to be considered as easily accessible rather than as exalted and awful. There are passages in Hindu literature which emphasize His exalted character, but the general tendency is to speak more often and to realize more clearly the nature of God as a loving Being who lives in the hearts of His servants. Again, the desire to see God in everything, admirable as such a desire is, leads to the attempt to place the material and the spiritual on the same level. If God is all, He is the rock and the river, the tree and the bird as much as He is the eternal Spirit. God not merely dwells in the heart of man but sustains the whole universe; indeed some thinkers go to the extent of saying that He *is* the whole universe. Where it is possible to see God everywhere, the temptation is certainly to forget His more exalted character. Once again, the Hindu tendency to ignore sin may explain this attitude towards God. There are indeed passages confessing with poignant shame the sins which have been committed.

'My race is evil, and my nature bad; evil is my outer self as well.

Sin alone have I in abundance; my very attempt to appear good is evil.

I am altogether bad; I am not wise or friendly with good people.

I am neither a beast nor am I without higher qualities: midway I stand.

But I can talk a great deal about things that should be hated.

Evil is my dwelling place, for I never give but only beg.

Miserable man that I am, why was I ever born?' [1]

Yet the tendency to feel the sting and the bitterness of the world and of its fleeting character is stronger. Because of this difference in emphasis, the feeling of unworthiness to hold a relationship with the eternal Spirit does not find as strong and as emphatic an utterance as it does in Hebrew literature. And where there is no such personal feeling of unworthiness making the soul sink in the dust as a mark of its penitence, there is not the same emphasis on the holiness and purity and exalted character of God.

We have already referred in this chapter to the vision of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*. This striking vision setting forth impressively an exalted idea of God has given a different outlook to the entire *Gītā*. This vision is the climax of the thought of the *Gītā*. Perhaps it is this which has given, along with other characteristic features, an overwhelming importance to the *Gītā* in all Hindu Bhakti literature. Like a blazing light in the centre, it sheds its illumination both over the chapters which precede and over those which

[1] Appar, 'Kulam Pollen.'

follow. It is important to note that the immediate result of the vision is a prayer for forgiveness.

'Thou hast been regarded by me as friend and addressed impertinently O Kṛṣṇa! O Yādava! O friend!

Without knowing this[1] thy greatness, I have done so through carelessness or love.

And while playing, lying, sitting, or eating alone, or in company, Oh firm one! thou might have been disregarded in fun.

I crave forgiveness of thee who art immeasurable,

Father art thou of the world, mobile or immobile, the adorable one and venerable preceptor too.

In the three world there is none to equal Thee.

How then could there be anyone surpassing Thee? O Thou of matchless glory!'[2]

This sense of awe awakened for a moment by the vision of the universal form is not, however, the true awe that follows a realization of man's own littleness before the over-powering majesty of God's character, it seems to be only the shrinking from a realization of the flaming abyss of Time, devouring all things; such shrinking is terrific but not moral. The editors of the *Mahābhārata* who give us the story are not ashamed to represent Kṛṣṇa on several subsequent occasions as an adept in plausible arguments and treacherous devices.

The result of realizing the exalted character of God is always different. It fills us continually with penitence

[1] As shown in the vision.
[2] *Bhagavad-Gītā*, xi. 41, 42.

and leads us to the Divine in a mood of shame and sorrow. We continue to love Him but our love is subdued and humbled by a deep feeling of our own unworthiness. The glorious and majestic God is indeed willing to come into our hearts but in order that this tremendous experience may become possible, it is necessary for us to cleanse our hearts with the utmost diligence so that He may enter in with all His majesty and glory.

CHAPTER X.

THE VALUE OF JNĀNA-MĀRGA

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye known him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how sayest thou, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask me anything in my name, that will I do. If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you. Yet a little while,

and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou will manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

John xiv. 6–23.

