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THE GOSPEL AND INDIA'S HERITAGE

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CHRISTIANITY AS BHAKTI MĀRGA
WHAT IS MOKSHA?[1]
TEMPLE BELLS
CHRIST IN THE INDIAN CHURCH
CHURCH UNION: AN INDIAN VIEW (out of print)
CHRIST ANSWERS YOUTH'S PROBLEMS (Jointly with Canon Streeter)
THE SADHU

[1] Published in England under the title *The Johannine Doctrine of Life.*

THE GOSPEL AND INDIA'S HERITAGE

BY

A. J. APPASAMY, M.A. (Harvard), D.PHIL. (Oxon.)

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MADE IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO
MY WIFE

334265

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Ah Aryan land, blest, blest is she!
A magic might is in her name;
Unrivalled stands here ancient fame;
And we, her sons, thrice blessed are we!

Before her sages' proud array,
Her saints' and warriors' marshalled row,
The great ones of the earth bend low
And at her feet their tribute pay.

Nature, in glad and loving pride,
Smiles on this land with tender eyes.
"Here only I behold," she cries,
"My heart's whole longing satisfied."

Hail, happy omens! presaging
The goal of all my country's woes—
Pledge that from out her travail-throes
A new and glorious birth shall spring.

Yea, at the end of pregnant strife,
Enthroned as *Guru* of the earth,
This land of Hind shall teach the worth
Of Christian faith and Christian life.[1]

[1] N. V. Tilak, *Khristayānā*, ii., translated by J. C. Winslow, *The Ashram Review*, July 1939.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I SHOULD like to begin this book with a personal statement. My father was a convert from Hinduism. He was baptized as a Christian when he was twenty-four years old. He had become a Christian after a good deal of searching inquiry; he practised as a lawyer and was highly successful in his profession. But along with his work as a lawyer he took an active part in religious work and was faithful in his personal habits of prayer and spiritual reading. Not content with this, he retired from the legal profession in his fifty-fourth year and devoted himself entirely to prayer, meditation and religious work.

He was a keen evangelist. He was never tired of bearing witness to the power of Christ in his own life. He did this in personal interviews with Hindus and in small meetings for them which he arranged wherever he went. He was well known in the district and his words were always listened to with considerable respect. Because of his social position he was able to reach a great many Hindus who would not ordinarily come to hear a Christian address. He wrote several pamphlets in Tamil and in English, telling the story of his conversion and giving his many reasons for his continuing to follow Christ. Both in what he said and in what he wrote, the note of personal testimony was clear and strong.

A convert himself, he had always a warm corner in his heart and in his home for new converts. There were always two or three converts, generally from the higher castes, whom he supported and for whose spiritual instruction he made careful arrangements. From the year the Indian Missionary Society was founded in Tinnevelly to the time of his death, he was closely associated with the work of the Society as its President for a period of over twenty years, and took a deep interest in the growing activities of the Society in the diocese of Dornakal. He was known as a practical man with sound judgment and his advice was often sought about the policy and work of the Society. When he died he made careful financial provision that much of the evangelistic work which he had been personally carrying on during his life should be continued after his death.

Throughout his life he was an earnest student of religion. He studied the New Testament daily and pondered deeply on its teaching. His copy of the New Testament in big type was well thumbed, its pages yellow with time and bearing innumerable pencil marks. He never seemed to study the Old Testament with the same care; he only occasionally read it. He also read deeply, though not extensively, Christian theological and devotional books. He had always on hand at least one good book which he read slowly, making endless marks with pencil, and on which he meditated a good deal, and which he often discussed with his children and his friends.

Along with his study of Christianity he carried on a careful study of Hinduism. He extended his knowledge of Hinduism by long and frequent conversations with Tamil and Sanskrit *Pandits*. As a boy I remember such *Pandits* often coming to our house and telling my father what they understood their sacred Scriptures to teach. In his pamphlets he often quoted from the Hindu Scriptures passages which helped him to understand his own Christian position better. He also clearly pointed out at what points Christianity was different from Hinduism.

In his sixty-seventh year a strange, new passion began to consume him, the passion to see God. He came in contact with a Hindu *Yogi* who taught him a method of meditation. My father followed carefully the instructions given by the *Yogi* and for a period of twelve years until his death he practised *Yoga* regularly every morning and evening. It was his habit to sit with folded legs, gazing on a stretch of grass or a sheet of water, and to be lost in contemplation. He passed through many mystical experiences, some of which he described to us and to his intimate friends.[1]

It is quite possible to criticize some of the things which my father did. It may be said that he ought not to have desired to see God. All the great Christian saints have taught us that such a desire is apt to be misleading. A man ought to aspire only for a life of communion with God, not for a vision of God. Modern psychology confirms the teachings of the saints, and points out that visions are often simply born of the desire to see God. Fresh from Oxford with my scientific study of religious experience, I did tell him this but he was not convinced. He felt sure that he actually saw God in every one of his visions. I could not but sympathize with his earnest desire to get to know

[1] See his *Fifty Years' Pilgrimage of a Convert* (C. L. S. Madras).

more clearly and more closely the God whom he had been worshipping through the years and yet who had seemed remote and far away.

It may also be said that he had no business to go to a Hindu *Yogi* for instruction in meditation. There are valuable books in the Christian Church on meditation and some of these he probably knew. And yet there was no person, among the Christians he knew, who was skilled in meditation and who could have guided him. If he had been a Roman Catholic, he might perhaps have gained some help of this kind. But certainly as a Protestant there was no Christian who could have guided him when he was engaged in a desperate struggle to come to know God more clearly and intimately than during all the previous years of his long life. As a matter of fact, I used to observe that in the deeper things of life he got very little help from Christian teachers during the last years of his life. He never missed going to church but he always complained that the sermons were all meant only to deepen the sense of sin and to show that God's forgiveness is available for men. The importance of this he knew well. It was really the Christian doctrine that in Christ God's justice and mercy were reconciled which had made him take the final step towards Christ. He had been taught that God's justice required that all men should be punished heavily for their sins and that His mercy demanded their complete forgiveness; on the Cross of Calvary both these claims were satisfied.

But my father felt that there were other things in the Christian life besides penitence, confession and the experience of God's forgiving love. The Christian saints say that in the religious life there are three stages of progress. In the first stage, men are penitent, confess their sins and are assured of God's pardon; in the second, they attain a clearer knowledge of God; and in the third, they experience fellowship with Him.[2] While no man leaves behind completely one or other of these stages, growth in the spiritual life is gradual movement from penitence and confession to a deeper knowledge of God, and then on again to a closer fellowship with Him. Even the maturest saint, to whom fellowship with God is real, must be truly penitent and confess his sins regularly. But surely there is a difference between the first stage when the sense of sin and of a strenuous fight against it is supreme, and the third stage when the experience of fellow-

[2] Known technically as the purgative, illuminative and unitive stages.

ship with God is of outstanding importance. My father's idea was that a great deal of the Christian preaching to which he listened Sunday after Sunday was concerned with the first stage only and had very little to offer by way of guidance for the second and the third stages. It also used to amuse him a little that the very first words of the Morning Service in the Anglican Prayer Book are about the wicked and not about God.

I have written at such length about my father as my knowledge of his religious experience has been responsible for some of the convictions which underlie this book. I have come to believe that there is a rich spiritual heritage in India which we Christians ought to use. There has been a profound search for God in India through the ages. The experiences and the ideals of the *Bhaktas* of India, which are found in their religious books and also in some of the devout Hindus of to-day, have a great deal that is of value to teach us. The fact that we recognize that there is much in the higher types of Hindu thought and life which can teach us does not mean that we lose something of our loyalty to Christ. The passion to win others for Christ need not become less keen for that reason. A Christian may be a fervent evangelist while at the same time he tries to understand other people's religious experiences and to learn from them. The knowledge of my father's spiritual struggles and successes has also led me to the conclusion that Christian theology in India should be restated with fellowship with God as the central experience. In popular Christianity this experience does not occupy the important place which it has in the New Testament. A good deal of our Christian thought and practice will be different if it is realized that fellowship with God, resulting in devoted work for Him, is the primary motive of the Christian life.

Another personal experience must be told. It was my great privilege to come to know Sādhu Sundar Singh intimately. I was writing at Oxford a thesis on the Gospel of St. John and Hindu *Bhakti* Literature. At that time (1920) Sādhu Sundar Singh came to England on a preaching mission and visited Oxford. Though I had read a good deal about him, I had not met him until then. From that time until his mysterious disappearance in 1929 I saw him several times, often spending many days in his company, and I heard him give several addresses. I had long and intimate talks with him on spiritual matters. I studied carefully all his printed sermons and books. His deep, inner life of communion with Christ, issuing in abundant practical activities, impressed me greatly. Prayer was very dear to

him and he often preached about it. During his meditations he saw the Living Christ and had frequent converse with Him. He did not often speak about these experiences but he spoke about them occasionally and at great length. He was himself a convert from the Sikh religion and he did not consider that there was anything of value in Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam or any of the other non-Christian religions of the world. But one felt that his was a characteristically Indian soul, with a really Indian outlook. He thought and spoke in pictures and his frequent parables were like the stories which the Indian religious teachers always used. The life of renunciation which he led was a literal following of the *Sannyāsi* ideal. He sought for peace with the same eagerness with which devotees in India have always longed for it. He dwelt much in the immediate Presence of God and he realized clearly that it was not his own spirit but the Spirit of God which guided him and controlled him in all his highest activities.

My contact with Sādhu Sundar Singh strengthened some of the convictions which had been taking shape in my home. I realized that there is a spiritual heritage of great value in India, and that Christians in India should make the fullest possible use of it. All the riches of devotion and prayer available in India should be offered up to Christ. The experience of communion with God, resulting in purity of life and in continued efforts to make Him real to men, is of fundamental importance in the Christian life.

What is the Heritage of India?

I am not saying anything in this book about the heritage of Islam. India has over seventy millions of Muslims; there are more Muslims in this country than in any other. Islam has been in existence in India for over nine centuries now and its followers play a great and important part in the life of the land. Thousands of our Christians have come directly from Islam or are the descendants of converts from it. Their spiritual heritage is really from Islam. Indian Christians with a Muslim background would naturally desire to offer up to Christ anything of special value in their own heritage. I am afraid they will get no help from this book. It is impossible to deal here adequately with the contribution of Islam to Christian culture. That must be done by someone who comes from the Muslim background himself, and who has a practical knowledge of Muslim doctrines and customs.

Nor am I saying anything in this book about the heritage of the art, literature and social life of India. There is much of value in them but lack of space forbids my dealing with them. Here I am wholly concerned with the heritage of India as found in the religious literature and the spiritual experience of Hinduism.

Hinduism is the characteristic religion of India and is followed by the majority. It is a vast ocean. There are many types of religious belief and practice included in it. All that can be done here is briefly to indicate the main lines of development. It is possible to distinguish for our purpose at least five different types of religious life in Hinduism.

1. *Atheism.* Some of the Hindu thinkers are atheists. In Sānkhya Philosophy, for instance, there is no clear and definite teaching about God. This Philosophy speaks of two realities, Spirit *(Purusha)* and Matter *(Prakriti)*. The *Purusha* is an intelligent principle and has consciousness as its very essence. It is different from the body, the senses and the mind. It is beyond all physical objects and sees the various activities going on in the world without itself undergoing change in any way. Objects like chairs and beds imply the existence of beings other than themselves for whose enjoyment they have been made. The entire physical world likewise implies the existence of spirits who enjoy them. It is a cardinal tenet of the Sānkhya system that *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are eternal. *Prakriti* has not come into existence through *Purusha*. Matter has always existed, though it undergoes various transformations from time to time by its association with *Purusha*. The *Purusha* is in itself free and immortal but it confuses itself with the body, the senses and the mind. Through ignorance the spirit feels injured and unhappy when the body is hurt or indisposed. The great goal of the Sānkhya thinker is to reach a state of existence in which the body does not determine a man's happiness or sorrow. A Hindu *Sādhu* said: "Every morning I go to one or other of seven houses. If I get food in the first house, I return to my cell immediately. If I do not get any food in the first house, I go to the second and if food is given there I return to my cell. I thus visit one after the other the seven houses. If in all the seven houses I do not get any food, I fast for the day and the next morning I begin my rounds again." In this way he seeks to prevent his body from determining his happiness or sorrow.

2. *Polytheism.* The popular religion of the Hindus consists largely in the worship of innumerable gods and goddesses. These

seem to have come down from ancient times. The aboriginal peoples of India, like primitive men all over the world, worshipped many gods. Some of them were the spirits of dead heroes. Others again were diseases like small-pox or cholera, which also came to be considered as evil gods who had to be worshipped and pleased if their anger was to be avoided. These old gods have been taken over into Hinduism and are still worshipped; even men of education occasionally pray to them. New gods are constantly coming into existence; if a specially holy man dies, a shrine is built for him and his worship is started. The more thoughtful men are inclined to say that all these many divinities worshipped in India are but the manifestations of the one Supreme God. Ordinary people believe that there is only one God but are not clear in their own minds as to the relation between all the numerous gods and that one God, nor are they anxious to make that relation clear. They continue their worship without troubling to inquire whether various gods could be followed if the belief in the one God is genuine.

3. *Pantheism.* Many Hindu thinkers are pantheists and regard the world of physical objects as identical with God. The sun, the moon and the stars are God; rivers, trees and flowers are all God; men and women are also God. These objects do exist. They are not mere illusions but they are entirely one with the Divine. The main reason for this doctrine seems to be a real feeling for nature. The beauty of nature captivates the Hindu thinker so much that he comes to regard it as Divine. We know that all through the ages the Hindus have been attracted by nature. All lovely spots—rivers, waterfalls, mountain tops and the seashore—are invariably set apart for worship. Wherever there is a commanding view a shrine is built. The majestic Ganges is considered a sacred river. The snow-clad Himalayas are adored as a goddess. In fact the whole world, which in one part or another has charm and beauty, comes to be regarded as Divine.

4. *Monism.* Many of the educated Hindus hold the doctrine of *Advaita* as taught by the great philosopher Sankara and his followers. According to this doctrine there is only one Reality and that is God *(Brahman)*. Everything else is unreal *(Māya)*. The world is unreal; men are unreal; animals, trees and plants are unreal. We may say that we exist, that there is an actual world in which we live, and that we are surrounded by real things. To this the *Advaitin* replies that it is through ignorance *(Avidya)* that a man thinks that there is such a person as him-

self, that there are other persons—relations, friends, enemies or strangers—with whom he has dealings, and that there are around him physical objects like houses, chairs, clothes, trees and flowers. As long as he is ignorant, he will think so. But when his ignorance is removed, he will know beyond all doubt that God only is Reality and that everything else is unreal. The path by which he may reach this belief is known as the path of knowledge *(Jnāna Mārga)*. Such realization is the goal of the religious life. There is nothing that counts except the clear knowledge that God alone exists, and that everything else is an illusion. One who has attained this knowledge has climbed the summit of spiritual experience. He is filled with complete peace; nothing disturbs him; no ambitions, no calamities, no successes, no failures have any influence over him. He is not annoyed or pleased, he does not hate or love and he remains at perfect rest. He is in no way moved by the varying fortunes which ordinarily occur to men.

5. *Theism (Bhakti* Religion). From the earliest times many Hindu thinkers and poets have believed that there is a Supreme God who has created the universe and everything in it. He is possessed of all the great and noble qualities of which we see glimpses here and there among men. He has boundless love and mercy for all beings; He is true and just. He knows everything; He understands everything; He feels everything; there is no limit to the powers of His mind. Men are real, not illusory, beings and they must love Him in return for His love. They must worship Him, for He loves their worship. The highest spiritual experience which they can reach is that of communion with Him. They do not lose themselves in Him; they continue to exist as separate persons and to dwell through eternity in the bliss of His Presence. There are many differences among the *Bhaktas* but what I have said may be considered to be, in the main, their teaching. Through the ages there have been holy men in India who have tried, as best as they know how, to love and serve God. The lives of such saints which have come down to us, though they are filled with many miraculous stories as in all lands and religions, show us that they were men of deep piety and sincere devotion. The hymns of undying value, which they have sung, have been carefully treasured and still nourish the spiritual life of multitudes.

The earliest expression of the *Bhakti* doctrine may be said to occur in the *Katha Upanishad,* which was probably written somewhere between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C. God is

regarded in this *Upanishad* as the Creator of the world and as dealing with His creatures in a spirit of grace:

"Less than an atom, greater than the great,
The Self is hid in every creature's heart:
The unstriving man beholds Him, freed from sorrow,
Through the Creator's grace he sees the greatness of the Self." [3]

A knowledge of God cannot be reached by any amount of study. It can only be reached if God, out of His abundant love, chooses to reveal Himself. Man is not identical with God; he is separate from Him. The devotee must discipline all his desires like a chariot driver, who keeps well under control the strong horses which are harnessed to his chariot. If such a process of spiritual discipline be followed, the God within will manifest Himself to the devotee. In this *Upanishad* we have the central ideas of *Bhakti* doctrine—the existence of God, the possession by God of such qualities as grace, the separateness of man from God and man's duty to follow after God by disciplining himself. It ought, however, to be pointed out that the actual word *Bhakti* does not occur in this *Upanishad*.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, written about the beginning of the Christian era, we have a full exposition of the path of *Bhakti*. We may surmise that during the centuries which passed between the appearance of the *Katha Upanishad* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the doctrine of *Bhakti* had grown slowly. In the *Katha Upanishad*, *Bhakti* is like a tiny stream; in the *Gita*, it has become a river in full flood. The experiences of the devotees which must have occurred in the meanwhile to make such a development possible are all hidden from us in obscurity.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says:

"Whosoever devoutly offers to me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water—I accept the pious offering of that man who is pure of heart.

Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest away and whatsoever of austerities thou dost practise—do that as an offering to me." [4]

In the *Bhagavad Gita* two other paths are also spoken of as leading to God—the path of knowledge *(Jnana)* and the path of works *(Karma)*. The author speaks of all these three paths at great length. This has led to much difference of interpretation. Some commentators hold that in the *Gita* the path of

[3] J. N. Rawson, *The Katha Upanishad*, p. 106.
[4] *Bhagavad Gita*, ix. 26, 27, translated by D. S. Sarma, *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 143.

knowledge is supreme, others that the path of action is given the first place and yet others that the path of love is of outstanding importance. It must be confessed that it is rather difficult to say which path the author himself prefers. He exhorts devotees to pursue all the three paths, though of the three, even in his own judgment, the path of *Bhakti* seems to be supremely valuable. The fact that the three methods of approach to God are dealt with in the *Gīta* gives to its teaching about *Bhakti* a distinctive character. The feeling of love to God with complete surrender to His will has to be exercised along with an understanding of his character and the active pursuit of duty. *Bhakti* is not empty feeling; there must be knowledge of the object worshipped; and this knowledge must gradually grow in clearness. The devotee must exert himself to do all the duties assigned to him in his station in life. Neither the possession of love for God nor a growing clearness of understanding about Him will excuse him from the steady observance of morality. He must perform sincerely, zealously and persistently all the duties required of him. Only when he loves God in a spirit of understanding and fulfils his duties can he be regarded as a genuine worshipper.

The next important stage in the growth of *Bhakti* took place in South India between the sixth and the ninth centuries A.D. There were several Tamil poets who poured out their devotion in stirring lyrics. Some of them like Mānikkavācakar and Appar were the worshippers of Siva, and others like Nammālvār were the devotees of Vishnu. They wandered from shrine to shrine pouring out their ecstatic devotion to God in lyrics of moving beauty. Hundreds of these hymns still exist and are sung daily by devotees both in temples and in homes. While the myths about the gods are fully accepted and believed in, we see wonderful glimpses of the love and goodness of God and of man's supreme duty to love God in return with his whole being. The hymns make it clear that the poets had a real experience of God and came to know something of His grace and reality and power. It is significant that the Tamil *Bhakti* poets flourished at a time when Buddhist persecution was active in South India. As long as men lead a soft life their religion is not deep. But when they pass through dangerous times and are called upon to suffer for the sake of their religion, it becomes genuine. The living religion of the Tamil *Bhaktas,* which is recorded in the hymns, has a real connexion with the persecution and suffering through which the devotees had to pass.

About the beginning of the tenth century A.D. the *Bhāgavata*

Purāna seems to have been written in South India. This book marks yet another stage in the growth of *Bhakti*. Here *Bhakti* becomes a thrilling emotional experience. The devotee's hair stands on end; his body shakes with excitement; tears flow down from his eyes. Whenever these and similar experiences occur he feels sure that he is having an experience of God. His great desire is to reach such an ecstatic state constantly. The *Bhakti* which is spoken of in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* is very different from the calm and restrained *Bhakti* of the *Bhagavad Gīta*. In the *Gīta*, as we have seen, the pursuit after a clearer knowledge of God and after the fulfilment of human duties keeps *Bhakti* from being a mere emotional experience. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* has been of immense importance in India; millions of devotees in all parts of the country have drunk deep of its doctrine.

For the first time in the history of *Bhakti* thought, Rāmānuja in the twelfth century A.D. gives a philosophic exposition of the doctrine. With great learning and profound insight, Rāmānuja seeks to show that the *Bhakti* doctrines are found in the ancient *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, which are the authoritative sources for the Hindu religion. He builds up a systematic doctrine of God who is regarded as being full of the auspicious qualities of love, goodness, truth, mercy, justice and power. Men are different from Him; they are not identical with Him. They wholly depend upon Him as the body depends upon the soul. They must worship Him with love and devotion. In the future life the highest bliss which is in store for them is the knowledge and enjoyment of God. They are not merged in God; they have their own separate existence but dwell in the bliss of God's Presence and devote themselves to His service. The work of Rāmānuja is important as it gives the teaching about *Bhakti* a great place among the philosophic systems of India. Rāmānuja makes it perfectly clear that the position which he takes up is not a simple faith, fit only for the man with little or no education. The doctrines of *Bhakti*, when fully worked out, form a complete and elaborate system of Theology. Thus Rāmānuja brings out still another important aspect of *Bhakti*, its capacity to appeal to the most critical and inquiring among men.

The Middle Ages saw the widespread activity of the *Bhakti* poets and thinkers. Kabīr flourished in Benares in the fourteenth century. In the sixteenth century Chaitanya was active in Bengal and Tulsidās wrote his immortal *Rāmāyana*, full of the spirit of *Bhakti*, on the banks of the Ganges in Benares. In the seven-

teenth century Tukārām led an active *Bhakti* Movement in the western part of India. These are only a few among the many prominent men and women who actively devoted themselves to the service of God and spread far and wide the religion of *Bhakti*. It may be pointed out that here again the active propaganda of Islam may have had something to do with the vigorous development of *Bhakti*. During these centuries Muslims were busy propagating their religion in India, often at the point of the sword. The threat and experience of constant persecution brought out all that was vital in the Hindu soul. A real experience of God was the outcome of the persecution through which it was called upon to pass.

The spirit of *Bhakti* is alive in India even to-day. Perhaps the most prominent *Bhakta* of recent times is Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa, who flourished in the nineteenth century. He was a man with little or no learning but he had an unquenchable thirst for the Living God; as he himself said, he was mad after God. He lived in an old Hindu temple not far from Calcutta, spending his days in prayer and meditation and in teaching the many disciples who began to gather around him. He attracted men and women of all types and many educated people from Calcutta flocked to hear his teaching. He did not write any books but he spoke at great length and his discourses were full of striking sayings and parables. His greatest disciple was Swami Vivēkānanda, who carried his message to the ends of the earth. Rāmakrishna's firm belief in God, his sincere devotion, his selfless love and his utter renunciation have won for him a growing number of followers. His influence in India to-day is steadily on the increase. The *Sannyāsis* of the Rāmakrishna Mission are scattered all over the country and are busily engaged in innumerable practical activities such as education, medical work, flood relief and spiritual instruction.

This all too brief account of the *Bhakti* saints, poets and thinkers shows that the movement dates back to the time of the *Upanishads* and is of ancient origin. *Bhakti* is of many types; sometimes the emotional aspect is most prominent; at other times insight into the nature of God is emphasized; at other times yet the fulfilment of duties attached to one's station in life is all important. The *Bhakti Granthas* are also of different types—popular hymns, brief and pithy sayings or deep and learned philosophical treatises. The *Bhakti* Movement is spread all over India and its books are found in practically all the important vernaculars. In virtue of the fact that the vernaculars

have been used by the *Bhakti* writers, their teaching has reached millions of men and women who are unable to understand the many learned books written only in Sanskrit.

The question of Christian influence on *Bhakti* Literature has been often discussed. Some scholars have held that as the Christian Church has been in Travancore in the south of India from the early centuries of the Christian era, Christianity is probably responsible for all distinctively *Bhakti* doctrines. The genius of Hinduism, it is said, is not at all of the *Bhakti* type; it is more of the *Advaita* type; only Christian influence can explain many of the characteristic features of *Bhakti* thought and experience. While it is true that the Christian Church has existed in India for many centuries, it has been shut off from the rest of the country by high ranges of hills and the Syrian Church in Travancore has tended to live its own life in isolation. We have no historical evidence that it actively propagated the Christian Faith in other parts of India. The early growth of *Bhakti* in India seems to have been an independent movement. But it is quite likely that from the sixteenth century onwards Christian ideas began to influence *Bhakti* thought. Roman Catholic missionaries were busy spreading Christian doctrines and no doubt many Hindus were influenced by them. It is important to notice that even if the Hindus borrowed some ideas from Christian sources, they adapted them very skilfully and made them their own. This is true also of the modern religious movements in India, which are obviously largely shaped by Christian influences. In view of the fact that all *Bhakti* movements in India, including the most modern ones, are in many directions wholly Hindu in their spirit and outlook, they may be regarded as a part of the heritage of India.

In this book for the sake of clearness I speak only of the significance of the *Bhakti* heritage. Other schools of Hindu thought and experience have also lessons of great value to teach us. I have not concerned myself with them for the reason that it is better to concentrate on one more or less unified system of thought than to attempt to deal with the many conflicting doctrines and practices of Hinduism.

Difficulties connected with the Christian Use of India's Heritage

The vastness of the subject frightens us. In a city like Benares one is impressed with the magnitude and diversity of the Hindu heritage. I visited the Gowenka Sanskrit School and was told that the course there occupied twelve years and that during this long period only an introduction was given to the main

branches of Hindu sacred learning. There are hundreds of scholars in the city who are devoting their whole life to the careful study of one or other of the Hindu schools of thought. The books are often written in an extremely subtle form. The arguments and illustrations have to be read over and over again before their significance is grasped. Even if attention is concentrated, as in this book, only on one part of the Hindu heritage (*Bhakti* Literature), there are so many different developments of it with their varying importance that it requires much study and thought to realize their true value.

Even now there are Christians who believe that Hinduism and all the non-Christian religions are purely human in their origin. Some of them go further. Once I spoke at a missionary gathering and pleaded that in our approach to Hindus we must use everything of value in their own thought and experience. The chairman of the meeting, who was quite conservative in his outlook, remarked that though there were some beautiful things in Hinduism, it was his firm belief that they had been put there by Satan to mislead people. This is no doubt an extreme position. There may not be many missionaries to-day of this way of thinking. But there are certainly many who are strongly convinced that Hinduism is entirely human in its origin, that God has never revealed Himself in India, that all the Hindu doctrines are the result of men's own thinking, and that there is no religious experience in India in the sense that God has revealed Himself to them.

Not only missionaries but also Indian Christians are much opposed to any use by Christians of the heritage of India. There are thousands of Christians in India who have no use whatsoever for Hindu culture in any form. They want the Christians in India to form a distinctive community by themselves. They must sing only Western hymns. They must worship in buildings which look like Christian churches in Europe. They must wear European clothes and follow European manners and customs. They must use English at home. In this way they must seek to mark themselves off clearly from the Hindus among whom they live and from whose midst they have come.

I may, however, say here that both among missionaries and Indian Christians a new attitude is coming into existence. Many missionaries themselves are now beginning to teach that the music, the architecture, the theology and the methods of government of the Indian Church must be really indigenous in its character. The view that the Church in India should be as far

as possible Indian is gaining ground though slowly. The younger men realize the importance of making as full a use as possible of the heritage of India.

We must never forget the danger, always present in India, of yielding to the many attractions of Hinduism. The subtle doctrines of Hindu thinkers, the vigorous arguments with which they support them, the picturesque illustrations which they bring forward in such abundance and the courage with which they carry their ideas to their logical conclusions, even though they are quite contrary to practical experience, are greatly attractive to people who take delight in thinking out things for themselves. The doctrine of *Advaita*, for instance, that the whole world is unreal is quite contrary to ordinary experience. We all think that the world is real and we always act as if it were. But the *Advaita* thinker holds firmly that the world is unreal; he proves this by careful arguments and vivid examples. Never for a moment does he hesitate in his belief that the world is *Māya;* he applies his belief consistently to all spheres of life and says that everything that we know is *Māya*. He brings forward many different proofs in support of his theory; they are often ingenious and require much thought before they can even be understood.

It is not surprising that many intellectual people find the philosophy of Hinduism of absorbing interest. If they have no extensive knowledge of Christian Theology and if they have no deeply Christian life of their own, they come to believe that all that Hinduism teaches is true, and that there is really not very much difference between Christianity and Hinduism. I have myself come across two men who are Christians in name but who spend their entire time in studying the philosophical books of the Hindus. They believe that Hinduism and Christianity teach practically the same thing; the intellectual power of Hinduism has supreme influence over them. Probably there are many others like them in the country. I am not thinking here of those who say that Hinduism is true, without taking any trouble at all to find out what it teaches. I am rather referring to those who begin to study Hinduism carefully and who end by losing the distinctive character of their own Christian belief. When we seek to find out the real value of the spiritual heritage of India, it is as well to bear in mind this constant danger which is found on the path of such study.

Why should we use the Heritage of India?

1. Because God has been at work in India through the ages.

Not long ago Christian scholars were inclined to say that all the religions of the world could be roughly classified as Christian and heathen; in the Christian religion God has spoken and in the other religions He has not. The growing knowledge of all religions, the numerous translations which have appeared of their sacred books, the appointment of professors in the great universities of the world to teach the history of religions and the abundant contacts now established between the different countries have brought about a new attitude. It is now felt that all the non-Christian religions cannot be simply dismissed as heathen. The growing science of religions has made it quite clear that there is much truth in all the religions of the world. Christian scholars, therefore, are coming to the conclusion that we should classify religions as those containing a general or a special revelation. In all the religions of the world there is a general revelation of God. He has been at work inspiring all the great prophets and seers of mankind. But in Christianity He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. The revelation through Jesus Christ is quite unique. It contains a clear manifestation of God's purpose for mankind. But this is not to say that all the other religions are merely men's blind gropings in the dark. To them also God has shown Himself, though not so clearly.

India is a deeply religious country. The pursuit of religion has been of absorbing interest to our people. We have a vast and ancient literature dealing with all the problems raised by religion. There are thousands of devotees who even to-day are earnestly engaged in the spiritual quest and who declare that God has spoken to them. If we believe in a general revelation, we cannot but accept that the religious books and the spiritual experience of India have much to teach us as they have been inspired of God. We do not regard the heritage of India as precious simply because we are Indians. As Indians we are proud of everything that is great in India. It is but natural that we should value highly our motherland and be devoted to it. We do not, however, value India's heritage simply because it is our national culture but we value it because we believe that God has been at work in this ancient land and that He has really helped the millions of earnest and sincere souls who have sought after Him with all the fervour of which they were capable.

2. We must use the heritage of India as we can be better Christians by such use. An Indian may spend his lifetime in the study of the English language. He may be in a position

to express his thoughts more easily, fluently and correctly in English than in his own mother tongue. But even so he rarely seems capable of writing English with the same grace as an Englishman does. In some such way, the experience of the Christian religion will be much more effective when it is pursued along lines congenial to the Indian soul. The people of India have always had an earnest longing to realize the Indwelling God, a passionate desire for intimate fellowship with Him and a strong urge for the attainment of inner peace and joy. These longings are not the whole of the Christian religion but they are a vital part of it. If Christians in India cultivate such longings, we would probably reach higher levels of spirituality than we do now, for in many ways efforts along these lines are congenial to us and it is easier to achieve greatness in virtues native to the soul. Modern teachers lay stress on the fact that education should commence with what the pupils actually know and understand. We must start from where they are and gradually lead them up to where we want them to go. The soundest method of education is to begin with the pupils as they are.

It is interesting to note that the distinguished Hindu scholar, Sir S. Rādhākrishnan, Professor of Eastern Religions at Oxford University, makes the remark that a convert is like an illegitimate child without any heritage. "A convert to a new religion feels an utter stranger to himself. He feels like an illegitimate child with no heritage, no link with the men who preceded him. What in other people is a habit or an instinct seems to be with him a pose or an affectation. There is no inner development or natural progress to the new religion. It does not arise out of the old, but falls from one knows not where." [5]

Rādhākrishnan's idea is that any one who changes his religion loses his spiritual heritage altogether; he is not really at home in the new religion. People who have followed Christianity for generations have learnt, for instance, to sing certain hymns and these are quite natural to them. A new convert seeks immediately to follow them, though many of the sentiments are quite strange to his former beliefs, and therefore his acceptance of them is not quite real. He has not grown up in them as the other Christians have, and so there is hypocrisy in his spiritual life. He seeks to believe and to follow what he has hastily accepted, and this is not grounded in a prolonged experience lasting over several generations. From this Rādhākrishnan argues that there should be no conversions from one religion to another. While I do not

[5] S. Rādhākrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 329.

accept that all conversions are bad, I do think that there is some truth in what Rādhākrishnan says about the unreality and lack of depth in the religious experiences of many new converts. They seek to follow new ideals for which they have not in any way been prepared. The best way to avoid this danger is to let the new converts follow Christ along the noblest lines of their own spiritual heritage. While everything which is not true to the mind of Christ should be given up, everything that He can approve of must be retained and developed. The use of the heritage available in India will really make possible a richer and deeper spiritual life in the Indian Church.

3. We must use the heritage of India for by doing so we shall make Christianity more attractive to the people of this land. Recently I was talking to a Buddhist monk. In the course of the conversation he said that he had been a Hindu, that he had seriously thought of becoming a Christian and that he had finally become a Buddhist. I asked him why he had done so. He said: "I feel there are many abuses among the Hindus such as caste and idolatry. I am anxious to correct them and to help my Hindu brethren. But I feel that if I become a Christian or a Muslim I cannot help them, for they will immediately regard me as an alien and I will have no influence over them. Both Christianity and Islam are considered as foreign religions in this country." I was surprised at this answer and asked him a further question: "You say Christians in India are foreign. What exactly is foreign about them, their theology, their methods of Church government, their ecclesiastical architecture, their social institutions or their personal habits?" And he said: "Everything about them is foreign." This criticism is often made of Indian Christians and with a good deal of justification. A Hindu speaker in a public address spoke thus of the late Sir A. T. Pannīrselvam, a Roman Catholic leader in South India. "Does he read Kamban's *Rāmāyana,* the masterpiece of Tamil Literature? Does he reverence the *Kurral* which contains the quintessence of all wisdom? What right has he to call himself a Dravidian, he who has cut himself off from Dravidian ideas, literature and culture and believes in an alien religion, culture and civilization?" [6]

If Christians in India could learn to use all that is valuable in the heritage of the country, such criticisms would cease to be made. There is much in the music, the literature, the architecture and the social institutions of India which is in keeping

[6] *The Hindu,* August 30, 1939.

with the spirit of Christ's teaching and example and which ought to be preserved in the Christian Church in India. It is a great pity that the Christians of India have tended to isolate themselves in every possible way from their countrymen. Such separation is good neither for them nor for India. I hope the time will soon come when Christians in India will identify themselves with all that is highest and noblest in the life and culture of the land.

4. We must use the heritage of India for only then can we learn to make our contribution to the Church Universal. Towards the end of 1938 a great Conference was held at Tambaram near Madras. Over 450 delegates from various parts of the world came, some of them travelling several thousand miles, to attend the Conference. There were representatives from the Older Christian Churches in Europe and America; there were also representatives from the Younger Churches in Africa, India, China and Japan. This remarkable gathering showed to the Christian world the wide appeal of the Gospel. People were impressed by the fact that the Christian Church included among its numbers men and women speaking many different languages, following many different customs and possessing many different cultures. It was felt that if all these different representatives preserved whatever was best in their own spiritual heritage, the Church of Christ would certainly be all the richer. Through the ages different nations in different countries have followed different ideals. Some of these are valuable and others are not of much importance. If all those which are acceptable to Christ were preserved in His Church, there would be a much greater wealth of spiritual life and power in it than there is to-day.

So the Tambaram Conference said: "When churches grow up in the environment of non-Christian religions and cultures, it is necessary that they should become firmly rooted in the Christian heritage and fellowship of the Church Universal. They have their place in the great Christian brotherhood of all ages and races. But they should also be rooted in the soil of their own country. Therefore we strongly affirm that the Gospel should be expressed and interpreted in indigenous forms, and that in methods of worship, institutions, literature, architecture, etc. the spiritual heritage of the nation and country should be taken into use. The Gospel is not necessarily bound up with forms and methods brought in from the older churches. The endeavour to give Christ His rightful place in the heart of people who have not previously known Him—so that He will neither be

a foreigner, nor be distorted by pre-Christian patterns of thought —is a great and exacting spiritual task in the fulfilling of which a young church can bring a rich contribution of her own to the Church Universal." [7]

Sir S. Rādhākrishnan has gone a little further: "Perhaps Christianity, which arose out of an Eastern background and early in its career got wedded to Græco-Roman culture, may find her rebirth to-day in the heritage of India." [8] This hope has been expressed by other writers also. If it is to be realized, it can only be if some of the fervent piety and profound insight, which mark the Hindu thinkers, is applied to an understanding of the problems of life and death with which Christian theologians have dealt. This new birth of the Christian religion, through contact with the best thought and life in India, cannot take place in a day. It is only slowly and gradually as men live the Christian life, sincerely following Christ in the light of the best ideals in India, that such a renaissance of Christianity will take place. Any new power of the Christian religion which may result will in the first place be felt in the Indian Church and through the Indian Church it may then spread to other parts of the world. All of us should pray and work earnestly that the deepest spiritual longings of India may find a new fruition in Christ.

The Purpose of this Book

We are now in a position to state the purpose of this book. It is my object in writing it to study afresh the life and teaching of Jesus as they are recorded in the Gospels and to explain them in relation to the spiritual heritage of India.

What is known as Christian Theology is an exposition of the teaching of Christ by Christian thinkers of the West who brought to their task their own natural aptitudes and the peculiarities of their own philosophy and culture. In the early Christian Church, to mention but one instance, Greek Philosophy was studied by many Christians and in understanding the mind of Christ they used the ideas of Greek Philosophy with which they were familiar. This was inevitable. Every man understands Christ in the light of his own experience and culture. So long as this experience and culture are in harmony with the mind of Christ, this method of knowledge is quite legitimate. When we become the followers of Christ we need not empty ourselves of all our national and cultural peculiarities, nor need we absorb Christian

[7] *The World Mission of the Church*, p. 25.
[8] S. Rādhākrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 305.

doctrines which are connected more with Greek or other systems of Philosophy than with the mind of Christ. An effort must be made to separate genuine Christian experience from the doctrines which the Christian theologians have expounded, and to state this same experience in terms which could be easily grasped by the Indian mind.

One or two more remarks are necessary to bring this chapter to a close. I have used throughout the book many Hindu words such as *Mōksha, Karma, Jnāna, Bhakti, Saguna* and *Dharma.* Any careful student of Hindu Literature will know that these words are frequently used in India but do not always have the same meaning. They are used in different books with quite different meanings. Unless we know who wrote a particular book, when he wrote it, and to what sect he belonged, we cannot understand their correct meaning in that book. Christians in India can use these old religious words putting into them a distinctively Christian meaning; it will be quite different from the meaning which they have in their Hindu contexts. But by the use of the old religious terms we show that we are thinking out the same problems, experiencing the same difficulties, dealing with the same facts as our people did, though not always coming to the same conclusions. In this way we convince ourselves and others that Christianity is not a foreign religion which has come from some other country and which does not meet our national needs.

For the same reason I have also used plenty of illustrations and quotations from Hindu books. This does not mean that Hinduism and Christianity are the same, but it means that whatever is true and good and noble in Hinduism, whatever is in harmony with the mind of Christ, can be used by the Christian and made a living part of his religious experience.

CHAPTER II

THE INNER LIFE OF JESUS

Back to Jesus

In rethinking Christianity in India, we must take into account the challenge which is made in many quarters that we should understand the real mind of Christ and apply it fearlessly to Indian conditions, without reference to the traditional teaching of the Christian Church.

It was the Christmas Eve of 1939. At that time I was living in Benares, for long ages the centre of the spiritual quest of India. That active modern Hindu organization, the Rāmakrishna Mission, had arranged, as was their custom, to celebrate Christmas fittingly. In a large room of their Mission House on the wall was hung a picture of the Virgin Mary holding the child Jesus in her arms. In characteristic Indian fashion a beautiful garland of flowers was hung around the picture. Immediately below it was a bunch of deep-red roses and many chrysanthemum plants with their large, lovely blossoms of yellow and white. Two electric lights on either side of the picture flooded it with their brightness. In the room facing the picture about a hundred men (mostly Hindus) sat cross-legged on the carpeted floor, wrapping themselves with shawls as the evening was chilly. About a hundred women sat in the adjoining room, somewhat in the dark. The chapter in St. Luke's Gospel telling of the birth of Jesus was read in English and translated verse by verse into Bengali and this was followed by prayer. Those who happened to come late sat down after worshipping reverently for a moment with clasped hands.

There were four addresses, one in Hindi, one in Bengali and two in English. Two of the speakers were *Sannyāsis* of the Rāmakrishna Mission, one was a Professor of the Benares Hindu University and the fourth was myself. One or two lyrics were sung to the accompaniment of Indian musical instruments—drum, harmonium and cymbals. After the service, light refreshments were served and all those present, regardless of caste or creed, joined in the simple meal.

This service was significant as showing the growing reverence and worship of Jesus in India. The closing remark of Swāmi

Vireshwarānanda, who spoke in English, was also quite significant. He said, " The dogmas and doctrines of Christianity may disappear but Christ will live." This shows that India is making a clear distinction between Christ and Christianity. Though we cannot agree with the Rāmakrishna Mission in regarding Jesus as only one of the many *Avatārs* of God, we may well rejoice over their reverence for Him and particularly over their serious attempt to carry out in practice His great ideal of social work. The distinction between Christ and Christianity which was drawn in that service is being echoed in many quarters.

Swāmi Abhedānanda was the head of a large and growing Rāmakrishna Mission House in Calcutta. He was highly respected by all those who knew him. In his younger days he lectured for thirty years in America on the *Vedānta*. He made a careful study of the history and doctrine of the Christian Church. As early as 1909 he gave a lecture on Jesus Christ in which he made a powerful indictment of the Christian Church but expressed his loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ. " A Hindu," he said, " distinguishes the religion of the churches from the religion of Jesus the Christ. Speaking from the Hindu standpoint, the religion which the churches uphold and preach to-day, which has been built around the personality of Jesus the Christ, and which is popularly known as Christianity, should be called ' Churchianity,' in contradistinction to that pure religion of the heart which was taught by Jesus the Christ and practised by His disciples. The religion of Christ, or true Christianity, had no dogma, no creed, no system, no theology. It was the religion of the heart, a religion without any ceremonial, without ritual, without priestcraft; it was not based upon a book, but upon the feelings of the heart, upon direct communion of the individual soul with the Heavenly Father. On the contrary, the religion of the Church is based upon a book, believes in dogmas, professes a creed, has an organized system for preaching it, is backed up by theologies, performs rituals, practises ceremonial, and obeys the commands of a host of priests." [1]

Dr. E. Stanley Jones often draws a distinction between Christ and the Christian Church. In his *Christ at the Round Table* he says, " We believe so profoundly in what we are doing, so profoundly in the Gospel of Christ and the Christian Church, so profoundly that in Christ is the key to the future, that we dare subject everything, including ourselves, to the most rigid scrutiny and criticism, knowing that if what we are doing is founded on

[1] Swāmi Abhedānanda, *Lectures on Jesus Christ*, p. 1.

reality, the more searching that scrutiny and criticism the more it will shine. It is the tendency of all institutions and organizations to become set and rigid. Founded to express life, they often end by throttling that life. They must undergo constant criticism, perpetual readjustment and recurrent renewing if they are to remain vital. Christian Missions are no exception. One of the most hopeful things of the future is that we are subjecting ourselves to a self-criticism that is relentless and perhaps unparalleled in any other body in the world. We are in a situation that searches us to the core and that demands reality. We must have reality or perish. So we turn to the Mind of Christ as that ultimate reality, to be subjected to Its criticism and to Its inspiration and to Its meaning. And the best minds of India know that everything depends upon our catching anew that Mind and living it out." [1]

Sādhu Sundar Singh likewise makes a difference between Churchianity and Christianity. "There are not in the Church enough men of the deepest spiritual experience to give final authority to what its teachers say. So I go direct to God. The Creeds were made by men who had spiritual experience, as is shown by their reference to the 'Communion of Saints'; but now the people who repeat them have not the same rich experience. With me a revelation in Ecstasy counts for more than Church tradition. 'Churchianity' and 'Christianity' are not the same thing. John Wesley and General Booth followed God's guidance in opposition to the Church, and they proved to be right. Every one, however, is not a mystic, so the authority of Church tradition is necessary for the majority. Roman Catholics have gone too far in one direction, some Protestants in the other. But it is not enough to be a member of the Church, one must also be a member of Christ." [2]

"There was a type of convert in the past," says Mr. Chenchiah, sometime Chief Judge, Pudukottah State, "who hated Hinduism and surrendered himself whole-heartedly to what he supposed to be Christianity. The convert of to-day regards Hinduism as his spiritual mother who has nurtured him in a sense of spiritual values in the past. He discovers the supreme value of Christ, not in spite of Hinduism but because Hinduism has taught him to discern spiritual greatness. For him, loyalty to Christ does not involve the surrender of a reverential attitude towards the Hindu heritage. His special asset in the search is that he has no co-

[1] E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, p. 196.
[2] B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, p. 150.

ordinate loyalties. St. Paul and St. Peter and other Apostles and the Church are not to him absolute guides. Accepting gratefully the light from these quarters, he still believes that Jesus and His demands alone are obligatory. He seeks to face the original stimulus, Jesus, afresh and understand the meaning and significance of the fact of Jesus anew. This emancipation from double bondage, namely, to the traditions of Hinduism on the one hand and to the traditions of Christianity on the other, gives him the freedom to study the question of the meaning and significance of Jesus untrammelled by doctrine and dogma and seek in the living forces of Hinduism a positive key to the still inaccessible riches in Jesus." [4]

We have here the opinions of four different leaders, all of them representative and influential. Swāmi Vireshwarānanda and Swāmi Abhedānanda speak for modern educated Hindus, Dr. Stanley Jones for missionary leaders, and Sādhu Sundar Singh and Mr. Chenchiah for Indian Christians. These vigorously expressed opinions by leaders of thought, quite different in their temperament and outlook, all point in the same direction. They all make a distinction between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to the Christian Church. They express dissatisfaction with the Christian Church but plead for a fuller surrender to Christ. Such a volume of testimony, which is steadily on the increase, cannot be easily ignored. In the chapter on the Church I deal with some of the difficulties connected with the Christian Church in India. At this point I should like to point out the importance of the call " Back to Christ ! " which these men sound. In every country and in every age people must always have real faith in Christ; they must go back to the original source from which Christianity started. So many doctrines and rites, professing to be interpretations of the mind of Christ, arise that constantly efforts must be made to go back to Christ Himself to study what He said, to live as He taught we should live, to imbibe His Spirit and so to understand Him more clearly. Particularly is there a need for this in a country like India where Christianity is being preached newly and where a young Christian Church is growing. The danger of accepting doctrines and institutions which purport to be Christian but which may or may not interpret the spirit of Christ aright is really a serious one. For this reason we must go back to Christ; we must learn afresh the meaning of His Gospel and by faith and devotion come closer to His mind and spirit.

[4] *Rethinking Christianity in India*, p. 49.

"Who is Jesus?" This question has been asked by a multitude of men and women all through the ages; it is being asked to-day the world over with a new earnestness. Here in India, for instance, it is being asked by the educated Hindu with his philosophic mind. He inherits an ancient tradition and the search for truth is a passion with him. In modern India with so many religions actively propagating themselves, he asks earnestly, Who is Jesus? Is He the only Incarnation of God? How does He compare with the great religious leaders of the world such as Buddha, Muhammad, Krishna, Zoroaster, Confucius and others? Does He really differ from them or is He in the same class with them? Does He give us that abiding peace which is the quest of our souls? Does He give us that sense of unity for which we crave amidst all the diversity of the world? Can we attain oneness with God through Him?

The outcaste in India from an entirely different background is asking the same question, "Who is Jesus?" with an earnestness which even the most hopeful Christian would not have anticipated some time ago. The spirit of the outcaste people is awake all over the country; there is a real stirring among them. They have come suddenly to realize with a new force that as long as they remain in the Hindu fold they will be oppressed and downtrodden. Begging favours from high caste Hindus, they say, will lead them nowhere; they must leave Hinduism with its oppressive social and religious laws and seek refuge elsewhere. Many of them are seriously asking about Jesus: Will He give us our birth-right as human beings? Will He give us our social equality? Will He give us clean homes, educated children, decent standards of life?

In this book an effort is made to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" which is being asked from such different quarters and with so much eagerness. As the inner life of Jesus was the source from which all His activities took their rise, an account is first given of the life of prayer and meditation and of communion with God which Jesus led. While He loved prayer, He did not love it only for its own sake. To Him communion with God was utterly incomplete without an active life of service and sacrifice. So, an account is also given of the active life of teaching and preaching and of healing the sick with which He was busily occupied in the course of His ministry. His teaching was unique and touched on all the main problems of religion and ethics. Several chapters are devoted to His teaching about God, sin and its forgiveness, fellowship with God, the Church and the

future life. The teaching of Jesus, unique as it was, was made far more powerful and effective by His life of utter selflessness which culminated in the death on the Cross. The meaning of His suffering and sacrifice throughout His life and on the Cross on Calvary is pointed out. Jesus rose from the dead. His entire teaching and His whole life of service and sacrifice receive a new significance from His Resurrection. An account is, therefore, given of the Resurrection of Jesus and of its meaning. The book closes by seeking to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" in the light of all these facts—His unique teaching, His life of utter self-sacrifice, His death on the Cross and His Resurrection. It is pointed out in the final chapter of the book that we must believe that Jesus is the supreme Incarnation of God. Only God manifest in human flesh could live as He lived, suffer such shame and pain on the Cross and rise again to a new and wonderful life.

Jesus' Love of Solitude for Prayer

India is rich in the literature and experience relating to the inner life. For many centuries her saints and devotees, her *Yogis* and *Bhaktas*, have devoted much of their time to the development of the inner life. Thousands of them have sought for solitude among the mountains or in the forests; those who were not able to leave the world have sought for it in their own homes. They have elaborated various fruitful methods for concentrating the mind on God. With singular insight they have pointed out the difficulties in the way of attaining concentration and have shown how they might be overcome. They have also realized what a close and intimate connection the body has with the mind in the realm of the inner life. In books on *Yoga* the inner life is described in great detail and often with real understanding. Many of the *Bhakti* saints in India practised *Yoga* and found it of great use. The hymns as well as the lives of the *Bhakti* saints make clear what a rich and fruitful inner life many of them led. One comes across even to-day scores of devout people who carry on the Indian traditions of the inner life under new circumstances, often with interesting variations. It is worth while for us to understand something of the inner life of Jesus, especially in its relation to the achievements and the failures of the *Bhakti* saints of India.

In His teaching Christ made clear the great need for private prayer. He said: "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense

thee." [5] This precept is amply illustrated in His own life. We are told in the Gospels that Jesus was in the habit of spending a considerable amount of time in private prayer. "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." [6] "And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray." [7] "And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God." [8] "And it came to pass, as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Who do the multitudes say that I am?" [9] "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray." [10] "And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples." [11]

When I visited Nazareth I was impressed by the quiet and peace which reigned there. It was in such surroundings that Christ spent the greater part of His life; He would have had ample opportunities there for prayer and meditation.