If Bhakti is the true pathway to God what should be our estimate of Jñāna, regarded by many in India as *the* way of approaching God? Some have sincerely felt that the most effective means of reaching God is Bhakti but others have just as strongly been convinced that it is Jñāna, meaning by Jñāna a clear understanding of reality. The relation between Bhakti and Jñāna has been variously stated by various Bhaktas. In his *Tiruvācakam*, Māṇikkavācakar has no hesitation in saying that Siva's gracious dealings with him have in no way been conditioned by his having insight.

'Wise One! Ambrosia! Didst thou consider thy servile dog wise when thou mad'st me thine?
Thou didst see my ignorance when thou mad'st me thine that day.
Was I wise or not wise? Do thou tell me, O Lord!'[1]

[1] Māṇikkavācakar 'Arivane! Amuthe!'

Appar states his own position frankly:

'Some sages worship thee with Jñāna.
I worship thee not with Jñāna.
I see others worship thee with Jñāna.
I too shall worship thee with Jñāna.'[1]

These words seem to recall an inner struggle in the mind of the poet.

The problem of Jñāna and its place in religious life is historically weighty as well as vital in practice. How can we most effectively experience God, by love or by knowledge? Is the heart or the head the seat of religion? If our choice rests on love, shall we neglect knowledge or shall we keep it in a lower place? The meaning and value of Jñāna is of significance to all men who seek God, particularly to those who, as in India, have been dealing with this problem for centuries.

The Johannine Doctrine of Knowledge

'To know' is a characteristic Johannine expression. It will be observed that it occurs often in the passage which forms the basis of this study. If we know Jesus we know the Father. The world does not know the Spirit of truth. In that day they shall know that He is in His Father and they in Him and He in them. The classic saying about the importance of knowledge however occurs in the seventeenth chapter. 'This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.'[2] In this great saying is concentrated all John's

[1] Appar, 'Jñānathāl.' [2] John xvii. 3.

emphasis upon the importance of knowledge. Even if no other passage existed, this forceful utterance would convince us how much weight the Gospel attaches to knowledge. It is necessary to understand what this knowledge is and how it is attained.

There might well have been certain external circumstances which led John to lay stress on knowledge. In his day there were Mystery religions on the one hand and Gnostic systems of thought on the other which assigned to it a place of supreme importance. This is not to say that contemporary religion supplied the only reason for John's attitude. He has spoken so fully and frequently of knowledge because of elements in his own religious experience which call for such emphasis. But he might well have used some of the thought-forms of his time to express these inner facts of his personal life. Nor does he attach to knowledge the same content as did the Mystery religions and the Gnostic systems. The Mystery cults range through the whole gamut of human experience. In some the secret knowledge given to the initiate seems to have been of an elementary character merely explaining the nature of the rites or the details of the myth lying behind the rites. These are the peculiar property of the worshippers of the cult and are not revealed by them to outsiders. In some, as we have already seen,[1] crude rites such as the eating of flesh were considered the means of union with the God, this union securing knowledge. In the higher stages such as those recorded by Apuleius, the worshipper realizes

[1] p. 136

the deity through a vision. By all these means knowledge was sought. And this *summum bonum* of the religious life was given from heaven and appropriated by man not through intellectual processes but by emotional experiences. Myths, rites, sacraments and visions made their primary appeal to the emotional nature of man. The Gnostics differed widely among themselves and it is extremely difficult to sum up their diverse beliefs and practices in any general statement. The soul on its way to the heavenly realm must know the rites and the passwords. Redemption is a gift of divine activity passed on by a saviour but man appropriates that saving activity through his knowledge of how the upward journey might be accomplished. The primary concern of knowledge is the redemption of the individual soul and the light by which that redemption is completed is the knowledge given from above to man. The idea of knowledge held among Gnostics is fundamentally the same as that held in the Mystery religions though it is less emotional in its processes and more magical in its content than in them.[1]

In John's day—as in ours—there were those who gave pre-eminence to knowledge. It is clear even to one who reads the Gospel for the first time, that he realized the importance of knowledge in religious experience. It comes directly from God. Because God loves us and we love Him He reveals Himself. 'He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall

[1] Mary Redington Ely, *Knowledge of God in Johannine Thought*, New York, 1925; pp. 78–100.

be loved of my father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.' Again, 'No longer do I call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I heard from my father I have made known unto you.'[1] Out of the fulness of His love, He lays open to us the depths of His being and helps us in our arduous search for Him. The Father in his dealings with the Son follows the same principle. He reveals Himself fully to the Son, because of the love which He bears to the Son. 'For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things that himself doeth.'