While saying that Jesus loved solitude for prayer we must remember that His love of prayer was combined with a life of active service. A careful study of Jesus as He appears in the four Gospels shows us that there was a perfect symmetry between His inner life of prayer and His outer life of service. Even among those who are devoted to God there is a great difference in this matter. Some, especially in India, find such joy in prayer and meditation that they do not feel inclined to show their love of God in practical work for men. *Yoga* is of such absorbing interest to them that they are not prepared to undertake any social or spiritual tasks which are likely to reduce their time or strength for it. It is not that they become experts in *Yoga* immediately. Slowly and steadily, perhaps for years, they learn to concentrate their mind on God. They put themselves under the instruction of those who have advanced in *Yoga* and carefully seek to follow their advice. They study the many books on *Yoga* which are available and try to get some hints for their spiritual develop-

[5] Matthew vi. 6.
[6] Mark i. 35.
[7] Mark vi. 46.
[8] Luke vi. 12.
[9] Luke ix. 18.
[10] Luke ix. 28.
[11] Luke xi. 1.

ment. As they succeed in controlling their mind and fixing it on God, they experience a new joy; this joy acts as a stimulus and drives them to seek further advances in the life of prayer. Sometimes they may work for this growth in *Yoga* in the company of other men in monasteries or in places of pilgrimage.

There are others (especially in the West) to whom poverty makes an immediate appeal; they throw themselves heart and soul into work for the uplift of the poor; they run schools and hospitals and are busy with social work. Some of them do not believe in giving only temporary relief; they want to find out the actual causes of poverty and distress; they hope to educate the people and to show why there is so much suffering in the world; they desire to remove completely these root causes of poverty by passing the necessary laws. Many active persons, even when they love God, find the social work itself so pressing that they have little time for prayer or meditation. The days become crowded with various duties; the time for prayer is often broken into by urgent calls for service. In any case, with such pressing needs among the poor and the suffering, prolonged prayer and elaborate meditation seem to them utterly selfish.

We note how Jesus combined perfectly His love of prayer and His love of social work. Prayer was very real to Him; He constantly sought the Presence of God; on all occasions, whether of joy or of sorrow, He prayed to God. At the same time He gave Himself fully to help suffering, sinful men. No one could have done more for others than He did; and yet no one lived a more continuous or a more earnest life of prayer.

It is profitable to trace the effect of His inner life on His outer and also the effect of His outer life on His inner.

As an instance of the effect of His inner life on His outer life of service, we may consider the long night He spent in prayer before the choice of His disciples.[12] He had come into the world to establish the Kingdom of God. For this purpose a band of disciples who caught through Him a vision of the Kingdom and who were prepared to do everything within their power to bring about its establishment was quite necessary. Such disciples had to be chosen carefully and trained with infinite patience and love. It is characteristic of Christ that before choosing them He spent a whole night in prayer. This shows how in the choice of His followers He realized His utter dependence upon the Father. The appointment of workers was not a mere question of organization with Him. It was not done in a spirit of worldly wisdom

[12] Luke vi. 12–16.

and knowledge of men; it was done in complete reliance upon the Father's unlimited resources.

The reception which Jesus gave to the seventy disciples on their return is a good example of the effect of His outer life on His inner. In the course of His ministry, Jesus sent out seventy of His disciples on a preaching and healing mission. When they returned they brought back the good news that their work had been quite successful and that even those who were possessed of evil spirits had been healed. " In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." [13] The Greek text uses a strong expression to show the nature of His joy on that occasion.[14] He exulted; He had an outburst of *Ānanda,* to use an expression familiar in the religious literature of India. The great joy which He had at this time was very characteristic of Him. Many of the saints of India have spoken of their joy in God. This experience has often been of a selfish character. They have sought God for the joy which He gives and have remained absorbed in it, as long and as uninterruptedly as possible. Not so Jesus. This supreme experience of joy came to Him because others had been helped and their physical and spiritual diseases had been healed. His joy did not arise from anything which had been done for Him, but it occurred because others had been given a new life. Thus His outer life of service introduced into His inner life an element of absolute selflessness.

When we say that Jesus loved prayer and meditation in solitude, we must also remember that He did not do this at the expense of public worship. In the chapter on the Church I show how Jesus was devoted to the temple with its elaborate worship and the synagogue with its informal services. Thus He had a wide catholicity of taste in the matter of worship. He loved prayer and contemplation of God in solitude and at the same time He took a real and living part in the public worship of His day.

The Fellowship of Jesus with God

We have seen that Christ devoted a good deal of time to solitary prayer and meditation. We may now enquire how actually He spent this time. Only a very few prayers of His are

[13] Luke x. 21.
[14] Philip Loyd, *The Treasures of the Heart of Jesus,* p. 68.

recorded in the Gospels. They are all quite brief. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight."[15] "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."[16] "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."[17] All these prayers are very brief. They could not have taken a long time to utter. The model prayer which He taught His disciples was also quite brief.[18] We have a long prayer of intercession by Jesus recorded in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. The thoughts of Jesus are there stated by the Fourth Evangelist in His own words, often with His characteristic explanations. This seems to have been His general practice. It is not likely that Jesus offered the entire prayer as it is now found in the Fourth Gospel. Probably the Evangelist has taken a few brief prayers of Jesus and expanded them at some length.

It is clear, then, that Christ did not spend His time in offering long prayers. Nor is it likely that He had the habit of repeating His brief prayers again and again. His instruction about this matter was clear: "In praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do."[19] In His own practice He would not have broken a principle which He laid down so emphatically. How then did He spend the time which He devoted to prayer? We may say that He probably spent it in passing through the mystical experience known to the Christian saints as contemplative prayer or ecstasy or the unitive life and to the Hindu *Yogis* as *Samādhi*.

It is necessary to point out here that the term *Samādhi* has been used in India to indicate different kinds of mystical experience. At least two types stand out. Sanskrit writers speak of *Savikalpa Samādhi* and *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*. *Savikalpa Samādhi* is the experience of God in which the difference between the worshipper and the object of worship is recognized. The devotee feels that he is in communion with God. The distinction between the two is not lost. In *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* the soul merges itself in God; no difference between the *Bhakti* and the God whom he worships is recognized.[20]

We may say that in His moments of solitary prayer Christ

[15] Luke x. 21.
[16] Luke xxiii. 34.
[17] Luke xxiii. 46.
[18] Matthew vi. 9–13.
[19] Matthew vi. 7.
[20] Sadānanda, *Vedānta Sāra*, 193–9. Translated by Swāmi Nikhilānanda, pp. 114–16.

had the experience of *Savikalpa Samādhi*. He was in fellowship with the Father, but did not become identical with Him. "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."[21] "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."[22] "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."[23]

We remember His piercing cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[24] The comforting and loving Presence of the Father, which had always been with Him and which had sustained Him through the heavy trials and difficulties of His life, seemed to have left Him at this, the most critical and the most painful point of His career. Jesus could not endure this separation from the Father. The suffering He underwent on the Cross was little when compared with the agony of the loss of the Presence of God. This intense cry, because of His isolation from the Father, was wrung from the depths of His soul.

I have said that Jesus probably did not spend His time in offering long verbal prayers or in uttering again and again certain of His brief verbal prayers. He exhorted very definitely that this should not be done. For this three reasons may be suggested.

1. There should be no vain repetition in prayer with the idea that God will hear us because of our much speaking. "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."[25] Many religious people, though sincere and devout, have believed that God will hear them because they pray at great length. They imagine that their own self-effort will move God. Such is not the teaching of Christ. God does not listen to us merely because we work ourselves up into a state of fervour and pour forth a torrent of words. As in His own case, a brief prayer sincerely uttered will be quite adequate.

[21] John xvi. 32.
[22] John xiv. 10.
[23] John xvii. 20, 21.
[24] Mark xv. 34.
[25] Matthew vi. 7.

2. The second reason which may be suggested is also clear from Christ's own teaching. "Be not therefore like unto them (the Gentiles): for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." [26] God knows everything. He is acquainted with all our needs. It is not necessary to lay before Him at great length our problems and difficulties. He knows them far better than we do. Any lengthy prayers are not needed in order to get His attention.

3. The communion between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit is a very exalted experience. It takes place on the loftiest level of human life. Human language is but a poor medium for the transaction of such experience. Great poets and thinkers, with an extraordinary knowledge of words, have often complained of their inability to express in words the noble thoughts and emotions which surge through them. Even those of us who are not great poets or thinkers have occasionally passed through some wonderful experience which has defied expression. Our hearts have been deeply moved by perhaps the sight of a glorious sunset, but when we try to state such experience in words we fail completely. The fellowship between Christ and His Father took place on the loftiest summit of religious experience. Words were not at all adequate to express or to deepen such experience.

It may be asked whether Jesus knew or practised *Yoga* if He experienced *Samādhi*. Some writers have made the suggestion that He probably practised *Yoga* as it is understood in India. On this point there is no evidence at all. We cannot say that He came in contact with any *Yogi* or learnt any method of *Yoga*.

The history of religious experience all over the world shows that many people attained *Samādhi* without following *Yoga*. Most Christian mystics had the experience of *Samādhi* but it was not brought about by any method of Hindu *Yoga*. The fact is this. Some men have a naturally strong physical constitution. Others obtain a strong constitution by careful physical training. Methods of physical training need not be despised. When a man is weak they may make him strong; when a man is strong they may make him stronger. But there are many strong men who have never undergone any physical training. In the same way Jesus experienced *Samādhi* without following any technical process of *Yoga*. This shows that He was a ripe soul and that He did not need any external aids to help Him in His experience of fellowship with the Father.

We know from certain incidents in the Gospels that Jesus had

[26] Matthew vi. 8.

definitely mystical experiences. One such experience is recorded as having taken place immediately after His Baptism. "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him; and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." [27] His Baptism was a momentous step in His spiritual career. It marked His entrance into that unparalleled life of service and sacrifice, of which we have an account in the Gospels. After the ceremony of initiation, He had a vision of the Spirit of God resting upon Him and heard a voice from heaven declaring that He was the beloved Son in whom God was well pleased. As He began His public ministry He received in this impressive manner the gift of spiritual power and the divine assurance endorsing His mission.

Immediately after His Baptism, His temptation took place. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered." [28] St. Matthew goes on to tell us how at this time Satan arrived and tempted Him in various ways. What happened was probably this. After His Baptism Jesus felt impelled to go into the wilderness for prayer and meditation. This urge within Him was a divine impulse; He was driven by the Spirit of God into the wilderness; it was no selfish motive which made Him seek quiet and peace away from the haunts of men. As He was absorbed in prayer and meditation, neglecting even food and drink, He saw a vision or a series of visions in which some of His spiritual problems were set out and solved. In the chapter on the Public Ministry of Jesus the meaning of these temptations is briefly discussed. At this point we may note that Jesus was a mystic who passed through abnormal spiritual experiences and saw visions and heard voices.

The third incident in the Gospels which provides us with evidence of the mystical nature of Jesus is the Transfiguration. "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." [29] Here also we have convincing proof that, in an

[27] Matthew iii. 16, 17.
[28] Matthew iv. 1 and 2.
[29] Luke ix. 28, 29.

hour of intense prayer, the face of Jesus glowed with supernatural beauty and He was in communion with the spirits of Moses and Elijah.

A person who was in the habit of passing through such spiritual experiences as these may well be regarded as having had *Savikalpa Samādhi*.

"I and the Father are one"

We read in the Fourth Gospel that He said, "I and the Father are one." [30] A great many Hindu readers are at once attracted by this verse and understand from it that Jesus had an experience of *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*. It appears to them to say the same thing as the text in the *Upanishads*, "I am *Brahman*" *(Aham Brāhmasmi)*. The *Advaita* doctrine is that there is only one Reality, God *(Brahman)*. People think that they are separate from *Brahman*. This ignorant belief is the root of all trouble in the world. Because of the wrong idea that they are separate beings, men become selfish; they are bitter towards those who may compete with them; they are worried about their own prestige. But if they realize that they are indeed *Brahman*, all these false anxieties will cease and they will be filled with bliss. Jesus attained to that knowledge. He realized that He and God were one Reality, that there was no difference at all between Him and God and that He Himself had no separateness of being. The followers of the *Advaita* always tend to understand this verse in some such sense.

Any saying of Jesus must be interpreted in connexion with all His other teaching. A verse cannot be taken apart from its context and explained satisfactorily. It may be quite true that on the surface this verse is like the texts in *Upanishads* which set forth *Advaita*. But we must remember that Jesus always thought of God as His Father. The name which He constantly used for God was Father. In this verse too He speaks of God as Father. This means that the relation between God and Jesus is a personal relation between Father and Son. Jesus also says, "The Father is greater than I." [31] This shows that He regards Himself as wholly dependent upon the Father; He is not identical with God. Again, on the Cross one of His prayers was, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." [32] Here again we see His recognition of the Father's love and His own willingness to

[30] John x. 30.
[31] John xiv. 28.
[32] Luke xxiii. 46.

submit Himself entirely to Him. He has a separate life of His own with its joys and sorrows. This life He gladly puts into the Father's hands, not that it may cease but that it may bear richer fruit. Jesus' conception of the Father's greatness and of His own difference from Him is brought out also in two other sayings of His: "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." [33] "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, even God." [34]

We can, therefore, say that "I and the Father are one" did not refer to any oneness or identity in the real nature of God and Jesus. The relation between God and Jesus was a personal one. God was His Father and Jesus was His Son. He loved His Father; He realized His entire dependence on Him; He gladly submitted Himself to Him. Worship was the expression of His love for the Father; the Temple was the place where He met His Father and had fellowship with Him. There is no hint in this verse that the nature of God and man is one and the same.

The oneness of Jesus with God was a moral identity. He was one with the Father in the sense that He loved what His Father loved and hated what His Father hated. The Kingdom of God, in which the Father realized His purpose for the world, was the sphere in which Jesus worked. The men and women whom God created were the people for whose redemption Christ lived and suffered and died on the Cross.

This does not mean that He had no will of His own, no desires or plans of His own. He had His own separate life. But at the same time He submitted Himself fully to the Father's will. We see this clearly in His prayer in the garden at Gethsemane. There we find that He struggled to fall in line with the Father's will for Him. His own natural inclination at the time was to escape the bitter humiliation and death which were ahead of Him. But He put Himself completely in the Father's hands. He prayed that not His will but the Father's might be done. The brief account in St. Mark gives a vivid picture of what happened.[35] Here we see something of the nature of His communion with God. It was the complete devotion of His will to the will of His Father. He did not worship God for any selfish reasons of His own, in order, for instance, to get certain blessings

[33] Mark xiii. 32.
[34] Luke xviii. 19.
[35] Mark xiv. 32–41.

for Himself. But He worshipped God and was ready to suffer to the utmost for Him. The doing of the Father's will was of the essence of His oneness with the Father.

In the oneness between Jesus and God there was also a oneness of feeling. Sometimes in an exalted mood people feel that they are one. Such feeling of oneness gives a glow to family life. The husband feels one with his wife; the mother with her children; the children with their parents. In most families this occurs only when there is an occasion of great joy or of deep sorrow, while in some it is a permanent feature. Without such a feeling of oneness, family life, with its difficulties and struggles, its misunderstandings and hardships, becomes impossible. This feeling of oneness binds the family together and makes life in it attractive and worth while.

Jesus must have had something also of this experience in His relation to God. We read how His face was lit up during an hour of prayer. "And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling." [36] This shows that prayer gave rise to a wonderful experience of joy in His heart and transfigured His face. On the other hand, we also know that there was deep grief in His heart when in a moment of spiritual anguish He lost the sense of His Father's Presence. Hanging on the Cross, He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [37] From this verse we see how much He took to heart the loss of the Father's Presence. Jesus was one with God in His great purpose for the redemption of men. It was this which sustained Him through the valley of the shadow of death; it was this which made Him drink the bitter cup of the crucifixion to its dregs.

St. John has described Jesus' life of communion with His Father as being one with God. This word "one" does not occur in the other three Gospels. So we may ask whether Jesus actually described Himself as being one with the Father. This is difficult to say but in the Synoptic Gospels we have ample evidence of the life of fellowship which Jesus led with the Father. We see in them clearly how close He lived to God and what delight He took in His Father's work. The experience is there; of this we have no doubt whatever. As to whether He Himself used the

[36] Luke ix. 28, 29.
[37] Mark xv. 34.

term "oneness" to describe that experience or as to whether St. John used it, we cannot be sure. The terms "oneness" and "union" have been greatly attractive to the saints. They show, as no other words can, the closeness and the intimacy of the fellowship between God and man.

Some readers of St. John's Gospel understand "I and the Father are one" to mean that by this Christ declares His own Deity and asserts that He is indeed God. The main difficulty in accepting this meaning is that according to the Gospel of St. John the oneness between God and Jesus is like the oneness among the followers of Jesus. "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 perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." [38] Here the union between God and Christ is said to be the pattern of the union which should prevail among the followers of Christ. If we understand "I and my Father are one" as teaching the Deity of Christ, it is difficult to understand the present passage. Then the followers of Christ would also possess Deity, which is against all Christian doctrine. The followers of Christ are not gods, nor do they possess any claims to Godhead. What this prayer desires is that there should prevail among Christians such a spirit of love and fellowship as exists between Christ and God. This makes it clear that the union between God and Christ which is spoken of in the Fourth Gospel is a union in love and work and not an identity in their essential nature.[39]

We may note here that there is a remarkable absence of the sense of guilt and of the need of divine forgiveness in the prayers of Jesus. The prayers of the Christian saints are full of a deep sense of penitence. They realize that they are entirely unworthy of the goodness and the love of God. They do not deserve any of His abundant mercies. They have offended Him grievously again and again. There has been a constant struggle between the flesh and the spirit in their lives, and the flesh has often been victorious. Their nobler desires have been constantly overwhelmed by their baser passions. The more advanced the saints

[38] John xvii. 20–23.

[39] See my *What is Moksha?* pp. 44–68, for a discussion of the verse "I and my Father are one."

are in their spiritual life, the more deeply they feel their sinfulness. We find an entire absence of this sense of guilt and of the need for God's forgiveness in the prayers of Jesus. This fact should be carefully noted. Especially when we seek to understand the meaning of Christ's life and death, we must remember this. Not that He was ignorant of the fact of sin in the world. He emphatically teaches that men are sinful and that their first duty is to repent and seek God's forgiveness. We shall see in a later chapter what an important place Jesus gives in His teaching to the need for our realizing our sinfulness and asking God for His gracious pardon. As far as other men are concerned, Jesus clearly feels their sinfulness and their need of God's forgiving love. But in His own personal experience there is no trace at all of the conviction of guilt. There are no confessions of sin and no prayers for God's forgiveness in His life of communion with the Father. This important fact should always be carefully remembered when we try to understand the real significance of Christ.

The Christian Church has devoted a great deal of attention to describing the public activities of Jesus—His teaching, His miracles, His suffering and death on the Cross and His Resurrection. These are quite important. But we must remember that these wonderful public activities which men saw had their roots in a deep, inner life of prayer. Prayer covers a wide range of experience. It may mean the simple, short prayer of the child who with real trust seeks the help and love of God or the advanced prayer of the *Bhakta* who becomes rapt in God and whose spirit is in communion with the Spirit of God. To get an accurate idea of the work of Jesus we must seek to understand something of His inner life of prayer. It is quite clear that there was a deep urge within Him to devote considerable time to solitary prayer. He did not regard this time as wasted as some active workers are apt to do. Nor did He devote Himself to prayer from a sense of duty. He did not strain and strive after a life of prayer. There was a natural instinct in Him which made Him seek quiet and peace for communion with the Father. After a heavy day's work He felt that He must seek more clearly the Presence of God. So intimately are His inner and outer life bound together that we cannot understand Him clearly unless we make an effort to grasp the meaning of His inner life. From the few hints which we have in the Gospels about His life of prayer we gather that He experienced oneness with God in mystical ways. Unless we realize this, we are apt to lose sight of some of the profound influences which were behind His life.

CHAPTER III

THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

THE life of Jesus was well-balanced. His inner life of prayer and His outer life of service were equally important to Him; the one did not crowd out the other. His communion with the Father was close and intimate both during His times of prayer and His hours of work. We have seen some glimpses of His inner life of prayer; we shall now study the nature of His public ministry.

Soon after He began His work, He went to Nazareth where He had spent the greater part of His life. On the Sabbath day He attended the service in the synagogue and expounded a passage from the book of Isaiah.

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
> He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovering of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears." [1]

He thus laid down the programme of His public work. We are impressed by the comprehensive character of His ideal. The main principles of all social and spiritual work are enumerated here in the clearest possible way and for all time. We may now inquire how Jesus Himself carried out this programme. His chief lines of activity were healing and teaching. He constantly travelled through the villages and towns of Palestine, carrying on these two types of work. Some of the important characteristics of His public ministry may now be noted.

1. It was in the spirit of a servant *(Sēvaka)* that He did all His work. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your

[1] Luke iv. 18–21.

minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." [2] The disciples never understood Him wholly. They had been drawn to Him by His mysterious spiritual power; though they listened to His lofty teaching and moved with Him closely, they did not quite grasp the spiritual character of His mission. They thought that He would establish a glorious worldly or spiritual Kingdom and that they themselves would be given places of importance in that Kingdom. The saying of Jesus that He had come to minister and not to be ministered unto perplexed them much. And yet that was the spirit in which He did His entire work.

In the Gospel of St. John the story is told of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." [3] Though this story occurs only in the Gospel of St. John we need not doubt it. The Fourth Evangelist was always exalting the glory of Christ, and an incident like this would not have struck him as natural. It was because it actually occurred that he has related it, though it is not in keeping with his high idea of the dignity of Christ. This incident shows clearly the spirit of the servant which actuated Jesus throughout His ministry.

2. Again and again He was moved with compassion. The needs of men deeply stirred Him. When He saw large numbers of sick people He was moved with compassion for them and healed them. "And when even was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took

[2] Matthew xx. 25–28.
[3] John xiii. 3–9.

our infirmities, and bare our diseases." [4] "And he came forth, and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick." [5] On two occasions they had come in thousands to a desert place to hear Him. They had no food and were hungry; so on each occasion He worked a miracle and fed them. "And Jesus called unto him his disciples, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat: and I would not send them away fasting, lest haply they faint in the way." [6] "And he came forth and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." [7] His compassion always led to immediate action; it was no empty feeling of sympathy. There is a great deal of useless sympathy in the world; people often express their sympathy and do nothing more. Not such was the sympathy of Jesus. Compassion literally means "suffering with"; Jesus suffered with the people who suffered. He realized in Himself more than any one else in the world the ideal of the godly man as set out by Tukārām, the poet of Western India.

> "That man is true
> Who taketh to his bosom the afflicted:
>
> In such a man
> Dwelleth, augustly present,
> God himself:
>
> The heart of such a man is filled abrim
> With pity, gentleness and love:
>
> He taketh the forsaken for his own." [8]

A wonderful prayer of a devotee is given in the *Mahābhārata:*

> "O who would tell me of the sacred way
> Whereby I might enter into all hearts
> That suffer, and take all their suffering
> Upon myself for ever and for aye." [9]

Some such prayer must often have been on the lips of Jesus.

[4] Matthew viii. 16, 17.
[5] Matthew xiv. 14.
[6] Matthew xv. 32.
[7] Mark vi. 34.
[8] M. K. Gandhi, *Songs from Prison*, p. 129.
[9] *The Mahābhārata, Anu-Shāsana Parva*, l. li. Quoted in Bhagavan Dās, *The Essential Unity of All Religions*, p. 304.

The greater the need, the deeper His sympathy. A touching story is told of a leper who came to Jesus and was healed by Him. "And there cometh to him a leper, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou made clean. And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean." [10] Leprosy is a loathsome disease; the very sight of a leper disturbs most people. But Jesus was deeply stirred and touched him with His own hand and healed him.

3. In the course of His work Jesus clearly realized the close connexion between the spirit and the body. A great many social workers to-day desire to give them better houses, better clothes, better food and better surroundings, and they think that all this could be done without any reference to religion or God. Even Mahātma Gandhi, with his deep religious experience and his passion for social work, urges Christians to run hospitals and schools but not to teach Christianity in them. In the work of Jesus the physical and the spiritual were constantly associated together. As we have just seen, when people came to hear Him preach and had no food He gave them food. He did not say, "I am only concerned with the souls of men and not with their bodies" but He met the physical needs of men just as effectively as He met their spiritual wants. And how much time He devoted to the relief of physical suffering! He made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; He made the blind to see and the lame to walk and He cleansed lepers. All this was primarily physical relief, and yet He devoted a considerable part of His time and energy to such work. Often He made the giving of physical help an occasion for spiritual teaching. When people came to Him to be healed He forgave them their sins and set them on a new spiritual path. We cannot really help people unless we help them both body and soul. If a man suffers intense physical pain we cannot tell him about God unless that pain is relieved; if a man is starving, instruction about the love of God will fall on deaf ears unless his hunger is satisfied. The opposite is also equally true. A man whose illness is healed must be given a new spiritual vision and taught to make the best use of the new life which has been made available to him.

"Tolstoi, the Russian writer, is reputed to have once said that his best story was never written. Explaining the paradox, he

[10] Mark i. 40–42.

continued: 'What a wonderful novel I could have written about a story I once heard in Moscow, a supposedly true story. An officer's wife was about to bear a child, and the doctor attending her declared that she herself could not be saved. A priest was hurriedly summoned to give her the last rites. He was a monk from a nearby cloister. It so happened that during his worldly life he had been a famous surgeon, and he realized at once that there was a chance to save both the woman and the child. Without stopping to think, he grasped the instruments and performed the operation. It turned out successfully, and the happy officer fell on his knees before the monk. But the latter, in his turn, begged forgiveness and made those present swear they would never tell a soul of his deed: for he had sinned grievously: he had seen a woman's naked body and had shed blood in the presence of the Almighty. . . . Naturally, the overjoyed husband could not keep the secret and the news leaked out. The monk was sent to do penance in a distant cloister in Siberia. Oh, what a wonderful book could be woven around that!' His voice trembled, tears glistened in his eyes!" [11] Our point of view on this matter has now changed a good deal. Many a Christian minister would now covet the monk's ability to give immediate physical relief.

4. Jesus called for the co-operation of the people. Whatever His own powers were, He always taught that He could not really help unless people had faith. He did this in the course of His teaching ministry. Once He was invited to dinner and as He sat down at the meal a woman who was a sinner brought an alabaster box of ointment, broke it at His feet and anointed them with the scent. The Pharisee who had invited Him was quite taken by surprise. He thought within himself that if Jesus were a prophet, as many people claimed Him to be, He would certainly have known that she was a sinner and would have had nothing to do with her. But, on the other hand, He told her that her sins were forgiven, and sent her away with the words of benediction: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." [12]

This woman was probably a well-known character. She was locally held in disrepute as a bad woman. All good people had given up hopes of her. They thought that social contact with her would be contaminating and avoided her like poison. Probably she also began to lose all hope for herself. The attitude of people

[11] *The Hindu*, October 1, 1939.
[12] Luke vii. 36–50.

around her would certainly have affected her; she might have begun to think of herself as having gone beyond redemption. But she heard of this new spiritual teacher who would not cast her out but who would give her a new lease of spiritual life. So she came to Him in great faith. She had to make an effort and decide to come to see Him, though she might naturally have shrunk from such an interview. She might also have anticipated difficulties from the host in whose house Jesus had the meal. Jesus welcomed this initiative on her part and reinforced her feeble spiritual powers. He forgave her sins and sent her out with new hopes to live for and new expectations to realize.

He did the same with the physically infirm. A paralytic man was brought to Him on a bed. Jesus bade him get up, take his bed and go home and he did so.[13] In every case He insisted upon people exercising their faith. They must do the best they could and then He would help them. Whatever powers resided in a man must be fully used before Jesus would come to his aid. Social workers know the importance of this principle. Unless the people want to help themselves it is no use building clean homes for them or giving them higher wages. Jesus took men and women as they were and drew out all that was best in them. If they were morally weak they had to use what little power of decision they had before He would come to their rescue. They might be physically weak and even unable to walk: but He put so much confidence in them that they walked, much to their own amazement and the surprise of those who knew them.

In several cities He could not do mighty works because there was no faith. "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."[14] Only where there was faith His healing power was released. He constantly rebuked His disciples and those who came to Him to be healed or to be helped otherwise for their lack of faith. Such want of faith always distressed Him. He spoke sternly whenever He saw men losing their faith in God. Unless they exerted themselves there was no salvation for them.

5. Jesus gave of Himself unstintedly to His work. One of the maxims in the *Kurral* says:

> "The loveless to themselves belong alone;
> The loving men are others' to the very bone."[15]

The second line of this verse describes Jesus exactly. He gave of Himself to others to the very bone. His was unremitting toil.

[13] Mark ii. 2–12.
[14] Matthew xiii. 58.
[15] G. U. Pope, *Sacred Kurral*, p. 12.

He was often fatigued at the end of a hard day's work. His time was so crowded with people coming and going that He had often to seek quiet and peace in the desert place or by the hillside. Once a deaf and dumb boy, who was possessed with a spirit, was brought to Him. The boy behaved violently; as soon as he saw Jesus he fell on the ground and wallowed foaming. His father said he had often leaped into fire or water at immense risk to his life. Jesus healed the boy. When His disciples, to whom the boy had been brought first and who had not been able to heal him, asked Him why they were not able to heal him, Jesus said that this kind of spirit could only be cast out by prayer and fasting.[16] This shows what price Jesus had to pay for His healing work; it was only as a result of long prayer and fasting that He was able to cure men of their diseases; such work did not come easy to Him. On another occasion as He was walking along, followed by a big crowd, a sick woman who had been ill for twelve years and had spent all her fortune on medical treatment came behind Him and touched the border of His garment and immediately she was healed. Jesus said: "Who is it that touched me?" Every one denied having touched Him. Peter and others remarked to Jesus that there was a big crowd pressing on Him. But Jesus said: "Some one did touch me: for I perceived that power had gone forth from me." On this the woman confessed that she had touched Him and was sent away with a blessing by Jesus.[17] Here again we see what it cost Jesus to heal people; He had to give of His spiritual energy to help them. When men did not respond, He took it very much to heart. He wept over Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!" [18] He helped people by living with them, entering into their deepest sufferings and working for them to the utmost limit of His strength.

6. Jesus helped all classes of people. He healed street beggars. A blind beggar on the way to Jericho besought Him to help and He gave him sight.[19] There were many men who were possessed with spirits; in our present day medical phrase we should call them insane; they were wandering wildly about, living in tombs

[16] Mark ix. 14–29.
[17] Luke viii. 43–48.
[18] Luke xiii. 34.
[19] Mark x. 46–52.

and in other strange places. These also Jesus made whole. Some patients had enough influence and money to be carried to Him on beds. He healed a centurion's servant. The centurion, though an officer in the Roman army, was quite humble and asked Jesus only to say a word and not to trouble even to go into the house, but Jesus went all the same and healed the servant. The mother-in-law of Peter, one of His disciples, was ill with fever and He healed her; Peter and his people were fisher folk. His intimate friend, Lazarus, was apparently a man of some means for he lived with his sisters in a home of his own at Bethany; he died; Jesus wept over the calamity and brought him back to life. Mary Magdalene, from whom He drove out spirits, was a harlot. A noble man's son was also healed by Him. Jairus, whose daughter He raised from the dead, was a ruler of a synagogue: that is, he was a church official. Thus He ministered to all sorts and conditions of men and women. He was a profound social revolutionary in the sense that He laid down principles which upset a great many of the accepted ideals of men about their duty to one another. But He did not advocate or practise class-war or class-bitterness in any form. Among those who came and were healed by Him, or who listened to His teaching, many races were represented. The Greeks, with their philosophy and culture, came to Him and were taught by Him. A woman of the Samaritan race, with whom the Jews were always in conflict, received some of His noblest teaching. The centurion, whose servant He healed, was a Roman and the Jews hated the Romans bitterly as they ruled over them.

7. Jesus was anxious to avoid all publicity. Again and again we read in the Gospels that He asked people not to speak about the mighty works which He wrought.[20] When men came to Him and were healed by Him, He asked them not to publish the news but often they disobeyed Him and spread abroad the glad tidings all the more. They were so filled with gratitude and joy for the new health which had been given to them that they did not give heed to the command of Jesus but made known the amazing change which had taken place in them by His power. Those possessed with spirits seemed to have a strange gift for understanding who He was; they had some unusual power of insight. As soon as they saw Him they confessed that He was the Son of God. Jesus forbade them to speak of Him publicly in this way. After the Transfiguration, when His glory was revealed to His three intimate disciples, He asked them not to speak about it to

[20] Mark i. 34, 42–45; Mark iii. 12; and in a great many other places.

others until after His Resurrection. The anxiety which He showed to avoid publicity and fame was remarkable. Often good people who are really anxious to help others and who do a great deal for them are weak in this matter; they like their names to be mentioned in the papers and their photographs to be published. Some give away large sums of money and even themselves actively take part in philanthropic work in order that they may be given titles. But Jesus who worked for others day and night avoided publicity as much as He could. If His fame became too great in one locality and large crowds began to collect He left that neighbourhood and went to another part of the country where He was not so well known. It may be said that the main reason for His avoiding publicity was to postpone the Messianic crisis. The Jews of His time were eagerly expecting the advent of the Messiah. If the mighty works which Jesus did got abroad, the Jews would have immediately concluded that He was indeed the long-expected Messiah and would have sought to force Him to declare Himself publicly as such. This He was not prepared to do, as the time for it had not yet come. The desire not to hasten a crisis was certainly one reason why He avoided publicity. But it was not the only reason. He helped people because they needed to be helped; their sad condition stirred Him to immediate sympathy; and He did not want others to know all that He was doing to relieve men of their suffering and misery. Did He not enjoin on others the utmost secrecy in almsgiving? "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee."[21] This precept Jesus practised in His own life of service, avoiding publicity and glory as much as He could.

8. Jesus did not use any of the supernatural gifts which He possessed for His own benefit. Before His ministry began we are told that He had three temptations. In a vision or in a series of visions He had an encounter with Satan who tempted Him. The first two of these temptations related to this very point. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness

[21] Matthew vi. 1–4.

to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written,

> He shall give his angels charge concerning thee:
> And on their hands they shall bear thee up,
> Lest haply thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." [22]

He knew He had extraordinary powers *(siddhis)*; these He could use for His own profit; when He was hungry, for instance, He could turn stone into bread. He was going to be a *Sannyāsi* and would carry no money. It was quite likely that as He wandered from place to place He would have to go without food sometimes. Perhaps then He could use His supernatural powers. Or He could use His miraculous gifts to demonstrate to the world His greatness; He could jump down from a high tower and be unhurt. Before He commenced His ministry, as He reflected in His own mind about the methods which He should follow in His work, the suggestion to use His supernatural gifts to avoid suffering for Himself and to win the favour of the public arose in His mind in a vision as an encounter between Himself and Satan. But He dismissed the suggestion; He would have nothing to do with it. He would not use His abnormal powers to win the faith of the world. His method was rather the method of the Cross. He would live with men, help them to the farthest limit of His strength and die for them; only in that way would He make men love Him. When during His arrest a disciple of Jesus cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest, Jesus healed the wound and said to His disciple: "Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" [23]

9. Jesus passed on to others His own passion for work. He

[22] Matthew iv. 1–7.
[23] Matthew xxvi. 52, 53.

appointed seventy disciples to go to various villages and towns, to heal the sick who were there and to preach the Kingdom of God. "And the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." [24]

This is a remarkable passage. The disciples were quite surprised when their work was crowned with success. Particularly were they pleased with the effective way in which they were able to treat the insane. The results of their mission stirred Jesus deeply and His joy was tremendous. It was a matter of supreme happiness to Him that His disciples had taken up with enthusiasm the work which He had entrusted to them, that they were doing it so well and that even greater results would follow than they had yet seen on their mission. We read in the Acts of the Apostles how in the early Church the disciples of Christ continued to carry on this important ministry of helping men, both body and soul.

10. There was another striking characteristic about the public ministry of Jesus. He introduced a new factor into human life by associating women with His work. "And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." [25]

Women were held in great contempt in the time of Jesus. The ethical teachers of that day taught that "A man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife." They also held that it was "better that the words of the law should be burnt than delivered to women." In the daily service of the synagogue the men said: "Blessed art thou, O Lord . . . who hast not made me a woman." The women from their separate

[24] Luke x. 17–21.
[25] Mark xv. 40, 41.

place made the response: "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast fashioned me according to thy will." [26]

We perhaps fail to recognize all that Christ has done for women. We are so familiar with the freedom and high social position given to women in modern days that we sometimes forget that it was Christ who introduced a new outlook into the world about women. For the first time in History women went about publicly doing religious and social work.

In the *Upanishads* we read of some women who were the apt spiritual pupils of the *Rishis;* these ancient thinkers of India explained some of their deepest thoughts to them. We may gather from this that some of the women of those days in India were highly advanced in their spiritual culture and were considered worthy of profound religious instruction. In the Gospels also we see some women in the capacity of apt spiritual pupils, to whom Jesus gave His highest teaching. Martha and Mary and the Samaritan woman received instruction from Him on some of the deepest things in life. The Gospels show that women were not only apt pupils but that they engaged in the active ministry. From this small seed has grown the tremendous Women's Movement which we see to-day all over the world; women are now co-operating with men in all spheres of life and holding various positions of leadership and responsibility.

The Miracles of Jesus

There has been much controversy in recent years about the miracles of Jesus. The spread of scientific education has made many men unwilling to believe in miracles. They say that the world is governed by certain well-known laws and miracles are contrary to them; we can believe only in what normally happens and not in the miraculous. So there are some Christian theologians who do not believe in any of the miracles recorded in the Gospels and many who believe only in the miracles of healing and reject all the other miracles as improbable.

We must remember that Jesus Himself often said that these and other miracles could be worked by any one who had faith. "And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth." [27] "And the Lord said, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou planted in the sea; and it would

[26] William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel,* p. 59, and B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John,* p. 74.

[27] Mark ix. 23.

have obeyed you." [28] "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast it out? And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." [29] Jesus firmly held that the power to work miracles was not confined to Himself; all those who had strong faith in God had the capacity to perform miracles. The power of God is infinite; if we can only tap that power and release it, we can do a great deal which ordinarily seems impossible. God is quite ready and willing to let us use His power. He is full of love for us and His infinite resources are always at our disposal. Only we must have strong faith that this power is available and we must be prepared to draw from it.

As I have said, some of the Christian theologians are prepared now to believe in miracles of healing which are recorded in the Gospels. Canon Raven says: "Scientists began to demonstrate that in certain directions, and notably in cases of nervous disease, individual men of to-day could accomplish results that to an earlier generation would have seemed miraculous. Psychic research began to open up fresh evidence of the subtle interactions of personalities, to demonstrate the power of suggestion, and to break down the older forms of materialism. Clinical experience, enormously increased by the nerve-strain and shock of war, discovered lines of treatment that yielded astounding and often almost instantaneous cures. That is not the place to describe the methods or discuss the significance of Psycho-therapy. But its effect upon the general attitude towards miracles has been revolutionary. Twenty years ago it was hard to believe that even Jesus healed the sick 'with a word': to-day it is admitted that in a person of outstanding psychic development it would be surprising if there were not the power to heal. Certain of His works are now generally accepted." [30]

The practice of spiritual healing is spreading in the Christian Church. There are many men and women who are able to cure diseases by their prayers. I myself have come in first-hand contact with such cases of recovery. The name of Bishop Pakenham-Walsh is well known in India. He prays for sick people, often anointing them, and keeps a careful record of all

[28] Luke xvii. 6.
[29] Matthew xvii. 19–21.
[30] Raven, *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, p. 251.

his cases. He states that over thirty-three per cent of the persons for whom he prays are healed. I have had occasion to investigate carefully three or four cases of remarkable recovery as the result of his prayers. The evidence, both of the patients and of their close relations or friends, is quite convincing.

It has always been believed in India that the spirit has great power over matter and that what are called miracles can be worked by men of high spiritual development. I am not referring here to the miracles which are narrated in the *Purānas*. These can be paralleled from all over the world. Men in a low stage of intellectual development are ready to believe whatever they are told and stories of miracles easily grow. The ancient books in the different countries of the world are full of such stories.

I am referring here rather to the deep and subtle thinkers of India who came to believe in the miraculous as a result of their careful investigation into the powers of the mind. Patanjali, the author of the *Yoga Sūtras,* must be regarded as a great psychologist. His book reveals a profound knowledge of human nature. He goes deep into the subject and makes a minute and careful study of the workings of the mind. He says: "One whose whole nature is surrendered to the *Īsvara* has perfection of concentration. By which (concentration) he knows, as the thing really is, all that he desires to know, in other places and in other bodies, and in other times. Thereafter his insight sees into things as they are." [31] Patanjali lays down precise directions for psychic development and believes that any one who follows them will attain powers like Telepathy and Television. Convictions such as these are at the root of the Hindu idea that the capacities of a spiritually advanced person are quite beyond the normal. Scholars in the West are gradually coming to recognize the truth behind these Hindu convictions. They are beginning to realize slowly the enormous possibilities in the control of matter by mind.

We know what a deep inner life Jesus led. His was a life of prolonged prayer and meditation. In the course of His spiritual development he acquired certain unusual gifts and He was able to do a great many things which men are not ordinarily able to do. He had, for instance, the gift of Telepathy or the power to read into other people's minds. "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth him, that she is

[31] J. H. Woods, *The Yoga System of Patanjali,* p. 190.

a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on." [32] "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" [33] "And knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." [34]

We must sift the evidence in the case of each miracle whether of Jesus or of others. We must be sure that the writers who recorded the miracles got their evidence first-hand. Often stories of miracles grow when they are passed on from mouth to mouth; new and unusual features are added to them. But if we can be sure that the historical evidence is sufficient we should have no hesitation in believing in miracles. In other words, we need not start with the idea that no miracles could happen. Miracles do happen if there is a highly developed individual with strong faith in God. What is recorded of him must be attested by ample evidence for men always tend to attribute miracles to persons who are not likely to possess the spiritual gifts needed to work them, and even of those who have the gifts far more stories, often added to by fertile imaginations, are in circulation than the events which took place would warrant.

[32] Luke vii. 39, 40.
[33] Matthew ix. 4.
[34] Matthew xii. 25.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON GOD

As we read the Gospels we are attracted at once by the teaching of Jesus. We may begin our study of Him by regarding Him as a great religious teacher *(Guru)*. His demands from us are the same as the requirements of any *Guru,* a readiness to learn from Him and to spread His teaching. This is the idea with which we may well start.

In India it has always been taught that spiritual progress can only be made under the personal instruction of a *Guru*. Religion cannot be learnt from books; it can only be imbibed from men of deep religious experience. Only such persons will be able to communicate to others some of their own intense faith in God. This is a truth of great importance. It is only through living witnesses to the power of God that religion can spread. This valuable tradition of the importance of a teacher has often been abused in India. Men quite unworthy have at times set themselves up as religious teachers and managed by their cleverness to win a large following. They have made the utmost demands on their followers and have insisted on complete surrender; such surrender ought never to be made to man but must be made only to God. But these abuses need not in any way hinder us from recognizing the importance of a *Guru* in the religious life.

The well-known Tamil book *Nannūl* thus mentions the qualifications necessary for a good teacher: "Good ancestry, love of men, knowledge of God, possession of dignity, clearness of thought, gift of speech, power of consistency, understanding of the world's ways and lofty character—these alone qualify a man to teach." [1] We note that Jesus possessed all these qualifications in full measure.

He had a noble ancestry. He came of the Jewish race. His people had produced a splendid line of saints and prophets, to whom God had disclosed Himself and showed that there is only one God and that He should be worshipped with a clean and holy life. The Jews did not accept these profound truths without a struggle. Like the other nations of the world, they too had believed at first that there were many spirits and gods ruling the

[1] *Nannūl,* 36.

affairs of men who should be pleased with bloody offerings and elaborate ceremonies. But gradually they had risen to a lofty conception of God and had learnt to recognize that there is only one God controlling the world and that those who worship Him must be pure and true and good as He is pure and true and good. Jesus had come of this splendid stock and had inherited the passionate faith of His ancestors in God. To Him as to them worship was very real; He loved to pray to God both in public and in private. He knew as they did that God is righteous and demands from His worshippers a holy life.

Jesus had a great love for men. He knew their difficulties and troubles and entered into all their problems; He was anxious to help them to the utmost in their temptations and struggles. Himself living close to God and experiencing His love and goodness, He enabled others to know something of this love.

He had a real knowledge of God. He understood the Father's ways with men; He knew His concern for every living creature; He spoke of His perfection; He was aware of His grief over the sins of men, His readiness to forgive them and His anxiety to redeem them.

Jesus possessed also the dignity which is required of a *Guru*. He spoke with authority. Those who heard Him teach were impressed with the certainty and assurance which lay behind His words. He knew what He was talking about. He was so sure of what He said that He claimed for it complete and unhesitating acceptance.

He had also clearness of thought, another qualification essential for a *Guru*. Tirumūlar teaches thus the need for clearness:

> "Seeing a clear *Guru*,
> Uttering a clear *Guru's* name,
> Hearing a clear *Guru's* words,
> Meditating on a clear *Guru's* character." [2]

The clearness of Jesus was the result of a profound knowledge. It is only the man who knows little who is confused in his thinking. Even as a boy of twelve the inquiring spirit of Jesus had awakened. At that early age He was found in the temple engaged in serious religious conversation with the Jewish theologians. All through His life Jesus studied carefully the Scriptures of His nation; He was familiar with the writings of the Jewish law-givers, prophets and psalmists which are con-

[2] Tirumūlar, "*Telivu Guruvin.*"

tained in the Old Testament. To His study, He added His profound capacity for spiritual insight.

He had the gift of exposition and knew how to make even deep things simple and clear to men. His many parables bear witness to this power; they are so simple that even children can understand them; and yet they contain depths of meaning which become clear to theologians only after long study and meditation and that also not always. His brief sayings are unforgettable and always linger in the memory; they state concisely what many long books often fail to convey.

He had the quality of consistency which is required of a *Guru*. *Nannūl* suggests that a teacher's consistency should be like the firmness of a rock. The teaching of Jesus was quite firm and coherent. He taught that it is impossible to serve God and Mammon at the same time. The man who desires to serve God fully must give up all worldly desires; only he who renounces the possession of wealth and even the joys of family life will be able to worship God fully. This may be hard teaching but it is the necessary outcome of Jesus' fundamental belief that God requires of His devotees full and unconditional surrender. Most of us are not able to meet this exacting demand, but Jesus Himself literally followed His own precepts. He gave up all that the world considers dear, the joys of family, friendship and wealth. To Him the greatest bliss was the joy of living with God and of working for Him among men.

He understood the ways of the world, another quality necessary for a *Guru*. He taught that men should be as guileless as doves and as wise as serpents. He was familiar with all the inner workings of the human mind. He knew that if men generally work longer hours they expect more payment and that when a master delays his coming, his servants begin to sleep. He realized that people with mediocre gifts (the men with one talent) are apt to be discontented and to bury their gifts, angry that they are not capable of the highest tasks. He was aware that about half the people in the world are wise, thinking of future needs and getting ready for them, while the other half are like the five foolish virgins who do not begin to prepare until the last moment.

To all these qualifications of a *Guru* must be added the last and the greatest, namely, the gift of a noble character. The *Guru* must live what he preaches; his actions must conform to his words. If he does not do this, he only cheats people. Tiruvalluvar has a vivid way of stating this truth: " One who

puts on the garb of an ascetic while living a wicked life is like a hunter who hides in a bush and traps birds to kill them." [3] Jesus was absolutely true to His teaching.

We shall now turn to His teaching, beginning with what He has to say about God.

The Old Testament Doctrine of God

Jesus derived many of His religious ideas from the Old Testament. The conception of God which is found in it is not quite consistent. We see there both the ideas of primitive religion and the magnificent insights of the great prophets. God was worshipped at first as a local and tribal deity. He was regarded as the God of the land of Canaan and the children of Israel were considered His chosen people. Only gradually, after several centuries of hard discipline and sustained suffering, they came to think of Him as the Creator of the universe who controls all nature and history and from whose hands no star or nation could escape. Their first thought of Him was that He was a stern hater demanding exclusively the worship of His chosen people and jealous and vindictive if this worship was offered to any one else. But gradually they came to believe that He was a merciful lover of His people, that He was afflicted in all their affliction and that He redeemed them in His love and in His pity. Their early belief about Him was that He was a mountain God of war and storm, exercising His dreadful power in all sorts of mysterious ways, so that His worshippers had to stand in perpetual awe of Him. This primitive conception was slowly replaced by the idea of a God who is present everywhere ready to help the seeking soul and who requires from His people justice, mercy and humility.[4]

Thus we see in the Old Testament the evidences of a sustained process of spiritual education. With His supreme insight Jesus chose out of the Old Testament the highest and the noblest ideas of God in it and gave them His own distinctive stamp. The idea of God as Father is the central conception in the teaching of Jesus which, like the bright sun on a clear day, floods all His utterances with its glorious light. Some scholars have written as if the idea of the Fatherhood of God is the unique teaching of Jesus. Already in the Old Testament we see glimpses of the belief that God is the Father. Though the Divine Fatherhood is almost always connected with the nation

[3] Tiruvalluvar, "*Tava Marainthu.*"
[4] H. E. Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 1–37.

rather than with the individual,[5] the reference in some passages at least is distinctly personal.

> " A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
> Is God in his holy habitation." [6]

> " Like as a father pitieth his children,
> So the Lord pitieth them that fear him." [7]

In the period between the Old and the New Testaments, the idea of the fatherly love of God is expressed so clearly and beautifully that we are reminded of similar passages in the New Testament. In the *Book of Jubilees,* written in Palestine in the second century B.C., we read : " Their souls will cleave to me and to all my commandments, and they will fulfil my commandments, and I shall be their Father and they will be my children. And they will all be called children of the living God, and every angel and every spirit will know, yea, they will know that these are my children, and that I am their Father in uprightness and righteousness, and that I love them." [8] A modern Jewish scholar goes to the extent of saying that the idea of the Fatherhood of God is a most familiar conception with all Jews.[9]

The Use of the term " Father " by Jesus

Jesus took this term " Father " and used it as His own characteristic name for God. The suggestion has been made that, according to the Gospel of St. Mark, Jesus used the term " Father " when speaking of God only after the confession that He was the Christ by Peter at Cæsarea Philippi [10] and that even after that confession He used it only when speaking of God to His own disciples and not to all the people.[11] As the Gospel of St. Mark was the earliest of the Gospels and its historical order of the events in the life of Jesus seems to be the most correct, it has been held that Jesus spoke of God as Father only after the disciples had been with Him for a considerable time and had become receptive to His highest thoughts. The confession at Cæsarea Philippi took place about the middle of His ministry. It indicates how gradually, by their close companionship with

[5] Deuteronomy xxxii. 6 ; Isaiah lxiii. 16 ; Jeremiah iii. 4, 19 ; Hosea xi. 1–3.
[6] Psalm lxviii. 5.
[7] Psalm ciii. 13.
[8] *The Book of Jubilees,* or *The Little Genesis,* I, 24–25, translated by R. H. Charles, p. 7.
[9] C. G. Montefiore, *Some Elements in the Religious Teaching of Jesus According to the Synoptic Gospels,* p. 91.
[10] Mark viii. 27–31.
[11] T. W. Manson, *Teaching of Jesus,* pp. 108 f.

Him and their intimate knowledge of Him, the disciples were coming round to the conclusion that Jesus was not an ordinary rabbi or even a great prophet, but Christ, the Son of the Living God. This confession made it clear that the spiritual capacities of His disciples were rapidly maturing. After they had reached this new stage in their religious life, Jesus felt that they were ready to receive some of His highest teaching and so He began speaking to them about God as His Father. He did not feel that the multitude who came to listen to Him were as equally well prepared to receive His teaching and He did not employ this term in His sermons addressed to them. This suggestion, though quite interesting, does not seem to be correct. As we have already seen, the idea of the Fatherhood of God was not so new or strange to the Jews as this remark would imply.