By knowledge is not meant an understanding of the whole field of reality but the intimate knowledge of God's person. The profound need in human life is union between man and God. For this man needs to understand God; he does not need to understand the entire world nor the whole range of existence. In understanding God, he also comes to understand in a measure the meaning of life. If a teacher teaches mathematics in an impersonal way his pupils are grateful to him for his instruction and if he is a man of charm they may even feel drawn to him by his personality. No teacher can wholly avoid being read and understood by his students however aloof he may be and yet what a different man that teacher is, say, to his own wife to whom he reveals himself. His wife understands him and is able to enter into intimate sympathy with him as others cannot. When there is readiness to lay bare the ultimate springs of life, the knowledge that is possible

[1] John xv. 15.

has wonderful clearness and richness. To compare great things with small, our knowledge of God is this kind of personal, intimate knowledge that is given to us by God Himself.

John and the Hindu Bhaktas are at one in their conviction that love is the supreme revealer. Men want to know God and in their anxiety try different methods. But all these are of no avail. God, however, in the fulness of His love unveils Himself before His loving children and reveals to them the wonder and the depth of His personality.

The idea that God's love is the supreme revealer is frequently found in Hindu Bhakti literature.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says:

> 'This Supreme Soul cannot be attained by the teaching of others, nor by knowledge nor by much study. Only he who is elected by this One can attain Him. Only to him does He manifest His own form.'[1]

A remarkable passage occurs in *Tiruvācakam*:

> 'From them who toiled with mystic scrolls didst hide Thyself!
> From those who in their homes practised virtue, Thou didst hide Thyself!
> From those who, in union with Thee, fixed their contemplative soul
> With painful effort; Thou didst hide Thyself!
> From those who boasted to see Thee by some rare device,

[1] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, ii. 23.

By that same device, there,—didst Thou hide Thyself!
Benign, regarding all, receiving with abundant grace,
As male appearing Thou dost change to neutral form,
And in a bright-browed female form dost hide Thyself far off.
Bidding the senses five depart,—passing over every trackless hill
With frames scarce living, spurning all delights,
Ascetic saints in contemplation dwell;—in their souls Thou fitly hid'st Thyself!
Seeming one thing, then not, eluding knowledge, Thou dost hide Thyself!
When e'en of old I strove to find Thee, when to-day I strive,
Thou hid'st Thyself, Deceiver! But we've found Thee now!'[1]

Behind these words we seem to hear much of the lament and tragic cry of India's fervent devotees, a cry not without echoes from other parts of the world. They have pored over the Scriptures; they have lived pious and devout lives in the sanctity of the home; they have concentrated their minds and practised meditation; they have endured austerities, but all this has been of no avail. God has hidden Himself from them. But He manifests Himself now to the men who follow the path of love, the path of Bhakti. Not

[1] Māṇikkavācakar, 'Uṛaiyuḷi.' This translation is taken from G. U. Pope, *The Tiruvācaṣam*, Oxford, 1912; p. 26.

Vedic lore, not well-ordered meditation, not asceticism, but love unveils the Divine in all its beauty and wonder.

Knowledge and the Will

Is the knowledge that is given to us appropriated by our intellect, by our will, or by our emotion? In approaching this question we must remember that John did not analyze the mind into thought, feeling and will as modern psychology does. But that in a general way he understood the diverse elements in man's thinking and that he was more or less aware of the fundamental distinction between the different activities of the mind may well be assumed.