The Gospels of Luke and Matthew (even if we omit the later Gospel of John where the title occurs constantly) seem to indicate that Jesus used the term "Father" from the days of His childhood to the close of His ministry; He used it on a variety of occasions and in the presence of all sorts of people. Once as a boy of twelve He was missing; when He was found in the temple in Jerusalem and was taken to task by His parents for not having told them where He would be, He asked them with great surprise: "Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" [12] This shows that even as a child He had begun to think and speak of God as His Father. In the garden of Gethsemane, passing through a tremendous spiritual struggle, He cried "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." [13] As he hung on the Cross He prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," [14] and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." [15] Thus we see that even as a boy of twelve He spoke of God as His Father and that He continued to do so to the end of His ministry.

He considered God to be His Father when He was deeply moved by joy. His seventy disciples returned from their mission of preaching and healing and reported the wonderful results which had followed their work. "In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the

[12] Luke ii. 49.
[13] Luke xxii. 42.
[14] Luke xxiii. 34.
[15] Luke xxiii. 46.

wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." [16] Jesus spoke of God as His Father also while going through tremendous spiritual suffering in Gethsemane and while hanging on the Cross. Many people are religious when they are prosperous and everything goes well with them; but when they begin to fail in life and are overtaken by defeat and misfortune, they have no use for God. H. G. Wells makes great fun of this. He says that his mother was very pious in her days of prosperity and always spoke of God as "Our Father" but misfortune after misfortune overtook her. Her husband lost a good job and ran a store for selling sports' goods, which proved to be a precarious method of earning a livelihood. Children began to arrive and the family had to live in cramped, uncomfortable quarters. She had to drudge all day long for years on end to feed and clothe the family. A little daughter, whom she loved ardently for her unusual interest in religion, died and the mother's heart broke. She really could not understand why her dear little girl should have been taken away. As time went on her piety became more and more formal and lost all its earnestness and reality; the phrase "Our Father" which she continued to use ceased to have any meaning.[17] The love and tenderness with which Jesus thought of God in His days of success and prosperity remained with Him even when He had to pass through the utmost humiliation and suffering as He hung on the Cross.

Jesus speaks of God as Father when He has in mind His love and tenderness and His willingness to help in all possible ways. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." [18] In this context the designation of God as Father seems most appropriate and natural. But Jesus speaks of God as Father even when He thinks of Him as a judge, holy and stern, measuring the qualities of people and assigning to them their various dues. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." [19] Thus we may say that Jesus found on all occasions a peculiar delight in speaking of God as Father. The Gospels do not represent to us the catch in His voice and the joy on His face as He thus spoke. But we may well imagine how His love for

[16] Luke x. 21.
[17] H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, Vol. I, pp. 63–75.
[18] Matthew vi. 8.
[19] Matthew xxv. 34.

the Father gave a new thrill to His voice and glowed on His face whenever He spoke about Him.

In speaking of God as Father Jesus sometimes calls Him "My Father," indicating a close personal relationship with Him.[20] But at the same time He does not confine this relationship to Himself. Often He speaks to people and calls Him "Your Father," thus making them feel clearly that they have an intimate connexion with Him.[21] In the prayer which He taught as our model[22] He also speaks of God as "Our Father," thus bringing out the fact that He shares with His hearers their experience and knowledge of a personal God, who is concerned deeply with the struggles and the difficulties, the triumphs and the successes of all men.

It is significant that all the four Gospels agree in this matter and make it clear that Jesus was constantly in the habit of speaking of God as His Father. Here we have one evidence of the fact that the report given in the Fourth Gospel of the teaching of Jesus is identical in substance (though not completely in words) with the account in the Synoptic Gospels.

The Meaning of the Fatherhood of God

1. When men speak of God as Father they sometimes mean that He is the Creator of the world and that He has brought into existence the whole world of nature and of man, which He continues to sustain. This meaning of the Fatherhood of God is not prominent in the thought of Jesus. Jesus does speak of God's activity in nature. "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."[23] "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them."[24] "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much

[20] Matthew vii. 21; Matthew x. 32; Luke ii. 49; John vi. 32; John vi. 40; John x. 29.
[21] Matthew v. 16; Matthew vi. 1; Matthew xxiii. 9; Luke vi. 36; Luke xii. 32; John xx. 17.
[22] Matthew vi. 9; Luke xi. 2.
[23] Matthew v. 45.
[24] Matthew vi. 26.

more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" [25] These verses speak only of God's activity in nature. But we may safely assume that He who is thus active in nature must also have created it. There is no explicit teaching by Jesus about God as Creator. But from these and other sayings in which the power of God is evident, we may say that Jesus fully believed in the existence of a Creator, at whose command the universe sprang into being and by whom it is sustained from day to day.

2. Most often when men speak of God as Father they refer to His love and His concern for them rather than of His being their Creator. It is this thought of God taking individual care of men which is most prominent in the teaching of Jesus. He tells us how in different ways God helps us. He provides for all our daily needs. "Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." [26] When we pray, He answers our prayers. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." [27] He forgives us our sins. "And forgive us our sins." [28] He reveals Himself to us. "At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." [29] God judges us. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." [30]

Thus in all these ways God is our Father. In the human family, the father provides for his children, helps them when they appeal to him, forgives them when they go wrong, speaks about himself to them and rewards or punishes them when necessary. Thus the ties which bind a father with his children are many; they are sometimes pleasant and at other times severe. Whether kind or stern, he is absolutely necessary for the peace and well-being of the family. His words of reproof are just as important as his embraces of love. The relationship

[25] Matthew vi. 28–30.
[26] Matthew vi. 31, 32.
[27] Matthew xviii. 19.
[28] Luke xi. 4.
[29] Matthew xi. 25, 26.
[30] Matthew xxv. 34.

between God and man is likewise close and intimate, covering the most diverse circumstances of life and offering peace, joy and love under a bewildering variety of conditions.

There is an important passage in which Jesus teaches clearly that the analogy of the human father is not quite adequate to describe God. "And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" [31]

The connexion between a human father and his children is one of the noblest relationships known to us. In all parts of the world and in all ages, the father has played a supremely important part as the head of the family. He loves his children dearly, he cares for them in all possible ways, he rebukes them when they go wrong and he forgives them when they are penitent. This universal human experience is used by Jesus to portray the love of God for men. His emphatic teaching about the Fatherhood of God has appealed deeply to the hearts of men. But Jesus realized quite clearly (as is evident from this saying) that God's love is far higher and deeper than any human father's love could be. There is no illustration known in the experience of men which can bring out fully the height and the breadth and the depth of God's love for us. Even one of the highest manifestations of human love (that of a father for his children) breaks down when applied to God. There is no human way of giving an adequate idea of His love, which is infinite and beyond description. Nothing that we know in this life can give an effective picture of what quality and extent God's love really is.

The Fatherhood of God in Hindu Thought

Popular Hinduism prevails in the villages and is the working faith of most Hindus, except of those who are thoughtful and hold advanced views. In this Hinduism of the masses there is still terrible fear of gods and goddesses who lurk in every corner prepared to hurt human beings. Ceremonies should be properly performed. Any tree which is regarded as the home of a god must not be touched; no villager will cut down a tree under the shadow of which an image is worshipped. The transplanting must begin, the harvest must commence and a journey must be taken only on auspicious days; if these important functions are

[31] Luke xi. 11–13.

begun on undesirable days, tragic disaster is likely to follow. At every point the villager is hedged in with superstition and fear. The message of the love of God, especially such profound love as has resulted in the death on the Cross, is badly needed for rural India which lives in the complete thraldom of fear. Only when men realize that God is filled with the utmost love for us and provides for all our needs will this fear disappear. It is absolutely necessary to preach in India the Gospel of Jesus Christ with its clear message of the unbounded love of God for mankind. Only such a message will be an effective remedy for the many fears and anxieties under which the vast majority of Hindus live every day of their lives.

The doctrine of *Karma* casts a blight upon the more thoughtful and better educated Hindu. The system of *Karma,* by which the deeds of men bring forth their inevitable consequences in future births, works on relentlessly. Whatever men do must be either rewarded or punished. The spiritually-minded Hindu stands in utmost fear of the many births and deaths which may be in store for him. He trembles with dread as he thinks of the ocean of *Samsāra,* into which he is plunged. The Christian message of the love of God is quite necessary as an antidote to the harmful and depressing effect of the doctrine of *Karma.* Belief in the love of a heavenly Father who forgives us when we repent and helps us in our spiritual quest must replace a belief in *Karma.* When men hold firmly to the doctrine of a loving God, as manifested in the life of Jesus and especially in His death on the Cross, no such fear as many devout Hindus have about the doctrine of *Karma* will remain. The most effective way of emancipating the Hindu mind from its subjection to the system of *Karma* is to make the Christian doctrine of God's Fatherhood absolutely clear and real. Unless the knowledge of the fatherly love of God sinks deep into the Hindu soul, the fear of the future consequences of actions in an endless cycle of births and deaths will remain.

The Christian doctrine of the love of God is also necessary to counteract the consequences of an impersonal conception of the Divine Being in India. Sankara holds that God is an impersonal Being who neither loves nor hates, who neither enjoys nor suffers and who neither acts Himself nor is affected by the actions of others. He has made the conception of God as *Nirguna Brahman* central to his system. He is the only Reality and all else is unreal. There are no real beings apart from Him. As He is impersonal even worship is not necessary, for He neither desires nor enjoys

the worship of His devotees who, after all, have no reality of their own. The best method of attaining Him is not the method of love (for human love can only respond when there is God's love) but the method of knowledge by which His true nature must be grasped. Such a knowledge is clearest only in the state of *Samadhi* in which the soul is above all feeling and thought and comes in real contact with Him who is beyond every kind of human experience. Sankara tells a story to illustrate his teaching that *Brahman* is wholly unknown. He narrates how an inquirer once came to the seer Bāhva to learn from him about the *Brahman*. Bāhva said: "Learn Brahman, O friend," and became silent. Bāhva was asked a second and a third time to explain the *Brahman* and finally he replied: "I am teaching you, indeed, but you do not understand. Silent is that Self." [32]

The attraction of the doctrine of *Nirguna Brahman* for the educated Hindu may now be considered.

1. The conflict of feelings in the human mind is often severe and turbulent. We are helpless when fierce passions such as love, hatred, jealousy or ambition gain control over us; their sway is so strong that we are wholly unable to combat them. Stories like the *Rāmāyana* in which these fundamental human passions strive for mastery are so popular because they are so true to life. History is full of murders, conspiracies, revolts and wars on account of such powerful feelings in the minds of men. We need not go either to fiction or to history to convince ourselves of the conflict of emotions and of the havoc which they cause in human life. If only we could see clearly into our own minds, how much ill-will and bitterness, often provoking harsh words or base actions, could we discover! The religious thinker in India, distressed by all this trouble and ruin caused around him by feeling, thinks of God as a Being who is completely beyond all such emotional struggles.

While it is quite true that when they are not kept under control the feelings of man work incalculable harm, we need to remember that they are the source of endless joy in life when they are held under restraint. We may go through life thoroughly enjoying what is good and true and pure. The wonderful sights of nature, the charm of books, the innocence of children, the lure of music, the attraction of beauty—all these are desired by men with a passion which cannot be completely subdued. Some of the higher forms of Hinduism have indeed taught that such

[32] Sankara's Commentary on *Vedanta Sūtras*, III, ii. 17, quoted by Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 100.

joys do not belong to God and may not be pursued by His worshippers. Regarding God as devoid of all the feelings which give meaning and interest to life goes completely against some of the deeply rooted and really valuable impulses of the human mind. In spite of the age-long teaching about such lack of emotion both in God and in the devotee, India has gone on rejoicing in her aesthetic pleasures even in the religious sphere. The *Bhakta,* with his song and dance, has given the lie to such a doctrine of the negation of all feeling. The temples, with their rich sculpture, have done the same service.

2. Feelings lead to actions and actions lead to births and deaths. If God feels He must also act and if He acts His deeds will inevitably bring about their consequence of rebirths. He will then be caught in the wheel of *Samsāra* and be just like the rest of us. To suppose that God can possibly be subjected to the cycle of transmigration is to bring Him down completely to our level. We cannot believe that He has to go through numerous lives as we have to. The doctrine of *Karma* needs careful consideration and the reader is referred to the chapter in this book in which it is discussed at some length.[33] We cannot accept the doctrine of *Karma* as applying even to the lives of men; still less can we accept it as holding true of God.

There are glimpses of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God in the religious literature of India as in the Old Testament. This doctrine never attained in India the importance which it has in the teaching of Jesus. The supreme conception of God in the Gospels is that of His Fatherhood. All fragmentary knowledge found in India of God as Father must be welcomed and treasured by the Christian.

A prayer in the *Rig Veda* says: "Be of easy approach to us, even as a father to his son. Do thou, O self-effulgent Lord, abide with us and bring blessings to us." [34]

In the *Yajur Veda* occurs another prayer: "O Lord, thou art our Father; do thou instruct us like a father. We offer our salutations to thee. Do thou not destroy us; do thou protect us ever." [35]

The *Mahābhārata,* a vast epic which gradually took shape through a long stretch of time, probably from about the fourth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D., contains the prayer:

[33] See Chapter VII.

[34] *Rig Veda,* I, i. 9, translated by Swami Yatiswarānanda, *Universal Prayers,* p. 13.

[35] *Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita,* xxxvii. 20, translated by Swami Yatiswarānanda, *Universal Prayers,* p. 19.

" Save me and protect me always as a father would his own son; protect me, I need your protection; obeisance to you, O pure Lord! " [36]

In the *Naradiya Purāna* occurs a prayer: " Compassionate Lord! the wrong which we did you in the past in our ignorance, put up with all that and look after us, like a father his sons." [37]

The eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gīta* (written about the beginning of the Christian era) may be regarded as a crucial passage in that book. In response to an urgent petition from Arjuna, Krishna manifests his form to him. The chapter gives a detailed account of this strange and powerful form and then goes on to describe the effect of the vision on the mind and soul of Arjuna. When Arjuna saw Krishna standing before him in a glorious blaze of light, he realized his own utter insignificance and sinful nature and prayed to Krishna thus:

" Thou art the Father of all the world—of all that move and all that do not move. Thou art the object of its worship and its greatest Teacher. There is no one equal to Thee. How then could there be in the three worlds one greater than Thee, O Thou of incomparable power?

Therefore I bow down and prostrate myself before Thee, adorable Lord, and seek Thy grace. Bear with me as a father with a son, as a friend with a friend, and as a lover with his beloved." [38]

An interesting poem entitled " The child's great petition " is found in the collected works of Rāmalinga Swami, the Tamil devotional poet who lived in the nineteenth century. He constantly addresses God as his Father in the poem and occasionally also as his Mother. The frequency with which the term " Father " is applied to God in this long poem of over five hundred lines is impressive. A note of universal compassion rings through the poem. Rāmalinga Swami speaks of his deep suffering when he sees much that is wrong in the world. His thoughts may be summed up thus:

" Thou knowest my weak pity. I cannot bear to see fatigue, distress or sorrow in my relatives and in others. I cannot stand the hunger, disease or poverty that afflicts others. When friends, young and old, relate to me the woes of life and speak to me

[36] *Mahābhārata, Santiparvan,* ccxc. 74–185, translated by V. Rāghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms,* p. 107.

[37] *Naradiya Purāna,* ii. 73, translated by V. Rāghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms,* p. 171.

[38] *Bhagavad Gīta,* xi. 43, 44, translated by D. S. Sarma, *The Bhagavad Gīta,* p. 172.

about their family feuds, I burst into tears. When the bereaved weep for the dead, I tremble with sorrow. My heart shudders at the mention of the wretched sinners who mercilessly kill innocent, dumb creatures to satisfy their greed under the pretext of religion. In the name of a hundred false deities people kill oxen, goats and hens. O, I cannot bear this! I cannot see angling and hunting. I cannot hear the pitiable cries of birds and animals and the suffering of any creature on any account. I grow thin with misery when I see people eating flesh. When I hear how in this world man cuts the throat of his fellow-man, I am filled with surprise and sorrow. I shudder to think of the terrible suffering of people from lust. I tremble to see, O Lord, how people lose themselves in drink, steal other people's goods and set fire to their habitations. The sufferings of the poor rend my heart. I tremble much at the ways of the world." [39]

This poem is significant, for it brings out the important truth that where there is a real belief in the love of God as the Father of the world, sympathy for the suffering of all creatures whom He has created along with us necessarily follows. If God loves all the beings in the world and we truly love Him, we cannot but feel one with the affliction which prevails everywhere. Rāmalinga Swami not only felt in his own heart the suffering but through his teaching tried to arouse such sympathy in the hearts of others and led them to take the action necessary to remedy the suffering.

There is one striking difference between the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God in Christianity and the same doctrine in Hinduism. In Christianity, the Father's love for mankind goes to the uttermost extent of self-sacrifice and death on the Cross. To redeem men from their sin God Himself became incarnate, lived as a man, identified Himself completely with their sorrows and was crucified on the Cross. There can be no greater love than the love of one who is prepared to die for others. The message of the Cross is lacking in Hinduism. It is the Cross which proves clearly the wonderful love of God. Even in the highest insights of the Hindu thinkers, we do not see anything of the readiness of God to suffer for men and to endure for their sake the shame of the Cross. The love of God which is spoken of in the Christian religion as manifesting itself on the Cross has, therefore, a quality and depth which is missing in Hinduism, even at its best.

[39] Rāmalinga Swami, poem entitled "*Pillai Peru Vinnappam,*" adapted from Suddhananda Bharati, *Mahātma Rāmalingam,* pp. 28–31.

The Motherhood of God

I once heard a very interesting sermon on the Motherhood of God preached in India by a distinguished bishop. He said—I write from memory—that the idea of the Motherhood of God was popular in India, that it was a valuable doctrine and that we Christians would do well to take it over into our thinking. We may consider here briefly the doctrine of the Motherhood of God in its relation to the teaching of Jesus.

The roots of the idea of the Motherhood of God go far down into the ancient history of India. Even as early as the age of the Indus Valley Civilization (the third millennium B.C.) we gather from recent discoveries that God was worshipped under the form of Mother. "With the upper classes the worship of the Mother Goddess, the goddess of fertility and crops, must have been the central point round which other religious practices and beliefs were interwoven." [40]

In the *Rig Veda,* the earliest religious document in India, we read of the Goddess Aditi: "By her grace she saves from sin the souls of those who worship her. She gives unto her children everything that is worth giving. She dwells in the forms of all *Devas* or bright spirits; she is all that is born and all that will be born. She is all in all." [41]

Again we read in the *Rig Veda:* "I am the Queen of the universe, the giver of all wealth and fruits of works. I am intelligent and omniscient. Although I am one, by my powers I appear as manifold. I cause war for protecting men, I kill the enemy and bring peace on earth. I stretch out heaven and earth. . . . As the wind blows by itself, so I produce all phenomena by my own will. I am independent and responsible to none. I am beyond the sky, beyond this earth. My glory is the phenomenal universe; such am I by my power." [42]

Down to the present day the idea of God as Mother is very attractive to Hindu devotees. In recent years Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa worshipped God regularly as the Mother of the Universe. He used to pray: "O, my Mother, thou art all in all. Thou art my guide, my leader and my strength." When he sang the praises of the Divine Mother, there was such real feeling in what he uttered that those who heard him were sure

[40] K. N. Dikshit, *Prehistoric Civilization of the Indus Valley,* p. 33.
[41] *Rig Veda,* II, vi. 17, Swami Abhedananda, *Divine Heritage of Man,* p. 93.
[42] *Rig Veda,* X, cxxv., Swami Abhedananda, *Divine Heritage of Man,* p. 102.

that he was enjoying real communion with his Divine Mother. He revered all women young and old, and said to them: "You are the living representatives of my Divine Mother on earth." Once he was asked: "If we are the children of your Divine Mother, why does she not take care of us? Why does she not come to us and take us up in her arms?" He said: "A mother has several children. To one she has given a doll, to another some candy, to the third a music box, according as each one likes. Thus when they begin to play and are absorbed, they forget their mother; she in the meanwhile looks after her household work. But the moment any one of them gets tired of the play, and, throwing aside the plaything, cries for the mother, 'Mamma, mamma dear!' she runs quickly to him, takes him up in her arms, kisses him often and often and caresses him. So, O man! being absorbed with the playthings of the world you have forgotten your Divine Mother; when you get tired of your play and, throwing aside the toys, you cry for her sincerely and with the simplicity of a child, she will come at once and take you up in her arms. Now you want to play and she has given you all that you need at present." [43]

It is evident, then, that from the earliest days down to the present time the idea of the Motherhood of God has exercised great attraction over the Hindu mind.

In the Bible itself there is very little to support the idea that we may think of God as Mother. There is an isolated verse in Isaiah where the Lord says: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." [44] Though Jesus had a wonderful mother, He speaks only of the Fatherhood of God.

Canon Quick suggests that there is something selfish and possessive about the love of a mother for her child and that she is devoted to the child because she needs him; without him there would be a real gap in her life which it would be difficult to fill. A father, on the other hand, is devoted to the child not so much for what he can get out of him as for what he can do for him; there is nothing selfish and possessive about the father's love. He is primarily interested in taking care of him and in giving him what he needs. Canon Quick suggests that God is conceived of as Father for some such reason as this. He is our Father and loves us and gives us what we need not because He

[43] Swami Abhedananda, *Divine Heritage of Man*, pp. 114–17.
[44] Isaiah lxvi. 13.

gets some joy out of us but because we need His love.[45] This suggestion will not be accepted by most people, for they will say that a mother's love is fundamentally unselfish; often mothers take the utmost trouble for their children without expecting any reward whatsoever. The selfless character of maternal love is a fact of human experience the world over. Also we believe, in all reverence, that God needs us almost as much as we need Him. There cannot be real love between two persons unless each has a longing for the other. The love between God and the human soul is only complete when it is realized that God is just as anxious to love man as man is eager to love Him.

Among Christians generally there is much unwillingness to speak of God as Mother. This unwillingness may be due to three reasons:

1. Jesus' conception of God had in it a strong sense of the stern righteousness of God. The Old Testament idea of God, generally speaking, was that He is quite severe in His dealings with His people, mercilessly punishing the wicked and lovingly rewarding the righteous. In the teaching of Jesus the love of God is far more prominent. But even so, the recognition that God is great, that His judgments are severe and that His demands are exacting is quite clear. Though Jesus loved God with passionate fervour, He would never have addressed Him with some of the freedom with which Hindu *Bhaktas* spoke of God. Such light, jovial and flippant methods of addressing God were far from Jesus because He realized the sternness in the character of God. This sternness is responsible for the conception of God as Father rather than as Mother. In human experience generally the mother's love is far more tender than the father's, which has in it a measure of severity. So God is always described by Jesus as Father.

2. Among the Roman Catholics the adoration of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God is carried to extravagant lengths. A great deal of the reverence which ought really to be given to God is given to her. Her saintliness is described in glowing terms, her influence with Jesus is extolled, prayers are continually offered to her and her blessing is sought on a wide variety of occasions. Protestant Christians, remembering all this extreme devotion, are unwilling to speak of God as Mother; they think that if they do so it is too much like the Roman worship of the Virgin Mary.

3. The worship of God as Mother in India as well as in

[45] O. C. Quick, *Doctrines of the Creed,* pp. 54, 55.

other countries has had clear connexion with the importance of the generative process in human life. One of the most important things which makes the world go is the reproductive function of sex. Men and animals are born and lead their lives here on earth. If there were no reproduction, there would be no human or animal life and the world would be empty of all activity and interest. For this reason the reproductive process has been personified as a goddess and worshipped, often with obscene rites and songs. The idea of God as Mother takes its origin from such ancient conceptions. Because of the often immoral accompaniments of such worship (of which there is plenty of evidence in India in the *Sakti* cults) strong objection is taken in many quarters to the doctrine of God as Mother.

Probably as Christianity becomes naturalized in India the idea of God as Mother will find a rapid entrance into Christian thought, as it is so deeply rooted in the soil of India. It is a beautiful way of thinking of the tender, devoted and unselfish love of God. Provided we realize some of the dangers to which the doctrine has led in the past and are on our guard against them, there is no reason why we should not think of God as Mother. While Jesus does not speak of God as Mother, the doctrine is not in any way opposed to the spirit or the letter of His teaching and life.

CHAPTER V

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE experience of the indwelling Spirit of God has been dear to the heart of India. From the days of the *Upanishads* the idea that God dwells in the heart of man is commonly found.

In the *Katha Upanishad* (about 500–300 B.C.) we read:

"He who is hard to see, entered into the hidd'n,
Set in the cave, dwelling in the deep, ancient,—
Perceiving God through spiritual concentration,
The wise man leaves behind both joy and sorrow." [1]

The human heart, with its mystery, is here spoken of as the cave.

The Vishnu Purāna (about A.D. 400) says:

"Thou art the Soul of all, the Lord of all, the Indweller of all beings. What then shall I speak unto Thee who art seated in my heart, and knowest my inmost thoughts?

"O Thou, the Soul of all beings, the Sovereign Lord of all creation, the Source of all that exists, Thou knowest all creatures as well as their desires." [2]

The Yoga Vāsishtha (A.D. 500) says:

"The all-pervading Self, who bindeth all,
Knits them together, bides in every heart,
Who turn from Him, the inmost Deity,
Seeking outside, their eyes are yet thick-veiled." [3]

In the well-known *Bhakti* hymn *Mukundamāla* (date uncertain), which is sung daily in every devout Vaishnava home, occurs this beautiful passage:

"Thou fool:
Why wilt thou drug with half a score of anodynes
Thy poor weak mortal frame?
No painlessness comes thus,
But sure increase of pain:

[1] The *Katha Upanishad*, ii. 12, translated by J. N. Rawson, The *Katha Upanishad*, p. 90.
[2] *Vishnu Purāna*, i. 12, translated by Swami Yatiswarānanda, *Universal Prayers*, p. 61.
[3] *Yoga Vāsishtha*, v. 34, 26, translated by Bhagavan Das, *The Essential Unity of All Religions*, p. 111.

This Life thou lackest,
Life for thy transient breath, thy slackening limbs:
Drink Life,
Life here and now,
Life whole and endless,
In one long deep immortal draught:
God is that draught,
God loving,
God incarnate,
God ever-present." [4]

These are not ideas occuring merely here and there. The thought of the Indwelling God is of supreme importance in the religious life of India. The central place it occupies in Hindu thought and experience may be illustrated from Rāmānuja (twelfth century A.D.). We may say that the two most vital questions in theology are:—1. What is the relation of God to the world? Did He create it? And having created it, how does He rule over it? 2. What is the relation of God to man? Did He create man and how does He continue to exert His sway over him? Rāmānuja answers both these questions with his doctrine of the Indwelling God *(Antaryāmin)*. God is the soul and the world is His body. Just as the human body is entirely dependent on the soul within, so the world is wholly dependent on the God within. But for the soul, the human body is a mass of inert flesh, as we know when the soul leaves the body at the time of death. By itself the body can do nothing; it is the soul within which animates it and rules it. In the same way, the inner Ruler, God, has the world as His body and controls it. He has the souls of men also as His own body; for they are moved and inspired by Him from within. He is the soul of their souls. But for His indwelling Presence, they are helpless and are of no great worth. Thus with the doctrine of the Indwelling God, Rāmānuja makes clear God's relation to the world and His relation to man, the two primary problems of religion.

The following passage from Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Bhagavad Gīta* shows him marshalling an impressive array of authoritative statements in support of His belief in the indwelling nature of God.

"I am, O Gudakesa, the soul that dwells in the heart of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings. I am seated as the soul of all beings who constitute

[4] M. K. Gandhi, *Songs from Prison*, p. 48.

my body. The soul is that which is the entire support, ruler and enjoyer of the body. Thus it is said: 'I am seated in the heart of all and from me come memory, knowledge and reason.' '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.' 'He who is in all beings, immanent in them, whom all beings do not know, to whom all beings are body, He who indwells and rules all beings, He is thy soul. He is the immanent one. He is the immortal one.' 'He who dwells in the soul, He who is immanent within the soul, He whom the soul does not know, He whose body is the soul, He who rules the soul from within, He is thy soul, thy immanent being, thy immortal one.' Thus I am the soul of all beings and am their beginning, middle and end. That is to say, I am the cause of their origin, existence and dissolution."[5] The passages assembled here by Rāmānuja are taken from the *Gīta,* the *Brihad-Aryanyaka Upanishad* and the *Satapatha Brāhmana.*

The dangers attached to the Hindu doctrine of the Indwelling God should be clearly realized and are pointed out at the end of this chapter. But the heart of the belief is essentially sound. God is very close to us. He is not an inaccessible, far-off Being, dwelling in remote heavens. His Presence is everywhere; as Spirit He pervades the whole universe. We cannot say that He is only here or there; there is no place where He is not. He penetrates into the deepest recesses of our heart; He dwells in our inmost being. This is a wonder and a joy. We do not need to go in quest of God to distant shrines or to past ages. He is here and now, as close to us as the life is to our body. Full of love and power, He touches us at every point. There is no thought in our heart which is not known to Him; no action we do which He does not see. His goodness is with us under all circumstances. Not a moment passes but His Presence envelopes us like the air we live in. Air is all around us and also in us; we are in the air and the air is in us. So is God most intimately and closely connected with us; we are in Him and He is in us. If we go in search of Him, only outside of ourselves, it will be but wasted labour.

The Indwelling God in the Old Testament

Did Jesus teach anything about the Indwelling God? To answer this question aright we must know something about the religious ideas and traditions which formed the substance of His

[5] Rāmānuja, *Gīta Bhāshya,* x. 20.

thinking. The Old Testament, on which He was brought up, taught a lofty conception of a God who is holy and altogether separate from the world of men and things. He creates this world from without; He commands and the world is made. While the world continues to embody His wisdom and glory, He has finished His work and dwells in the heavenly places apart and aloof in unquestioned supremacy. Though He does visit the earth at times, the world is separate from Him. The utter grandeur and majesty of God, characteristic of the Old Testament, is briefly summed up by the prophet Isaiah. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." [6]

We may here point out that it is this teaching about the power and holiness of God in the Old Testament, which has guarded Christianity against falling into some of the errors which arise from undue emphasis on the indwelling aspect of God. The suggestion has often been made that in churches in India the reading of the Old Testament should be replaced by a lesson from the *Upanishads;* this it is felt is an excellent way of linking up the Gospel with the heritage of India. The main objection to this proposal is that the Old Testament provides an excellent corrective to over-emphasis on the nearness and intimacy of God and that this corrective is badly needed in India.

While the general idea of God as found in the Old Testament tends to emphasize His majesty and holiness and His separation from the world and from man, there are here and there glimpses of God as being present everywhere in the universe. These passages would seem to indicate that He does not leave the universe completely to dwell alone in His glory in the heavens.

We may now consider these passages. One of the Psalmists says:

> "Cast me not away from thy presence;
> And take not thy holy spirit from me." [7]

In Hebrew poetry the second line repeats and states the substance of the first line in different words. If we remember this characteristic of Hebrew poetry, we shall note that here the Holy Spirit of God is defined as His Presence; casting the

[6] Isaiah lv. 8, 9.
[7] Psalm li. 11.

devotee away from the Presence of God is the same as taking away the Holy Spirit from him.

The Presence of God is everywhere; no man can go away from its influence. The prophet Jeremiah says: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." [8] This thought is expanded at great length and with moving beauty in one of the Psalms.

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me." [9]

The book of Jonah tells the story of a timid prophet who was asked by God to preach in the city of Nineveh against the wickedness of the people. Jonah did not want to do this. So he rose up and tried to flee from the Presence of the Lord. But where he went there also the Lord was and He dealt with Jonah severely for having tried to evade His command.[10] But, on the other hand, the devout men of Israel found constant comfort and help in the universal Presence of God.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee:
Thou hast holden my right hand.
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me to glory." [11]

To pass from the belief in the universal Presence of God to the thought of a God who dwells in the hearts of men is easy. If He is present everywhere He is also present in the heart of men. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." [12]

These, then, were some of the ideas with which the spiritual life of Jesus had been nourished.

[8] Jeremiah xxiii. 24.
[9] Psalm cxxxix. 7–10.
[10] Jonah i. 1–4.
[11] Psalm lxxiii. 23, 24.
[12] Isaiah lvii. 15.

The Indwelling God in the Gospels

The Gospel of St. John records a conversation which took place between Jesus and a Samaritan woman. For a long time there had been a bitter controversy between the Samaritans and the Jews about the right place of worship. The Jews held that God should be worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem and the Samaritans maintained that He should be worshipped in the temple on Mount Gerizim. After conversing a little with Jesus, the Samaritan woman realized that He was a prophet and put before Him this problem on which there was so much discussion and ill-feeling with a view to obtain His opinion. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that 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." [13] When He spoke to the Samaritan woman He made it clear that God is not present only in one place: He is present everywhere and His worship must be carried on in spirit and in truth.

His presence everywhere naturally leads to the thought of His presence in the human heart. We have many passages in the Gospel of St. John to illustrate this. "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." [14] "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me." [15] "The Spirit . . . remains with you, and will be within you." [16]

Jesus in the Gospel of St. John teaches that our relation to God is the same as the connexion of the branches with a plant.[17] This picture shows us very clearly and vividly the intimate nature of our relation to God. Nothing can be more closely connected than a plant and its branches. The life from the

[13] John iv. 21–24.
[14] John xvii. 22, 23.
[15] John xv. 4.
[16] John xiv. 17 (Moffatt).
[17] John xv. 1–8.

plant flows into the branches; they depend entirely upon the plant for their existence; the moment the connexion is cut off and the life ceases to flow the branches are useless; they do not yield any flower or fruit; they begin to wither and are only fit to be burnt. The intimate fellowship between God and man, in which God's love and knowledge and power continually flood the soul of man, is here made plain. When this close and intimate fellowship comes to an end, man ceases to have any value. He is so wholly dependent upon God for the constant and steady flow of life into his soul that when the supply stops, he is not worth anything.

Jesus speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged. 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 soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." [18]

Do we find similar teaching in the Synoptic Gospels? The emphasis which is laid in the Synoptic Gospels on the Fatherhood of God shows us that Jesus has made a distinctive advance on the teaching of the Old Testament. While we are aware of the power and glory of God, we approach Him in a new spirit of love and confidence. God is no longer a remote, far-off being, who remains in isolated splendour. We can go to Him as often as we wish, perfectly sure that He will listen to us and succour us. He is accessible to us at all times and under all circumstances. He is righteous and powerful but He is also loving. He is ready to help us in our weakness, to forgive our sins fully and to lavish His grace upon us without stint. This emphasis of Jesus upon the Fatherhood of God brings Him indeed very close and near to us. He also speaks in the Synoptic Gospels of the Holy Spirit. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your

[18] John xvi. 7–14.

heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" [19] "For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what ye ought to say." [20] "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." [21] Thus we may say that in the Synoptic Gospels also we have teaching about the indwelling Spirit of God, though perhaps it is not as emphatic and as clear as in the Gospel of St. John.

Inspiration

We have so far emphasized the fact that the Spirit of God is present everywhere. In the interests of clearness it has been necessary to speak, for a moment, only of His universal presence. This, however, does not mean that He is found everywhere as a silent and inactive influence. In fact, the original Hebrew word which is used in the Old Testament for the Spirit of God is *Ruah* which means breath or wind: the powerful desert wind is often used as an illustration of the vigorous and active work of the Spirit of God. He is a vital energy, stirring up deeply many activities. His functions in the realm of men's hearts may be considered to be mainly two: Inspiration and Sanctification. We may now consider His work of Inspiration.

In the first three Gospels Jesus speaks about a very practical problem.[22] The immediate disciples of Jesus had real need of help. They were brought up for examination before various magistrates and not being men of much education or position, under normal circumstances they would have shrunk. But they spoke with extraordinary courage; they did not hide anything; they expressed their utmost loyalty to Jesus. This was because, as Jesus had taught them, the Holy Spirit was with them, putting into their mouth the words they should speak. They did not answer the magistrates, who were often hostile or suspicious, with their own ineffective or halting words, but they spoke as the Holy Spirit taught them and their speech was full of courage and power.

The idea that the Spirit of God guides the minds of prophets and saints was commonly accepted during the time of Jesus. Like the other Jews He believed fully that God spoke through the law-givers of old such as Moses and had given them the laws which had knit them together as a people; they were a chosen

[19] Luke xi. 13.
[20] Luke xii. 12.
[21] Matthew x. 20.
[22] Mark xiii. 11; Matthew x. 19,; Luke xii. 11.

race with the special vocation of making God known to the nations of the earth. He believed that David and the Psalmists were led by the Spirit of God to sing His praises, to confess their sins and to plead for their forgiveness in psalms of undying beauty. He knew that Samuel had been taught by the Spirit of God to help his people as they advanced in their political thinking and as they came in contact with the different nations. He further believed that it was through the inspiration of the Spirit of God that great prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah had caught a new vision of the righteousness of God and of His demand from men of a clean and pure life, both as individuals and as a nation; this vision recorded in books had become a permanent part of the heritage of Israel. Jesus fully believed that all the noble ideals which the prophets of His race had seen, all the lofty aspirations with which His people had throbbed and all the wonderful experiences which they had undergone were the work of the Spirit of God.

Was the Spirit of God at work only in Palestine or did He also guide the minds of men in other countries? This is a problem of great practical importance in India. A good many people in the Christian Church, and outside it, are sore perplexed about it. It is, therefore, necessary to take up at this point the attitude of Jesus towards other religions than His own.

In the *Book of Wisdom*, a Jewish Scripture not however included in the Old Testament, it is said of the Spirit of God: "From generation to generation passing into holy souls, she maketh men friends of God and prophets." [23] This seems to suggest that the Spirit of God is at work beyond the limits of Israel. This, however, is an isolated verse; no other statement of this kind occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures. We do not know whether Jesus was familiar with this verse or accepted it as true.

In the last two verses of the Gospel of St. Matthew Jesus dwells upon the missionary task of the Christian Church. "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." [24] Some modern scholars have regarded these verses as not belonging to the original Gospel but as having been inserted by a later writer. However that may be, the missionary emphasis in the teaching of Jesus cannot be explained away.

[23] Wisdom vii. 27.
[24] Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

He was a born missionary. He wandered ceaselessly up and down His country, preaching both to individuals and to groups the message of the Kingdom of God. He had a passionate desire to share with others His own vision and experience of God. He was happy only when as many people as He could reach heard His teaching. For this end He toiled hard, defying opposition and speaking courageously even though He knew that He was running the risk of sure death. Not content with His own work, He trained a body of disciples to carry it on even more widely than He could. Into this work of preparing a group of eager, selfless evangelists He put some of His best energy. Though the disciples were often confused in their thinking and had many shortcomings, He bore with them patiently and sought to impart to them something of His own eager longing to make God real to man and establish in the world the Kingdom of God, in which men would be ruled by love and not by hate.

There are two or three occasions in the Gospels when Christ had to deal with followers of other religions. A Gentile woman begged Him to heal her daughter.[25] He refused her prayer on the ground that it was not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. But she humbly answered that the dogs ate the crumbs from the master's table; He was delighted with her faith and healed her daughter. It is surprising that Jesus, who had such immediate and practical sympathy with the sick and the suffering, should have tried to put her off for this reason. The Gospels make it clear that He fully believed, like all the other Jews, that Israel was a chosen race of God and that through them the true knowledge of God would spread through the world. His saying, " Salvation is from the Jews," sets forth the same truth.[26]

Jesus held that God had chosen the people of Israel to be the instrument of His revelation to the world. Gradually God had trained them to understand His character and His purpose. Like all primitive peoples, they had started out with the belief in innumerable spirits dwelling in hills and valleys, rivers and trees. They had practised idolatry. But He had commanded them to abandon their worship of many gods with images and to worship Him only, the one true God, in purity of heart and cleanliness of life. This message had not at all been easy for them to accept. Again and again they had fallen back into idolatry and the

[25] Matthew xv. 21–28.
[26] John iv. 22.

belief in many gods; but prophets inspired of God had arisen and rebuked them for their lack of faith in the one Living God. Slowly they learnt to worship God without images and ceased to believe in many gods. They realized that there is only one God, that He is a righteous Being and that He required of His worshippers pure hearts and clean lives. Jesus built His message on this heritage. He took all this training for granted. He carried on to new heights the spiritual lessons which His race had learnt painfully through the ages. It is difficult for us to say why God should have chosen only one race and decided to reveal Himself to the world through it. What we do find is that there is a clear difference between the spiritual history of the children of Israel and the spiritual history of other nations. We also find that Jesus who came of this race is unlike any one else. Whether we consider His life or His teaching or His suffering and death on the Cross or His Resurrection, we cannot think of any one else as being in any way like Him. We, therefore, firmly believe that in Jesus God is revealed more clearly and completely than in any one else.

The attitude of Jesus towards the Roman Centurion, with whom He came in contact, is most illumining.[27] This Gentile had many interesting traits of character. He had been attracted by the belief of the Jews in the one God who was good and righteous and who had to be worshipped not with images but with clean hearts and pure lives. He had even built at his own expense a synagogue for their worship. We note the element of kindliness in his character from the personal interest which he took in his servant when he was ill and from the trouble to which he went to get him healed. He held a position of some authority and influence, but was very humble and urged Jesus not to bother about coming to his house but to heal the patient with a word. As a military man he was used to enforcing discipline and we may surmise that in his own personal life he practised some of the discipline which he required from his soldiers. Jesus noted the depth and earnestness of his faith and expressed His admiration for him openly and freely. "And when Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping

[27] Luke vii. 1–10; Matthew viii. 5–13.

and gnashing of teeth." [28] We are not told that He called the centurion to leave his ancestral religion and to follow Him, though on many occasions He called His own fellow Jews to give up all and to follow Him.

The conversation with the Samaritan woman, which we considered earlier in this chapter, throws further light on the attitude of Jesus towards religious differences. The controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans about a place of worship was acute. Jesus raised their controversy to a high level. He taught that as God is present everywhere, controversy about any particular place of worship is not of vital importance. What is of real value is the realization of God in His true nature as Spirit and the genuine, sincere, whole-hearted worship of Him.

In His account of the Judgment Day [29] Jesus speaks of those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked and visited the prisoners. He said that in doing all this they helped Him and that the bliss of God's Presence would be theirs through eternity. They are surprised at this judgment. " Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? " [30] They do not seem to know anything about Him; they profess ignorance of Him and of His demands. Does this mean that they are not His acknowledged followers? And yet Jesus, as the final judge of men, gives them the joy of dwelling for ever in the immediate Presence of God.

Jesus, then, while making it absolutely clear that He is the Way, the Truth and Life, teaches that wherever there is goodness, truth and beauty, it should be recognized and respected. It is for this reason that in this book wherever in India the experiences and the sayings of the saints have been in harmony with the mind of Christ we have quoted them. All these fragments of truth and glimpses of knowledge fit into the perfect revelation which has been given to the world through Jesus.

It is recognized in India that the Indwelling God enlightens the soul and is the source of all spiritual activity. The *Bhāgavata Purāna* says: " O Lord, I make salutations to Thee, the Glorious Being. Thou hast entered into me through Thy intelligent power and roused my dormant faculty of speech. Being the Lord of

[28] Matthew viii. 10–12.
[29] Matthew xxv. 31–46.
[30] Matthew xxv. 37–39.

all powers, Thou kindlest to activity also all other organs of mine." [31] These "other organs of mine" refer to the avenues of knowledge we constantly use and the methods of action by which we normally express ourselves.

Sanctification

The Holy Spirit, entering our hearts and abiding in them, sanctifies us. "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged." [32]

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. We are constantly forgetful of God. We love the world and the things in it. We do not always speak the truth; when it suits our convenience we hide part of the truth and reveal only the rest or we tell a lie. The Holy Spirit appeals both to the mind and the heart. He convinces our mind that we have gone wrong and He makes our heart accept the fact of our guilt. He makes us say, like the publican in the parable of Jesus, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This recognition of our sinful condition is vitally important. It is only when we realize how wicked and evil we are that we can truly approach God and beg Him for His forgiveness. Out of the abundance of His love He will then forgive us fully and take us into the bliss of fellowship with Him, here and hereafter. If we had not known our sin, we should have remained where we were. The trivial things of the world with their temporary satisfaction would have occupied all our time. The joy of living with God would then not have been known to us. But the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, shows us how evil we are and thereby awakens in us a desire for forgiveness and salvation.

The Holy Spirit teaches us righteousness. He puts before us lofty ideas of conduct so that we may strive after them. It is significant that when Jesus began His ministry He said of Himself:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,

[31] *Bhāgavata Purāna*, IV, ix. 6, translated by Swami Yatiswarānanda, *Universal Prayers*, p. 49.
[32] John xvi. 8–11.

To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." [35]

Here we have an account of how the Spirit of the Lord holds up the ideal of righteousness. The poor, the captive, the blind and the broken-hearted are generally passed over by the world. People look up to the rich, the educated and the well-to-do; they hold in contempt those who are down and out because of physical infirmity or mental incapacity or lack of money and influence. It is just these people that the Holy Spirit wants us to help. Righteousness does not refer to individual righteousness only; it does not mean that we should be loving and truthful and just only in our personal relations one with the other. This we should certainly be. But we should also strive after social righteousness. Love and truth and justice ought to exist between capital and labour, between the rich and the poor, between men and women and between the different races. The love of God should prevail over the whole world. All children should be provided with equal opportunities for education. The wealth now available in the world should be so distributed that every one has clean clothes, plenty of nourishing food and homes where shelter can be had from rain and cold and heat.

The Holy Spirit speaks also of judgment. Whatever we do brings about certain definite consequences. A life of sin brings about ill-health, poverty and misery. The man, for instance, who drinks heavily ruins himself and his family. He loses his job, is filled with anxiety and worry and may die from starvation. Whatever sufferings he undergoes are shared by his family. He passes on to his children the taint of his own evil habits; they yield to the same temptations as his and their suffering is multiplied. Neither he nor they know anything of the peace and joy of a life lived in communion with God. They are more used to drunken brawls than to the serenity of a life dedicated to God. They find it more pleasant to spend their money on drink than to help others with it. Their absorption in their own miserable short-lived enjoyments shuts them off both here and hereafter from the abiding joys of living constantly with God.

We find in India glimpses (though not frequently) of the truth that God dwells within us and guides us to right action.

"That which the heart permits; which the soul likes;
The God within approves; the mind holds pure;
The Eternal Witness sees as free from doubt,

[35] Luke iv. 18, 19.

Without misgiving, as straightforward course;
Which brings pure satisfaction to the self;
That is the course to follow, for good men." [34]

The Indwelling God is the source of endless joy. The joy of salvation is always the outcome of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled." [35] "But now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." [36] People generally think that the pursuit of religion is dull and boring. Those who have real spiritual experience know, however, that the coming of God into the soul means the welling up of abundant, pure and wonderful joy. Joy *(Ānanda)* is spoken of by Hindu *Bhaktas* constantly as the characteristic of the Indwelling God. The God within gives rise to endless bliss. There is no measuring the constant and abundant joy which springs forth in the devotee's heart. Kabīr sings:

"I would caress this day! It is dearer to me than all other: for my Beloved is a guest in my house to-day.

My chamber is radiant with His Presence; my courtyard is blessed.

Lost in admiring His great Beauty, my longings sing His name and are glad:

I wash His feet with my tears; I gaze into His face; I offer my body and soul, and all I have, to my Lord.

My Beloved, my Treasure has honoured my house. What a day of joy is this!

At the sight of my Lord all evils flee from me, and my heart feels the buoyancy of delight.

Yea, to-day my Beloved is a Guest in my house: and this day is dear to me above all others." [37]

Conditions required of man for realizing the Indwelling God

We have said that the Spirit of God is present everywhere and at all times. It may be asked: Why, then, does not every one feel His presence? At this moment outside my room there is plenty of fresh, clean air. But unless I open the doors and the windows this air will not come in. Though the Spirit of God is present everywhere, there are certain conditions which we

[34] *Manu Smriti,* quoted by Bhagavan Dās, *The Essential Unity of all Religions,* p. 104.
[35] John xv. 11.
[36] John xvii. 13.
[37] A. J. Appasamy, *Temple Bells,* pp. 67, 68.

must observe if we are to feel His presence and be helped by it. We must throw open the doors and windows of our soul to Him. If we are too lazy to do that, we cannot complain if we have no experience of His presence. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" [38] The Holy Spirit is given to them that ask God. We may be quite sure that all earnest and sincere prayer for the Holy Spirit will be answered. We may also be sure that where there is no such prayer, the power of the Holy Spirit will not be manifest. When Jesus left this earth He commanded His disciples that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father.[39]

The need to fulfil the moral conditions necessary for the realization of the Spirit of God is often brought out in the religious literature of India.

Rabindranath Tagore says:

"Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act." [40]

In the *Rāmāyana* of Tulsidas, Rama, who is believed to be the incarnate God, asked the sage Valmiki where he may dwell and receives this answer:

"They whose ears are like the ocean, and stories of Thee are like rivers flowing into them, yet ever flowing they are never full—in their hearts is a house worthy of Thee.

Those who have made their eyes eager for the sight of Thee, like the pied cuckoo longing for a cloud, and who, ignoring the ocean, rivers, streams, and water, find delight only in the raindrops of Thy presence, in their heart is a restful home, abide there, O Lord of Raghus, with Laksmana and Sita.

All who ask this one fruit, the love of the feet of Rama, dwell in the temple of their heart, both Sita and Ragunandan.

[38] Luke xi. 13.
[39] Acts i. 4.
[40] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, p. 3.

Lust, anger, desire, pride, ignorance, covetousness, perversity, passion, enmity, deceit and illusion—where all of these are not—dwell in their hearts, O Raghuray.

Beloved by all and helping all, they who count alike pleasure and pain, praise and abuse, who speak the truth and think the kindly thought; and sleeping or waking, find their refuge in Thee, who never, forsaking Thee, seek another—dwell, O Rama, in their bosom!

Who have no desire at any time but their love for Thee is unfailing, dwell ever in their hearts! let that, O Lord, be Thy special abode!" [41]

The dangers connected with the Hindu Emphasis on the Indwelling nature of God

There are three real dangers into which Hindu *Bhaktas* have often fallen when seeking to realize the indwelling character of God. It is as well that we should acknowledge these dangers clearly.

1. Even such a spiritual man as Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa considered the Spirit of God to be present everywhere, in the heart of the sinner just as much as in the heart of the saint.

"Verily, I say unto you, the Lord walketh the earth in all forms

And He abideth in the holy and pure man, and also in the man of vice;

And He is in the rogue, and in the debauchee also, He is." [42]

This is going too far. When we speak of God as being a Spirit who is present everywhere, we do not mean that there are no moral conditions attached to His indwelling. He is only present when the heart is clean and ready for Him; where there is no such inner purity He is absent. He is, of course, anxious to help all sinners. He is all the time calling us to repentance; but His own work of inspiration and sanctification begins only after the sinner repents, begs to be redeemed and is forgiven. Because we believe in a God who is present everywhere, we need not say that He lives in the hearts of all sorts of people, whether they care for Him or not. He respects man's free will; He does not force His way into any heart; He only enters where He is really wanted. To hold that He is present in the sinner as much as in the saint is to forget His essentially righteous charac-

[41] Translation taken from *Tulsidas*, G. A. Nateson & Co., Madras, p. 25.
[42] Rāmakrishna, *Studies in Universal Religion*, translated by Manmatha Nath Chatterjee, p. 98.

ter. In our anxiety to realize the indwelling presence of God we must not forget that He is a holy God who insists on the utmost purity of character in His devotees if He is to make His abode in their hearts.