John was no believer in ecstasy but he was full of the warmth of personal love. His teaching that action is the essential complement of love gives strength and stability to this emotion. As he takes love out of the realm of emotion and links it with action, so also he takes knowledge out of the realm of speculation and links it with action. Knowledge with John is not speculation but rather the result of the will and the intellect working together. Everyday experience proves how different knowledge is when it is tested in action. The knowledge that comes from constant doing is indeed different from the knowledge which comes in a moment of intense feeling. Our passage declares: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.' Elsewhere

we read still more clearly: 'For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.'[1]

A characteristic word in John's writings is 'truth.' The teaching about truth is given in different ways. The reference is now to the believer doing or knowing the truth, now to Christ who is the truth and now to the Comforter whom He will send and who is also the Spirit of truth. In the passage at the head of this chapter occurs the great utterance of Jesus, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one cometh unto the Father but by me.' Again, 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you the Comforter that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you and shall be in you.' The important point is that Jesus and the Comforter who comes to carry on His work are both true and that the relation which exists between them and the believers should be true.

It is necessary that we should seek to understand clearly the meaning of the Johannine writer when He speaks of God as truth. The meaning we attach to his words will depend upon whether we think that he was more affected by Hebrew or by Hellenic influences. The Hebrew idea of truth is ethical. The Hellenic idea of truth is metaphysical. The difference between the

[1] John iii. 20–21.

ethical and metaphysical interpretations of truth may be brought out by a passage from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and the comment made on it by a leading Hindu commentator. This passage is given here only as an illustration that is likely to help students of Hindu religious thought. It is not meant that the ethical and the metaphysical interpretations suggested here exactly correspond to the Hebrew and the Hellenic ideas of truth.

In a hymn of praise given in the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* occur the following words:

'Thou art the efficient truth, the supreme truth, the three-fold truth, the origin of truth and the truth of truth.

Thou hast truth and justice as thy eyes.

Thou hast truth as thy soul.

To thee, our refuge, we surrender ourselves.' [1]

In explaining this passage the commentator suggests two different meanings, one ethical and the other metaphysical. Sometimes truth is interpreted as the resolute capacity of God to save those who have approached Him and as justice to all and at other times as including all that exists, as the origin of the five elements which are true and as being the source of nature, man and time. In other words, according to the one view, God is true because He is faithful to His devotees, saving them according to His word and dealing out justice to them impartially. Integrity is His distinguishing mark. What He says will come to pass. The promises which He makes will receive their

[1] *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, xi. 2.

fulfilment in due course. And according to the other view, He is true because the entire universe exists in Him. He is the ultimate ground of all the worlds. From Him even the elements have come forth and in Him all nature and time continue to have their existence.[1]

This passage with its comment is given by way of illustration. Apart from the important question it raises as to what significance should be attached to it in comparison with the words of Jesus, it enables us to see what possible meanings Jesus might have meant by describing Himself as the truth. A natural interpretation might well be that when Christ is spoken of as the truth, it is meant that He is the ultimate reality and that there is a certain soundness and plausibility in our worship of Him. This would be in line with the Hellenic strain in John's thought. But the emphasis of John throughout his writings is so largely on ethical issues that we are led to interpret the word 'truth' in an ethical sense. Early in the Gospel occur the words, 'The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we behind his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.'[2] Almost immediately afterwards, 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'[3] The close connexion between grace and truth here implied suggests that truth is understood ethically. Grace is primarily a characteristic of God in His dealings with men. When therefore truth is so closely linked with grace, we suppose that truth too is understood in the same way and not as an

[1] *Munibhāva-Prakāśikā*, ad. cit.
[2] John i. 14.
[3] John i. 17.

ultimate attribute. Again we are taught to worship God 'in spirit and truth.'[1] From this it is quite obvious that truth cannot be meant in any metaphysical sense. What is given us is an injunction as to the way in which we should worship God. Truth is here an attitude of mind on the part of the worshipper, not a metaphysical attribute. We may then say that Christ is described as the truth in the sense that He is capable of carrying out and fulfilling His word. We have no reason to suppose that truth is used in a philosophical sense with regard to Christ and in an ethical sense with regard to man. While such a distinction in thought is inherently possible, there is no ground for us except that of conjecture to say that John has made it. The more natural theory is that he uses the word throughout in one sense only, though with such slight modifications as the context may require.