2. Another danger into which Hindu *Bhaktas* have often fallen is to say that because the Spirit of God dwells in them, whatever they do is God's doing. It is no longer they that act but His Spirit acts in them. The knowledge they possess is His knowledge; the feelings they experience are His feelings; the thoughts which are in their mind are the thoughts which He has put there. So whatever they do is the work of God. Recently a Hindu priest was asked: "Why do not people follow the way to God?" He said: "Because of their sins." "What should they do about their sins?" "They should meditate and worship in the temple." "There are people who meditate and worship and yet cheat and are greedy." "This is all God's doing," said the priest, closing the argument.

We cannot attribute to the Spirit of God our own errors and sins. We must always remember that the Spirit of God has to function through such weak and sinful creatures as ourselves. Fresh air cannot do us any good if we are constantly generating poison gas.

3. The third real danger is to maintain that all nature is identical with God. God is the sun, the moon, the blue sky with its glittering stars and the vast ocean with its myriad forms of animal life. From saying that God makes the sun to move, Hindu thinkers easily pass on to the assertion that He *is* the sun. When it is said that all nature is God (not merely that all Nature is animated by the indwelling spirit of God), the fact that God is a Person is forgotten. God is not inanimate matter, without any intelligence or feeling. He is a thinking, feeling and willing Spirit. To hold that He is the same as natural objects, which have no life or mind of their own, would be to ignore the real character of God. God is the Mind behind the universe; He is *not the* universe.

All these grave dangers are carefully guarded against both in the Old and in the New Testaments.

The Distinctive Teaching of Jesus about the Indwelling God

It is necessary to deal here with the distinctive emphasis of Jesus on the work of the Holy Spirit as the interpreter of His own teaching and ministry. "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach

you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." [43] "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 soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." [44] "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." [45]

All these verses point in the same direction. The Holy Spirit will continue to interpret Jesus to the world. Men may forget His sayings and doings, the lapse of time may blur their memory. The depth of meaning in His life and in His teaching may not be quite evident at once. He Himself was not able to say all that He wanted to say because His immediate hearers were not mature enough to receive the fullness of His teaching and His own time was limited. So the Holy Spirit will, from age to age, keep alive in men's hearts and minds the wonderful life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. If people begin to forget them the Holy Spirit will bring them again to memory. He will expound fully their significance. He will carry them forward to meet new problems and give them fresh interpretations as new situations arise. This is the distinctive contribution of Jesus to our understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. God, who is immanent in the souls of all earnest and true seekers, will interpret fully and clearly the work of Christ and thus extend its usefulness through the ages.

A doubt may arise here. Has not the Holy Spirit been always in the world? Why, then, did Jesus speak of it as if it were coming for the first time into the hearts of men? We are sure that Jesus believed that the Spirit of God had been always active in the hearts of the prophets of His own race. We are not sure whether He would have extended the sphere of the operation of the Spirit to include prophets of other races as well. Jesus teaches that the Holy Spirit will have a new function, namely, He will make clear to men's hearts the meaning of the Incarnation; He will bring out the full implications of Christ's teaching and apply it to strange and new problems as they arise from age

[43] John xiv. 26.
[44] John xvi. 12, 13.
[45] John xv. 26, 27.

to age. On account of this most important new function of the Holy Spirit, Jesus speaks of His coming into the hearts of men as if it were an absolutely new event. This added function of the Holy Spirit has thus given Him a fresh significance. For this reason, His coming into the hearts of men after Christ is an entirely new event in the spiritual history of mankind.

CHAPTER VI

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON SIN

THERE are many prayers in the religious literature of India asking for God's forgiveness.

In the seventh book of the *Rig Veda* there are some hymns by the *Rishi* Vasishtha which show a sense of penitence and a desire for forgiveness. They are addressed to Varuna, the most ethical of the Vedic gods.

" With mine own heart I commune on the question
how Varuna and I may be united.
What gift of mine will he accept unangered?
When may I calmly look and find him gracious?

Fain to know this my sin I question others:
I seek the wise, O Varuna, and ask them.
The one same answer even the sages gave me,
surely this Varuna is angry with thee.

What, Varuna, hath been my chief transgression,
that thou wouldst slay the friend who sings thy praises?
Tell me, Unconquerable Lord, and quickly
sinless will I approach thee with mine homage.

Free us from sins committed by our fathers,
from those wherein we have ourselves offended.
O King, loose, like a thief who feeds the cattle,
as from the cord a calf, set free Vasishtha.

Not our own will betrayed us, but seduction,
thoughtlessness, Varuna, wine, dice, or anger.
The old is near to lead astray the younger:
even sleep removeth not all evil-doing.

Slavelike may I do service to the Bounteous,
serve, free from sin, the God inclined to anger.
This gentle Lord gives wisdom to the simple:
the wiser God leads on the wise to riches."[1]

[1] *Rig Veda*, vii. 86. Quoted in W. Dilger, *Salvation in Hinduism and Christianity*, pp. 292–3.

The poet was ill and on his death-bed. Conscious of having called forth the wrath of the god Varuna by his evil-doing, he prayed for pardon for sins committed recently as well as in the past, for his own sins as well as the sins of his ancestors. He tried to excuse himself by saying that these sins were committed as he was misled, while drinking and gambling with others or in moments of anger. He promised to serve the God with a new faithfulness if he were pardoned.

Another hymn by the same author seems to have been written under similar circumstances:

"Let me not yet, King Varuna, enter into the house of clay,
Have mercy, spare me, Mighty Lord.
When, Thunderer! I move along tremulous like a wind-blown skin,
Have mercy, spare me, Mighty Lord.
O Bright and Powerful God, through want of strength I erred and went astray:
Have mercy, spare me, Mighty Lord.
Thirst found thy worshipper, though he stood in the midst of water-floods:
Have mercy, spare me, Mighty Lord.
O Varuna, whatever the offence may be,
which we as men commit against the heavenly host,
When through our want of thought we violate thy laws,
punish us not, O God, for that iniquity." [2]

Here too the poet is ill and he traces his suffering to his trespass against the laws of Varuna. He prays that his sins may be pardoned so that he may not have to enter the house of clay, which means the grave. The remission of the punishment due to his offence is the object of his petition. He is anxious to escape punishment and does not seem burdened with the sense of guilt.

In another hymn by the same poet there seems to be a distinct spiritual advance. Fellowship with the god Varuna is here regarded as the highest gift while sin is a barrier in the way of such fellowship.

"When Varuna and I embark together
and urge our boat into the midst of ocean,
We, when we ride o'er ridges of the waters,
will swing within that swing and there be happy.

[2] *Rig Veda*, vii. 89. Quoted in W. Dilger, *Salvation in Hinduism and Christianity*, pp. 293–4.

Varuna placed Vasishtha in the vessel,
and deftly with his might made him a *Rishi*.
When days shone bright, the Sage made him a singer,
While the heavens broadened and the dawns were lengthened.

What hath become of those our ancient friendships,
when without enmity we walked together?
I, Varuna, thou glorious Lord, have entered
thy lofty home, thine house with thousand portals.

If he, thy true ally, hath sinned against thee,
still, Varuna, he is the friend thou lovedst.
Let us not, Living One, as sinners, know thee:
give shelter, as a Sage, to him who lauds thee." [3]

Vasishtha had intimate fellowship with Varuna. They were both travelling in the sun-ship which swayed to and fro in its course through mid-air and were close friends. The poet feels that he has now lost his friendship on account of his violation of Varuna's laws and prays for the pardon of his offence and the renewal of former protection.

In succeeding ages the saints of India have prayed for forgiveness in moving words. Tukārām says:

"No deeds I've done nor thoughts I've thought;
Save as Thy servant, I am nought.
Guard me, O God, and O, control
The tumult of my restless soul.
Ah, do not, do not cast on me
The guilt of mine iniquity.
My countless sins, I, Tuka, say,
Upon Thy loving heart I lay." [4]

Dādudayal thus pleads for forgiveness:

"Before Thee I am guilty in every nerve and vein; a sinner am I every moment: Master, forgive me!

In the wide world I stand trembling and alone, chief of all sinners, the black cloud of my errors is impenetrable and covers the whole horizon of my life.

Evils without number, countless vices are within me; many stains are without:

[3] *Rig Veda*, vii. 88. Quoted in W. Dilger, *Salvation in Hinduism and Christianity*, p. 294.
[4] N. Macnicol, *Psalms of Marātha Saints*, p. 76.

Not a single good deed have I done; no virtue is there in me; no merit is mine:

Yet forsake not Thy sinful child, for without Thee where is my refuge?

Desire, pride, anger and falsehood have misled me since my birth: O miserable man that I am!

Thou only art my help: Father, wash me with the nectar of Thy rich forgiveness and heal the mind that is sore." [5]

It is evident, then, that some of the best men in India have felt the seriousness of their sin. In talking with Hindus to-day all of them accept the fact of sin, their own guilt and their need for pardon. And yet it must be said that this sense of sin is not very deep among Hindus generally. The eager desire for forgiveness is not one of the driving-forces in the religious life of India. For this several reasons may be assigned!

1. In popular Hinduism forgiveness appears to be a very easy thing indeed. Bathing in sacred rivers is considered to be quite effective for the wiping away of sin. All over India thousands of men are making pilgrimages daily to holy rivers in the hope that their sins will be washed away. The utterance of *mantras* and the frequent repetition of God's name are regarded as other means for the attainment of pardon and forgiveness. The belief in such pilgrimages and *mantras* definitely tends to bring about a shallow idea of sin.

2. The doctrine of *Karma* plays a most important part in the thought of both the man-in-the-street and the educated man. The problem of getting rid of *Karma* is far more pressing than the problem of getting rid of sin. There is a significant poem in *Tiruvācagam*:

" In the strong grasp of deeds,
I lay, hidden amid illusion's shrouding gloom.
Thou binding with rare cords of virtue and of sin,
Didst clothe with outer skin, enveloping with worms and filth,—
Within my nine-gated dwelling foul bewildered,
By the five senses sore deceived,—
To me, mean as I was, with no good thing, Thou didst grant grace,
That I, with mind erewhile embruted,—pure one!—should
Become commingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt!

[5] A. J. Appasamy, *Temple Bells*, p. 62. For other prayers for forgiveness see *Temple Bells*, pp. 55–64.

Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show Thy mighty feet
To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog,—
Essential grace more precious than a mother's love!" [6]

To Mānikkavachakar, who wrote these lines in Tamil, the bondage of *Karma* is worse than the bondage of sin. Man lies entangled in deeds. The life of virtue and sin is imposed upon him by God. The earlier and the more important experience is that of *Karma.* The desire to get rid of *Karma* and of the births and deaths which they bring about is of compelling power. Of this I speak more in the next chapter.

3. The idea that all that happens in the world is God's doing is deeply rooted in the Hindu mind. When many Hindus are confronted with evil in their own lives they are apt to say that whatever occurs, whether good or evil, is God's work. They forget that there is such a thing as man's evil will, constantly thwarting God's purposes. It is not right that we should make God responsible for the evil things in life which are the result of man's sin. The Hindu doctrine of God tends to make Him the author of everything, both good and evil. This brings about a weak and shallow conception of sin.

4. There is a peculiar development of thought confined to the *Bhaktas.* Some of them, especially those who follow the *Bhāgavat Purāna,* are inclined to make religious experience a highly emotional thing. They think that they realize God only when their feelings are deeply moved. Such ecstasy, often showing itself in song and dance, is regarded as the highest end of the *Bhakta's* life. All his energies are devoted to its attainment. The failure to experience religious thrills is regarded as a serious offence. Many *Bhaktas* constantly blame themselves for it. The failure to walk in the path of virtue does not trouble them in the same way. For this reason the conviction of sin is very superficial in some earnest and sincere *Bhaktas.*

The Vision of God

A distinguished missionary thinker who, convinced of the weakness of the Hindu ethical sense, has tried by many arguments to deepen it has confessed that his efforts in this direction have not been of much avail. My own conviction is that the more effective way would be to begin with God and not with man. The Hindu has a real passion for God. He is willing

[6] Mānikkavachakar's *Tiruvācagam,* translated by G. U. Pope, *Tiruvācagam,* p. 5.

to suffer to the utmost in order to realize God. Here we have a very useful point of contact with him. Instead of seeking to put into him something in which he is lacking, namely a deep conviction of sin, why not begin with God, for whom he has a passionate longing? The Hindu should be first helped to understand the wonder and the depth of God's love, particularly as revealed on Calvary.

It is interesting to note that Canon Raven, in his latest book *The Cross and the Crisis,* advocates this line of approach not merely for India but for all countries. " Quite plainly, to begin with sin—indeed to begin with the state of man at all—is to begin at the wrong point. Begin with God; for the mystery is first and foremost an unveiling of the nature of God. It has, I think, been a definite source of weakness both to the Church and to preaching of the Gospel that men have so continuously felt that their first business was to awaken a sense of sin. Plainly we become conscious of sin as opposed to sins, we become conscious of our own deep frustration as opposed to those acts which violate convention and respectability, precisely in proportion as we get a glimpse of God—as we are caught up into a consciousness of things eternal, of the beauty and truth and goodness, dimly glimpsed in the universe, manifested in it, and from time to time making us aware of their presence." [7]

The vision of God will bring about the conviction of man's sin and guilt. There is an interesting incident in the life of Jesus which sheds light on this matter. " And he saw two boats standing by the lake: but the fishermen had gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the multitudes out of the boat. And when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answered and said, Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing: but at thy word I will let down the nets. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their nets were breaking; and they beckoned unto their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the

[7] C. E. Raven, *The Cross and the Crisis,* p. 47.

draught of the fishes which they had taken." [8] Simon Peter realized from this incident that Jesus was a supernatural being and his immediate thought was that in that case he himself was not worthy to be in the company of Jesus. Every sincere man who has the vision of God exclaims, "I am a sinful man, O Lord."

In Isaiah, Chapter vi., this point is even clearer. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." [9]

In the *Bhagavad Gita* there is an interesting glimpse of this truth. Krishna described his nature to Arjuna, who was not satisfied with this account. He longed to have a vision of Krishna as he really was. He prayed for such a vision and it appeared before him, resplendent with glory. When Krishna saw this glorious vision he realized that he may have taken liberties with Krishna and asked for his forgiveness. In other words, the vision roused in Arjuna a sense of the sin of irreverence and he besought Krishna's pardon for the same. "Hail to Thee before, and hail to Thee behind, and hail to Thee on every side, O All. Infinite in power and immeasurable in might, Thou dost pervade all, and therefore Thou art All. If, thinking that Thou art my friend and unaware of this Thy greatness, I addressed Thee in ignorance or love as 'O Krishna,' 'O Yadava' or 'O Friend' —If in my mirth I showed no reverence to Thee while playing or resting, while sitting or eating, while alone, O eternal Lord, or in the presence of others, I implore Thee, who art infinite, to pardon me. Thou art the Father of the world—of all that move and all that do not move. Thou art the object of its worship and its greatest Teacher. There is no one equal to Thee. How then could there be in the three worlds one greater than Thee, O Thou of incomparable power? Therefore I bow down and prostrate myself before Thee, adorable Lord, and seek Thy

[8] Luke v. 2–9.
[9] Isaiah vi. 1–5.

grace. Bear with me as a father with a son, as a friend with a friend, and as a lover with his beloved." [10]

When we see the vision of God, especially of His love as manifested on Calvary, we realize how deeply unworthy we are and how many barriers exist between us and God. Jesus speaks of the many barriers in the way of our fellowship with God. To these we may now turn our attention.

Barriers to Communion with God

1. *Indifference.* Many people keep away from God simply from indifference. Christ spoke a parable and said: "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." [11]

The reasons which these men gave were not in themselves wrong. It is not a sin to buy a field or five yoke of oxen. As long as people need food it has to be raised from the earth and this means that farmers should have lands to cultivate and oxen with which to do their work. What was really wrong was that these men preferred to see their land or oxen rather than attend the feast. It was not a crime on the part of the third man to get married. But when he refused to go to the feast because he had married a wife he showed that he was not particularly anxious to be present at the feast. To-day many interesting things take up men's attention. Talkies attract a great many people. The daily paper with all kinds of news runs away with

[10] *The Bhagavad Gita*, xi. 40–4, translated by D. S. Sarma, *The Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 170–2.
[11] Luke xiv. 16–24.

a good deal of our time. Fascinating novels are written in large numbers and command hundreds of thousands of readers. The radio provides music and education; even people in remote villages can hear good music and listen to informing addresses. People with money own cars and spend much time in driving long distances. Now there is nothing wrong in any of these. The reading of a novel or the listening to a concert on the radio is not wrong. But these amusements are so abundant to-day that there is little time for the quiet and peace needed for cultivating fellowship with God. Life, especially in the cities, becomes a rush. Men and women want to enjoy themselves and are so busy in hurrying from one engagement to another that they do not find time for God. Jesus teaches that this is wrong and that to be indifferent to God's love is a sin. The attractions of the world are not of permanent value: pursued too much they soon become tiresome. People become discontented with their normal life; the duties in the home, in the school and in the office become a burden. It is more interesting to read a novel than to cook a meal or to mend a garment. It is easier to read the daily paper than to pray. The danger of forgetting God through the abundant distractions of the modern age is a real one. It is quite necessary that we should realize that these amusements should not take up the time that should really be given to God.

2. *Worry.* Worry about daily needs keeps us from God. Christ said: "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" [12]

Millions of men and women suffer untold hardships from poverty. Many of them do not even know where their next meal will come from. Even those who are not actually poor

[12] Matthew vi. 25–30.

have several needs to meet. We have to provide ourselves with clothes, food and houses to live in. In these days we desire also the opportunities for education and amusement which need money. The danger is that we may be so worried about these things that we may forget God. The task of finding the money for meeting the various needs of life becomes a burden. Social and religious workers, who have seen the vision of a new day, are working hard so that there may not be such vast differences between the rich and the poor as at present. Slowly all over the world standards of life are improving for every one. It is likely that as years go by the conditions under which men live will steadily become better though we cannot say whether all poverty and suffering will be abolished. But whatever the social conditions may be, there will be innumerable daily needs to meet and millions will be busy worrying about how to meet them. Such anxiety keeps us away from God. We are busy planning out ways of earning and spending money. There is no room for God in our lives. To such Jesus speaks of the Heavenly Father's love. He takes care even of the birds in the air and of the flowers in the field. Nothing can be achieved by worry. A man cannot add even an inch to his height by anxiety.

Jesus Himself was a poor man. He belonged to the ranks of skilled labour and was a carpenter by trade. When He began His religious work He gave up even His home. He said of Himself that He had nowhere to lay His head. With His band of disciples He wandered as a *Sannyāsi* from village to village and from town to town, depending upon the gifts of His friends and followers. He had no economic security. He had no monthly salary, no landed property and no bank account. He had no shares in profitable investments with dividends coming in regularly. And yet He was absolutely free from anxiety about His daily needs. He had complete confidence in the love and goodness of God. He knew without any doubt that God would provide for Him and that He would get all the supplies He wanted.

If only we could understand something of the intimate concern of God for every creature we should turn to Him more often. Jesus teaches us that nothing in the world happens without God. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered." [13] Science to-day is extending considerably our knowledge of the universe. We are

[13] Matthew x. 29, 30.

told about thousands of suns and stars, about which we did not know anything before. Even in such a vast world it is good to realize that God's infinite care extends to the smallest atom in creation and that the lowliest bird or insect lives because of Him. Men and women with minds and souls are also, therefore, certainly under His care. He knows all about us. He provides for our needs. There is a purpose in the universe. The world is not simply a chaos; natural forces alone are not at work. Behind them there is the watchful eye of the Father. As long as we are worried we cannot realize the Father's care. And so Jesus teaches us not to worry but to know that our loving Father will meet all our needs.

3. *Worldliness.* Jesus told the parable of a rich fool who became drunk with the wine of success.[14] His fields were yielding good crops and his storehouses were found to be too small. They had to be pulled down. He was prepared to work quite hard. He would pull down the old storehouses, he would not grudge the loss and the trouble which this would involve. He would calculate accurately the needs for future years, he would make careful plans for the new buildings and he would find the money necessary for their construction. But having built the new granaries and filled them to their capacity, he would begin to enjoy himself. He was not aware of anything higher. He was certainly lacking in spiritual knowledge. To say that eating, drinking and being merry was the goal of his life shows that his soul was but little developed. No one with a spark of spiritual understanding would have thought this. God spoke to him severely and taught him the badly needed lesson, that man is mortal and may die at any time. When he dies all his worldly possessions, so carefully accumulated, are of no value. The soul must be rich towards God. He must realize that any abundance of worldly goods cannot take the place of God.

Here, again, the temptations of the modern man are far stronger than in the time of Jesus. Science has taught us many new ways of making money. We are able to make land yield far more. Clothes, scents and chocolates, meant to make life more enjoyable, are manufactured on a large scale in factories which show big profits. Men of enormous wealth are found in all countries. The temptations to accumulate wealth appeal to many of the most brainy men and they yield to it. The pursuit of money comes to have an absorbing importance. There are too many opportunities to-day to extend business on a vast

[14] Luke xii. 16–21.

scale, to beat down competitors ruthlessly and to practise doubtful methods of buying and selling. To all men who seek to increase their worldly goods, whether on a large scale or on a small and to pin their faith to them, Jesus says that we must be rich towards God. God is an enduring Reality. The spirit in man will live in eternal communion with Him. The body may die; the world may pass away; the sun may slowly lose its warmth as the scientists say; all creatures may be frozen to death; but the spirit in man will continue to dwell in the Presence of the Eternal Father. Our life on this earth is uncertain. We may die to-morrow. When we die the goods we have gathered together in this world are of no value to us and must only be left behind. But if, on the other hand, we are rich towards God we shall find permanent bliss. Being rich towards God means that we know clearly God's love for us and that we love Him with our whole heart. We are confident of His goodness towards us and to the whole world. To remain in His Presence in prayer and meditation is bliss; to work for Him among men, seeking to help them, is immense joy. We are then rich in spiritual possessions. Our treasures are not the things of the world which perish but the things of the spirit such as love and truth and service which endure. The spirit may be called to-morrow from its life in this world but it will not be helpless; it has already learnt to have intercourse with God, the Eternal Spirit, and it will abide in that fellowship. Steadily its knowledge of God will become clearer; its capacity to love God and men will become fuller; and its power to serve and suffer will become greater.

4. *Lack of Faith.* Jesus had a great deal to say about the lack of faith in His generation. He was most patient and rarely used strong words of condemnation, but He felt compelled to rebuke people for their lack of faith. He often spoke about the unlimited possibilities of faith. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them."[15] He Himself had complete faith in God. He had no doubt in His own mind about God's infinite resources. And therefore whenever He came across people who had doubts about the power

[15] Mark xi. 22–24.

of God He rebuked them. It was but natural that to one who had unwavering faith in God hesitation on the subject seemed worthy of strong criticism.

To-day there is far less faith in the time of Jesus. We understand a great many things more clearly than when He lived. Science has advanced a good deal and it says that we can only believe those things which can actually be proved in the laboratory. We cannot believe or accept anything on surmise. The existence of God cannot be proved by scientific tests and so some scientists say that we cannot believe in God. In recent years we have come to know much about the influence of mind over body. If a sick man really believes that he is improving in health and could tell himself truly that day by day he is getting better, he will get better. He need not take any medical treatment; his mind will influence his body; he will cure himself by the power of his thought. From this some scientists conclude that if prayer is offered for a sick man and he recovers, the cure is not due to God who brings about the healing but is simply the result of the influence of the mind of the person who prays over the body of the patient. For this reason many people do not pray these days.

The fullness of God's power cannot flow into our lives if there is lack of faith in us. Only when there is faith can there be any helpful relationship between man and God. Even a schoolboy cannot get much help from his teacher if he thinks that the teacher does not know anything. He must have confidence in the teacher, he must be prepared to do what the teacher tells him to do. If he is told to work hard, he must do so even though for some time he does not see the results of his work. Only if the boy is sure that his teacher does know and that he can help can any good come out of the instruction. This is even more true of our relation to God. We must know that He exists, that He has unlimited power, that He is really anxious to help us, and that there is no limit to His readiness to hear us. It is only where such unswerving faith in God exists that there can be real communion with Him. If we have any doubts about His existence or about His love, we shall not care to approach Him; prayer will not mean anything to us; there will be no longing in our hearts for His Presence; and we shall not make any effort to hear Him speak amidst the tumult of the world.

5. *Impurity.* Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." [16] There can be no vision of God where

[16] Matthew v. 8.

there is sin. Sin according to Jesus does not mean only the outer act which people see; it means also the thought from which the outer act springs. A well which is contaminated at the bottom is dirty up to the surface. If it is to become a fresh, clean well, the dirt at the very bottom must be removed. It is no use throwing out only the bad water without clearing off the dirt which spoils the water. Even if all the water in the well is thrown out, the new water which oozes out will still be dirty. But if the source of dirt is removed, all the water in the well will become clean and the new supplies will come out clean and fresh.

Jesus teaches that there must be absolute purity. A man must not kill; he must not even have the angry thought which sometimes issues in murder. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgement; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." [17]

The world judges only by the outer act. If a man does not commit murder he is not guilty. His mind may be filled with bitterness but as long as there is no practical expression of his anger which people can see he is not condemned. But Jesus says that not only the act of murder but even the angry thought is a sin.

In the same way He teaches that the lustful look on a woman is as bad as adultery. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." [18]

The evil thought is the source of the evil act; where there is no evil thought there can be no evil act. The world condemns only if there is open wickedness. But Jesus traces the trouble to its root and condemns even the wicked thought. There are men whose minds are impure, who have indecent pictures hanging in their rooms and who constantly read exciting novels in which acts of adultery are described in great detail and with much relish. Outwardly they may be good men and the world may have nothing to say against them, but judged by the standard of Jesus they are not clean.

[17] Matthew v. 21, 22.
[18] Matthew v. 27, 28.

The vision of God is possible only when there is purity of body and mind. God is holy; He can only be seen by those who are holy. The experience of God is not a pleasant emotion which comes into our minds by constant prayer or religious study, whatever our lives may be. We cannot have bitter thoughts about other people and expect to see God. We cannot cheat in business and hope to hear God speaking when we sit down to prayer. We cannot continually tell lies and hope to understand God's goodness. God is so pure and holy that only those who are pure can know Him.