Thus understood, the frequent teaching of John about truth shows that in his idea of knowledge too the ethical element holds an important place. Knowledge is knowledge of truth. Knowledge of truth, in the sense of metaphysical reality, is apt to be largely an intellectual apprehension: knowledge of truth, in the sense of ethical sincerity, is apt to be largely an ethical fact. As John seems to use truth in an ethical sense, the mode of understanding that truth must also be held to be largely ethical.

[1] John iv. 24.

Knowledge and the Intellect

That the process which leads to the assimilation of the knowledge given is also reflective is evident from many characteristic features of Johannine thought. We note in the first place that John has chosen the biographical form for his teaching. This form he uses with considerable elasticity putting into it much of his own personal reflection and comment. He did not write as a historian, but history provided him with the starting point of his thought. He might have written liturgies, hymns, dramas, reports of ecstatic vision but he preferred to make an appeal to the intellect by solid facts, though he overlaid them with his own interpretation. His constant reference to witnesses and testimony suggests that he does not want us to take things for granted. We are to believe not through any overpowering ecstatic experience but because of the facts which bear testimony to Jesus being the Son of God. Again, miracles are 'signs.' They point beyond themselves to the power of Christ and show His divine origin. They prove His tremendous power and authority. Once again, the knowledge of God is put before us as a constantly growing experience. There is no one supreme crisis of vision or rapture that places the devotee in the entire possession of all knowledge, but there is a constant advance. Jesus has many things to say to the disciples; they cannot bear them; but when the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide them in all truth.[1] When

[1] John xvi. 12, 13.

washing the disciples' feet Jesus told them that although they did not know then what He did, they would know and understand later.[1] It is clear that the knowledge which John speaks of is the appropriation of a divine gift through the intellect though it has also in it the warmth of personal love and the stability of action. We love God and divine revelation becomes a part of our personal life by our reflective processes working with the emotional and the active processes.[2]

The Significance of Emphasis on the Intellect and the Will

This prominent place which John has given to the intellect has a special significance for the development of Bhakti in India. As a Hindu writer says, 'Religio-erotics, with their piercing glance, their prophetic and dominating tone, their studied manners and appearances exert a powerful influence. Their self-assurance, the fire of their faith, their feeling of infallibility, all combine to fascinate, to hypnotise, average humanity. Wherever and whenever, whether in the East or the West, whether in Hinduism or Christianity, the path of devotion has been trodden with heedless and headlong steps unguided by the reins of intellect, such has ever been the case.'[3] Bhakti is a valuable approach to God, but it should be checked and controlled by the thought and the will. Otherwise it will degenerate into extravagant and useless emotion.

[1] John xiii. 7. [2] M. R. Ely, *op. cit.* pp. 136–151.
[3] Govinda Dās, *Hinduism*, Madras, 1924; p. 172. cf. also p. 263.

But an undue emphasis in religion upon an intellectual understanding of truth has tended to spiritual pride. The man who feels that he has attained high flights of knowledge is apt to be filled with arrogance. Having attained that knowledge, the object of supreme desire on the part of many, he thinks that he has reached a higher state of religious development than others. The gradual formation of a circle of such persons leads to a distinction between the favoured few who have mastered the secrets and the unfortunate many who are beyond the pale and the gulf between them keeps on widening. Again an over-emphasis on knowledge is apt to bring about the cold intellectualism that is busy with speculation and study rather than with intense and warm living, and the outcome is often a development of the intellect at the expense of the other parts of man's complex being.

Now John avoids these extremes. We have seen how wide and comprehensive his message is.[1] There is no closed circle in his teaching; it has a universal range. And he believes in the warmth and tenderness of personal love. In the middle ages European Mysticism sprang into new life as a reaction against the scholastic obsession with minute issues of no moment. In India the Bhakti movement gained a new ascendency in view of the cold impersonal abstraction of thought to which Śankara had reduced religion. In view of these movements in religious history John's teaching becomes clear. There is wonderful wisdom in the balanced and discerning account he has given of

[1] pp. 55, 56.

knowledge. Knowledge is necessary and yet it is not the first necessity. It is assimilated by the intellect and yet it is constantly enriched with feeling and tested by action.

Jñāna and Bhakti, then, are but different phases of the same relation; they are different aspects of the same experience. A study of the Johannine writings makes it clear that the great goal of knowledge is eternal life, that is, a life lived in union with Christ. 'And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.'[1] So also the great goal of love is eternal life. 'Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.'[2] Knowledge and love lead us in the same direction with this difference, if there is any difference, that in knowledge there is a larger emphasis on our intellectual activities, while in love there is a greater stress on our emotional activities. But in both we respond with our whole being to the gracious workings of the eternal Christ in our inmost hearts. The Fourth Evangelist is thoroughly aware of the importance and supreme value of knowledge and yet he prefers to lay all his emphasis on love.

Christ the Light

In the prologue to the Fourth Gospel Christ is called the Light. 'There was the true light, even the light

[1] John xvii. 3. [2] John xv. 9, 10.

which lighteth every man, coming into the world.'[3] The evangelist thus emphasizes Christ's work as the illuminator. If we feel the urge of the Infinite within us, if we find it possible to discern between what is high and spiritual and what is low and mean, if we can catch glimpses of another world of beauty and goodness, if we are able to follow the gleam, it is because a light that is not of this earth has been kindled in our hearts by Christ. As the work of creation is the task of the Logos, so also the work of guidance is His. Religious men of all countries and creeds have recognized that the work of carrying on the world involves constant divine energy. But the work of this energy in illumining the minds of men has not been equally recognized. John however dwells on it often.

In our passage Jesus Himself promises to come into the individual soul and to illumine it. 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.' What a glorious prospect is opened to us by these words! In a most intimate way Jesus will dwell in our hearts and enlighten us from time to time. In reading the Gospels we are greatly attracted by the figure of Jesus, His love, His sincerity, His devotion. We are also particularly struck with His insight and knowledge. How illumining is His whole teaching! The immortal words which He has uttered have given an entirely new meaning to our knowledge of God and

[3] John i. 9. cf. also verses 4, 5, 7, 8.

man and life. With supreme clearness He has told us of the Father who deals with men in love and grace, of the paramount duty of man to love God and man and of the unreality and fleeting nature of the world. The insight which Jesus has will become a permanent possession of our souls. We have not merely the historical records of His teaching to study and meditate on, but we can expect His own personal teaching and guidance from day to day. To the one who lives with Him in love there will come flashes of insight, promptings towards a higher life, glimpses of transcendent beauty, all enabling him to rise higher. Always will the immanent Christ, by whose life as a historical figure we are already captivated, energise in the depths of our souls pouring into us floods of light. In the blaze of His divine glory we shall see all things in their true perspective. Such radiance will invest the whole of life with undimmed clearness and reveal it as it is. And such constant revelation will take place with the intimacy and warmth of personal love.

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GLOSSARY

Bhakti Mārga—the way of love.

Bhaktas—lovers of God.

Bhakti Literature—the literature written by Bhaktas.

Vedantic tat tvam asi—'Tat tvam asi' is a verse in the *Chāndōgya Upaniṣad*. It means 'That art thou.' Sankara interprets that verse to mean that the individual soul is the same as the Divine Soul.

Advaitin—a follower of Sankara.

Yōga—a method of concentration.

Yōgin—a follower of Yōga.

Śaiva—a worshipper of Siva.

Vaiṣnava—a worshipper of Viṣnu.

Antaryāmin—the indwelling God.

Jīvan-Mukti—the doctrine that release is possible in this life.

Karma—deeds which cause a cycle of births and deaths.

Ānanda—joy or bliss.

Brahman—God.

Ṛṣis—saints.

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