Jesus then taught that sin is a tremendous barrier between God and man. In the night the world is covered with darkness and all activity is practically at a standstill. We say the sun has set; as a matter of fact, the sun has not set; only we have turned away from the face of the sun. The sun is always radiating its light and warmth. We turn away from it and are unable to do much. The same with God. He is always spreading His love and goodness and truth. He is never silent or inactive. Only we move away from Him because of our sin. Sin makes it impossible for us to know God and to find out what He wants us to do; even if we know what He wants us to do we cannot do it. Therefore all through His ministry Jesus called men to repentance. When sick people came to Him to be healed He forgave them their sins because He knew that unless they were released of the burden of their sin they could not get even physical health. He moved especially with publicans and sinners. The world keeps sinners apart; it is afraid of them or it wants to teach them the lesson that they have done something gravely wrong. But Jesus was eager to help sinners. When He was criticized for this He said that He had come not for the sake of the righteous but for the sake of sinners. People who are healthy and strong do not need a doctor; only those who are ill need him.[19] He was particularly pleased when sinners repented and showed their love to God. When a woman who was a sinner repented she broke a box of fine scent as a mark of her gratitude to Him. Those who saw this remarked about the waste of money. But He encouraged her, for He said that where much had been forgiven there would be much love. A man whose large debt is cancelled will feel far more grateful than a man whose small debt is wiped out.[20] If a man has a hundred sheep

[19] Luke v. 27–32.
[20] Luke vii. 36–50.

and loses one of them, he will not rest until he traces it and his joy when it is found is great. A woman who loses a coin will sweep up the house carefully and when she finds the coin again she will rejoice greatly over it and tell her neighbours about it. So too the angels of God rejoice over every sinner who repents and is saved.[21]

[21] Luke xv. 4–10.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON FORGIVENESS

THE Bishop of Dornakal, in whose Diocese thousands of Hindus join the Christian Church every year, says that one of the strong reasons which attract many of them towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this. As Hindus they believe that they have to work out the results of their deeds in various births, but the Gospel teaches them not this difficult and perilous way but the way of Divine forgiveness. They do not have painfully to expiate in the course of many lives the consequences of their actions, for God out of the abundance of His love forgives them, completely wipes away the results of their harmful actions and places them on a new path of effort and progress. For this reason they join the Church. This experience of converts sheds fresh light on the doctrines of *Karma* and forgiveness, to a careful discussion of which we should turn in this chapter.

The Value of the Doctrine of "Karma"

The earliest statement of the doctrine of *Karma* occurs in the *Brihad-Āranyaka Upanishad*, written about 500 B.C. King Janaka, famous in India for his piety, offered a sacrifice at which many prizes were given. There was a large gathering of Brahmans at the ceremony. Janaka desired to know which of them was the most learned in Scripture. He had a thousand cows enclosed and on the horns of each were bound ten pieces of gold. He spoke to the Brahmans and said: "Venerable Brahmans! Let him of you who is the best Brahman drive away these cows." All the Brahmans kept quiet except Yājnavalkya, who instructed his pupil to drive the cows away. The other Brahmans were all angry at this and said: "How can he regard himself as the best among us?" A long and hot contest took place between Yājnavalkya and the other Brahmans. He was asked many questions by them which he answered with great insight. In the course of the discussion Yājnavalkya said:

"As is a person's desire, such is his resolve; as is his resolve, such the action he performs; what action *(Karma)* he performs, that he procures for himself.

On this point there is this verse:

Where one's mind is attached—the inner self
Goes thereto with action, being attached to it alone.
Obtaining the end of his action,
Whatever he does in this world,
He comes again from that world
To this world of action.
—So the man who desires.

Now the man who does not desire—he who is without desire, who is freed from desire, whose desire is satisfied, whose desire is the Soul—his breaths do not depart. Being very Brahma, he goes to Brahma.

On this point there is this verse:

When are liberated all
The desires that lodge in one's heart,
Then a mortal becomes immortal!
Therein he reaches Brahma!

As the slough of a snake lies on an ant-hill, dead, cast off, even so lies this body."

Janaka was so pleased with Yājnavalkya's teaching that he exclaimed, "I will give you, noble sir, a thousand cows" and awarded him the much coveted prize.[1]

The doctrine of *Karma,* the beginnings of which we see here, has become a most powerful doctrine in India. There are many schools of thought among the Hindus and they differ widely on various important points but they are all entirely agreed in upholding the doctrine of *Karma.* The doctrine found its way into Buddhism where also it holds an important place. Through Buddhism it has reached far beyond the borders of India and has penetrated into the greater part of Asia.

Without going into the innumerable developments of the doctrine we may say that to-day the working faith of the Hindus includes a belief in many lives. Every soul passes through a cycle of births and deaths. In innumerable lives it works out the results of its deeds. The sins of one life are punished by suffering in the next; the good deeds of one birth are rewarded in the next. If there is any accumulation of evil or good deeds still to be expiated, the soul reaches hell or heaven there to eat further the fruit of its actions. Then it comes back again to the earth to go through a further process of purification. There may

[1] *Brihad-Āranyaka Upanishad,* III, i.—IV, iv., R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads,* pp. 107–41.

be many millions of births through which a soul may have to pass before it reaches the bliss of final emancipation. Only after such prolonged purification, covering innumerable births, is a soul considered fit to experience the ultimate joy of union with God.

It will be noticed that a synthesis is made here of the doctrine of heaven and hell and of the doctrine of transmigration. A word of explanation is needed in this connexion. Before the doctrine of *Karma* came into existence, there was a belief among the Hindus in heaven and in hell. Instead of the new theory taking the place of the old, the new theory was added on to the old. This explains why even to-day the belief in heaven and hell survives in India along with the doctrine of many births.

In the course of its development the doctrine of *Karma* has received many fantastic expressions. In the *Pāla Pādam,* a Tamil book on the *Saiva* religion prepared for the use of children, it is stated that a woman who is rude to her husband will have to endure eternal torment; she will have to lick for millions of years a red-hot iron in hell and then be born on earth as a mosquito.[2] We need not take such accounts as serious any more than we do some of the lurid pictures of hell given in the old Christian writings. All these belong to a more primitive stage of religion which is passed as men progress in spiritual and intellectual culture. What we must do rather is to get at the heart of the doctrine and to try to find out what measure of truth there is in it to have made it so appealing to hosts of thinkers in India and the East generally for such long centuries. We may say that the attraction of the doctrine lies in the emphasis which it lays on the law of retribution, the sense of individual responsibility and the ample time it allows for the growth of the soul. These points need to be explained at some length.

1. Men all over the world have accepted that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished. This principle is expressed emphatically by the doctrine of *Karma.* Unless there is some such law, we cannot imagine how morality can find a place in the universe. This conviction holds true in the present as it did in the past. We may understand it to-day in a slightly different sense from how it was understood in past ages. When we say that virtue should be rewarded we may not mean to-day that it should be rewarded by a prosperous life in the worldly sense. That was the mistake which Job and his friends made. They thought that because Job was a good man he must continue to

[2] Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 63.

be successful from the worldly point of view. When misfortune after misfortune befell him, he failed to understand why such troubles should overtake one who was sincerely striving to lead a righteous life and one who, as far as he and others could see, was really doing his best.[3] Though a good man may not be successful and may not hold an important office or receive the homage of his fellow-men or own houses and lands, he has the peace and joy of a good life which no man can take away from him. The opposite is true of a man with evil passions and habits. He may be highly respected, exercise great authority over others and be surrounded with all the comforts which wealth can give and yet in his heart he may be a miserable and broken-down man. We may also say that though it is true that virtue is always rewarded and vice punished, no man should follow virtue or avoid vice for this reason. The pursuit of virtue for the sake of the reward which it brings is not at all a desirable motive. We may say further that this law does not always work in short periods of time. A man may prosper in his wickedness for several years and yet there may suddenly come a crisis in his life which will show him to be what he really is. Thus though we may like to qualify the general principle in many directions in virtue of the experience which men have acquired painfully in the course of time, we accept and believe fully that virtue must always be encouraged and wickedness prevented. If there were no such law at work in the world there can only be spiritual chaos. Orderly progress and steady growth are possible only when there is a clear recognition that such a law is at work. The doctrine of *Karma* is valuable, then, for it states, without a shadow of doubt, the excellent moral law that goodness thrives and evil suffers in the world.

2. The theory of *Karma* is also valuable as it embodies another important moral idea that every individual is responsible for the actions which he performs. An excellent statement of this principle is found in St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. "For each man shall bear his own burden. But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life."[4]

[3] See the *Book of Job* in the Bible.
[4] Galatians vi. 5–8.

An Indian proverb puts the same truth in another way:

"Who plants mangoes, mangoes shall he eat;
Who plants thorn-bushes, thorns shall wound his feet." [5]

The *Garuda Purāna* says:

"Sorrow or joy none other gives to us;
False is the thought that others give us these;
Our own deeds bring us their own just fruit—
Body of mine! repay by suffering!" [6]

Modern Psychology confirms this principle. It shows us how every act that we do is registered in our nerve cells and fibres. A man who yields once to the temptation to drink has already drawn a track in his nervous system; it will be much easier for him to drink the next time because he has drunk once. If he drinks a number of times, the fateful habit of drink will have little or no difficulty in subduing him to its control, because deep down in his mind there has been established a pre-disposition to yield to the temptation of drink.[7] The fact that what a man thinks and says and does will surely bring forth a large harvest of consequences and that the individual must bear the full share of responsibility for what has been brought upon himself is clearly shown by modern psychology.

The individual's share in deciding his own future destiny is also clear from the doctrine of *Karma*. There is no external judge imposing upon him penalties or apportioning to him bliss at the last day. Each individual is determining every moment of his life the nature of his eternal destiny. If he makes wrong choices he is heading for disaster and if he makes right decisions joy and peace are in store for him. As Sir S. Rādhākrishnan says: "The Hindu religion does not believe in a God who from His judgment seat weighs each case separately and decides on its merits. He does not administer justice from without, enhancing or remitting punishment according to His sweet will. God is in man, and so the law of *Karma* is organic to man's nature. Every moment man is on his trial, and every honest effort will do him good in his eternal endeavour. The character that we build will continue into the future until we realize our oneness with God." [8]

[5] Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 71.
[6] Quoted in Bhagavan Dās, *The Essential Unity of All Religions*, p. 177.
[7] William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, Chapter on "Habit."
[8] Quoted in G. K. Chettur, *Altars of Silence*, p. 293.

Sir S. Rādhākrishnan has behind him the authority of the *Mahābhārata* and of *Manu Smriti* which declare:

> " For fear of one another, some refrain
> From sin; others for fear of the king's rod;
> Some, fearing Yama's judgment after death;
> But judge of judges is the inner self;
> In whom this inner judge is satisfied,
> He hath no fear of any other judge." [9]

3. The theory of *Karma* maintains that considerable time is necessary for the development of the soul. This life is far too brief and fleeting for the eternal spirit to become full-fledged. It cannot reach here all the wonderful possibilities which are hidden within it. Some such reason seems to have led Dr. J. M. E. McTaggart of Cambridge to make a powerful defence in Europe of the doctrine of rebirth. He had no belief in God but felt that the doctrine of rebirth provided ample scope for acquiring the fullness of knowledge and experience which cannot be attained in this all too brief life. He says: " Death is not a haven of rest. It is a starting-point for fresh labours. But if the trials are great, so is the recompense. We miss much here by our folly, much by unfavourable circumstances. Above all, we miss much because so many good things are incompatible. . . . Would it not be worth much to be able to hope that what we missed in one life might come to us in another? . . . Though the way is long, and perhaps endless, it can be no more wearisome than a single life. But with death we leave behind us memory, and old age and fatigue. And surely death acquires a new and deeper significance when we regard it no longer as a single and unexplained break in an unending life, but as part of the continually recurrent rhythm of progress—as inevitable, as natural, and as benevolent as sleep. We have only left youth behind us, as at noon we have left the sunrise. They will come back, and they do not grow old." [10]

The Weakness of the Doctrine of " Karma "

It seems to me the excellent principles underlying the theory of *Karma* have led to its real weakness by being pushed too far.

1. Virtue must bear good fruit and vice must suffer. But if the enjoyment or suffering is for actions of which we have no memory there cannot be any real moral value in such enjoyment

[9] Quoted in Bhagavan Dās, *The Essential Unity of All Religions*, p. 182.
[10] Quoted in Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 65.

or suffering. If a man is rewarded he must know what exactly he has done which is worth such recognition; if a penalty is given him he must know what he has done which deserves such a penalty. It does not help a man morally if he is rewarded or punished without his knowing what exactly he has done worthy of such treatment.

The fact that there is a good deal of suffering in the world for which an explanation can be given only in terms of former births leads to a fatalistic attitude. One who takes the doctrine of *Karma* to heart is inclined to say: "Whatever comes let it come. I have no idea of what I did in my previous births. I have no idea of what is ahead of me. Whether it is pleasant or hard I cannot help. So my duty is to go through life patiently bearing whatever happens."

The Telugu poet, Thiāgarāja, whose sweet lyrics are most popular in South India, often refers to the doctrine of *Karma*. In one of his lyrics he says:

"O! my God! I now understand the fruits of my *Karma;* for, despite my repeated worship, you continue to be what you were, leaving me severely alone." [11]

In another lyric he says:

"I have a wavering mind; I have not known your steady mind; I have created my own difficulties; yet I complain.

You have ascertained the merits and demerits of people and go on protecting them, in your own pre-arranged way.

I composed and sang hundreds of lyrics in order that you might save my individual self alone, irrespective of others.

Have mercy on me and pardon me for such heavy and serious offences." [12]

Thiāgarāja's meaning is that God has His own way of dealing with people based on their actions and it is useless to offer any prayers. What happens to us depends on our *Karmas* and so prayer for this or that blessing is unnecessary, useless and even sin.

Rādhākrishnan says: "Whatever happens to us in this life, we have to submit in meek resignation, for it is the result of our past doings. Yet the future is in our power, and we can work with hope and confidence. *Karma* inspires hope for the future and resignation to the past." [13] It is perfectly true that a devotee may by an exertion of his will begin a new series of actions which

[11] M. S. Rāmaswāmi Aiyar, *Thiāgarāja,* p. 74.
[12] M. S. Rāmaswāmi Aiyar, *Thiāgarāja,* p. 171, adapted.
[13] Quoted in Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 69.

will produce different results. But there are various difficulties in the way even of this method. The uncertainty and the ignorance about the past, with all its possible consequences in the future, makes it exceedingly hard for a man to take any new action. What lies behind is so uncertain and dim that it is really hard for a devout person, who is sensitive to the implications of the theory, to shake himself thoroughly of the incubus of the past and to start afresh on a new line of endeavour. And even if he has the courage and the stamina to make a new beginning, he may yet make mistakes from ignorance or frailty and their consequences will recoil on him with dread certainty.

So most Hindu devotees have been inclined to follow one of two lines. Some of them have attempted to subdue all desire and all action. Desire is dangerous, for it may lead to action and action is sure to involve future births. The safest course, then, for the devotee is to avoid all desire and all action and to reach a state of complete quietism and inactivity. Other devotees have sought to pursue the path of *Nish Kāma Karma*. This ideal is set forth in the *Bhagavad Gīta*. The author of the *Gīta* realized the danger of avoiding all action, for that would really mean that the whole business of life in the world would cease. So he urges that people should do their work without desiring to enjoy their fruit. A man must act in a particular way not because it is going to make him happy or bring him wealth or give him fame or in any way add to his selfish enjoyment. The soldier must fight because he is born in the soldier caste and it is his duty to fight. The farmer must plough, for he is bound to cultivate the land as a member of the farmer caste. The priest must say his prayers, for that is the duty which has been assigned to him on account of his birth. All these actions must be performed without an eye on the reward which is given for them.

2. The theory of *Karma* emphasizes the thought of individual responsibility so much that there is no room for helping others. Every man must enjoy or suffer according to his deeds; what he does only matters; he cannot possibly get away from the effect of his own works. For this reason it is useless to pray for others or to help them in any way to improve their position, for every person must inevitably suffer or enjoy according to his own works.

In another way the theory of *Karma* minimizes the strength of our bonds with others. The history of the soul is viewed as a whole, including a terribly long series of births and deaths. We speak of a man's relations or of his friends or of his countrymen.

But who are they really? According to the doctrine of *Karma* they are only those likely to be connected with the soul in one phase of its existence. In this birth he has certain relations, certain friends and certain countrymen; but the connexion with them lasts only for the short period of this life. In successive births there will be other relations, friends and countrymen. The soul's concern for others, with whom it is immediately related, is of a very transitory and impermanent character. In view of the fleeting nature of such relationships during this life only, effective help for those connected with us is a matter of no enduring significance.

There was a big earthquake in Bihar in 1934 when millions of people were rendered homeless and destitute. Some students from Bishop's College, Calcutta, who went to give relief reported that they met with opposition from the orthodox Hindus who said: "Why should we help these people? They are suffering as a result of their *Karma*." Not only is social service not welcomed where the doctrine of *Karma* is strictly held; orthodox people even think that they are only working in line with the system of *Karma* when they add to the troubles of such unfortunate people as widows or *Harijans*. Their very state implies that their *Karma* demands such suffering. If they are made to suffer a little more it is all to the good, for suffering and misfortune are their lot in accordance with the inexorable laws of *Karma*.

3. The idea that the soul needs ample time for its growth has led to extreme and unfortunate results. The soul may have to pass through millions of births and deaths. The forms of embodiment may vary through the whole range of life from plants or animals to the highest types of human or celestial existence. There is no necessarily steady progress. If the soul commits a dread sin, it may sink down very low and may have to work its way up slowly through many lives. And so the progress of the soul is not one steady ascent but follows many ups and downs, through various forms of suffering and enjoyment in different bodies.

The result of this conception of the infinite life of the soul is most depressing. No Hindu welcomes this prospect of future births and deaths. As Dr. Cave says: "Rebirth to the Hindu is not something that is desired or sought for; it is something which has to be accepted as belonging to that order of Nature of which men are held to be a part." [14] We may even go further

[14] Sydney Cave, *Hinduism or Christianity?* p. 66.

and say that with many devout Hindus the thought of future births and deaths is a terrible burden too heavy to be borne.

The Tamil poet, Pattinattār, imagines the various births through which he has possibly passed or through which he may yet have to go.

" Mothers, how many, O how many mothers, must I have had!
Fathers, how many, O how many fathers, must I have had!
Then, how many, O how many wives, must I have had!
Children, how many, O how many children, must I have had!

How many, O how many former births, must I have had!
Thy foolish servant knows not.
How many, O how many more births?
What shall I do? O Kachia kambanē! " [15]

Kabīr feels keenly weariness at the endless cycle of births and deaths:

" I was in immobile and mobile creatures, in worms and
in moths;
I passed through many births of various kinds.
In this I occupied many bodies;
But when, O God, I assumed human birth,
I was a *Jogi,* a *Jati,* a penitent, a *Brahmachāri;*
Sometimes a king, an emperor and sometimes a beggar,
Saith Kabīr, ' O God, have mercy on us;
We have grown weary; make us now whole.' " [16]

Tiru Mangai Ālvār, the Tamil devotee, expresses with many illustrations his dread of the future existences which God might ordain for him. He says he is like a tree on the bank of a river constantly in fear of flood, like sailors in the midst of a storm, like ants surrounded by fire and like jackals swept along by an impetuous flood.[17]

The fear of future births and deaths is real with all devout Hindus and one of their main pursuits in the spiritual life is release from them. They pray to God eagerly that He may save them from such dire consequences of their own actions.

It must be pointed out, however, that some *Bhaktas* have not actually prayed to be delivered from such a cycle but have besought that, however many lives they may be called upon to

[15] Pattinattār, " *Annai Ethanai.*"
[16] Translated by Max Arthur Macauliffe. Quoted by Eva Martin, in *The Ring of Return,* p. 104.
[17] Tiru Mangai Ālvār, *Peria-Tiru-Moli,* xi. 8.

pass through, they may be steady and unflinching in their devotion to God. In other words, they accept the setting of innumerable lives in which they have to live but are eager that through them all their love for God should continue. In the enthusiasm of their *Bhakti* some have even said that they do not desire release from the wearisome cycle of births and deaths, provided they can maintain undisturbed, through all the changing circumstances of their innumerable lives, their devotion to the feet of God. Such is the reality of their joy in God and of their communion with Him that the vast panorama of an infinite number of existences which opens out before them holds no terrors for them. In the joy of their rapture in God during this life, they are willing to dare all and to pass through the most startling vicissitudes of existence if only they can be sure that God will continue to bestow on them such joy through them all.

Tukārām says:

"Hear, O God, my supplication,—
Do not grant me Liberation.

'Tis what men so much desire,
Yet how much this joy is higher!

Heavenly joy is not for me,
For it passeth speedily;

But that name how strangely dear
That in songs of praise we hear!

Ah, says Tukā, it is this
Makes our lives so full of bliss." [18]

Before leaving the matter of the weakness of the doctrine of *Karma*, we must note that at present in India there are signs that this ancient doctrine, with its powerful hold on the thought and imagination of the people, is breaking down. New factors in the political and social life of the country are at work threatening to disintegrate this old system of thought.

The desire for political independence has given the people an absolutely different outlook about the seventy millions of *Harijans*. In former years they were considered to suffer various hardships because in some previous lives they had done evil *Karma*. No one attempted to improve their position, for it was felt that they were only reaping the consequences of their actions

[18] N. Macnicol, *Psalms of Maratha Saints*, p. 83.

in accordance with the well-ordered system of *Karma*. But that theory is forgotten now in the keen desire for independence. If India is to attain independence (and who does not wish for it?) the social position of the *Harijans* must certainly be raised. They must learn to form clean habits, they must wear good clothes and live in decent homes, they must be educated, they must be free from the thraldom of fear and superstition and they must learn to use new and improved methods of work in the fields. Only when this is done and they become like the rest of the population of India will freedom for the country dawn.

The Labour Movement and other movements like Socialism and Communism are also helping to break down the old system of *Karma*. Leaders are beginning to say that if certain classes suffer, it is simply due to man's selfish organization of society. The rich and the educated have so ordered life that everything is comfortable and easy for them and hard and difficult for others. They so manage that they get the larger share of the wealth that Nature produces abundantly everywhere. There is no such thing as *Karma* which is responsible for the evils connected with poverty. We do not need to blame *Karma* for what selfish men have actually done to further their own interests. So the best thing is to reorganize Society in such a way that every one has enough to satisfy his needs and no one an abundance of things far greater than is actually necessary.

The spread of scientific education is also tending in the same direction. The theory of *Karma* explains the genius of a child of five for music by saying that it is carrying on in this life a gift which it had developed in a previous existence. Or it explains the inherent criminal tendency of another child, born apparently in a good home, by saying that it is carrying further an evil habit acquired in former lives. These and many other remarkable manifestations of surprisingly good or evil characteristics are now explained in terms of heredity. In order to understand a child's nature we are now told by men of science that we must go back not one or two but several generations. That genius for music or that criminal tendency which is so astonishing may really have come down from some distant ancestor of whom we know nothing. Many of the striking characteristics of people now explained in India in terms of *Karma* receive a more reasonable and scientific explanation as the results of heredity.

It is interesting to note that a Hindu Professor of Philosophy, Dr. Indra Sen of Delhi, educated in modern methods of scientific investigation, has been devoting considerable time to the collec-

tion of facts about those who claim to remember their previous births. Dr. Sen has made a serious effort to get first-hand information about the persons who have made such claims, to cross-examine them thoroughly and to test carefully the truth and accuracy of what they have said. He has been placing before the annual meetings of the Indian Philosophical Congress the results of his investigation. He has not yet come to any definite conclusions. The fact that a modern Hindu scholar is beginning to collect carefully at first hand the relevant evidence and to sift it and to test it in many ways is quite significant. There was once a time when such claims by those who spoke about their former births were accepted without any questioning. The spread of scientific knowledge makes educated men to-day in India investigate these facts far more carefully and try to understand with an open mind what they really imply.

"Karma" and Redemption

The Christian doctrine of redemption embodies all the principles of value in the theory of *Karma,* while it does not give scope for their extreme developments.

1. The moral law that the wages of sin is death is upheld by our Lord Jesus Christ. His teaching is that whoever repents truly will be forgiven by God.

The story of the prodigal son sets forth clearly the readiness of God to forgive.[19] The father of the prodigal son was a loving man. He must have brought up his son with great tenderness and care. Any good son would have responded to such a father's love. In the world, generally speaking, if a father loves his children dearly they love him dearly in return. That is natural. The prodigal son was unnatural. He did not care for his own home or for his father's love. He forgot all about the duties he owed to his father. All he wanted was his father's money, with the many opportunities which it would give for enjoying himself. So he got the money, left his home and indulged himself in the pleasures which money bought.

We are not told anything about the father's feelings at this time. The son's strange request must have hurt him deeply. That all the love which he had shown the boy should end in this must have made his heart bleed. He might need the boy's company; he might need his love; he might even feel that it would be good for the boy to continue to live in the house and to have the help and influence of the family. But he was too

[19] Luke xv. 11–32.

loving and tender to think of these things, and he made it possible for the son to go away as he pleased.

It is curious that even after the hardships through which the prodigal son passed he was only interested in the bread which he could get in his father's house. He was afraid that his father would not take him into the family but may agree to treat him only like one of his hired servants. We do not know whether he missed his father's love or whether he only missed his father's bread. It looks as if he only missed his father's bread. This was quite in keeping with his character. He was an unnatural son. No normal son would have left such a father's home or wanted to return to it merely for the sake of the food that he would get there. The father's love was deep. His joy at his lost son having returned knew no bounds. He forgave the prodigal son completely and took him back into the family at once. So, Christ teaches, does God do to every repentant sinner.[20]

In fact, God goes out in search of the sinner. If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them is lost, that man will not rest quiet until he finds the sheep that is lost and brings it home rejoicing. So God does with us.[21] Jesus spoke another parable about a woman who had ten pieces of silver but lost one. She sought diligently until she recovered it and then invited her friends to rejoice with her.[22] These three parables of the prodigal son, the lost sheep and the lost coin Jesus spoke to show God's abundant willingness to forgive and save repentant sinners. Once a saintly preacher said: "If all the Bible were lost and only the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke preserved, I should be content for in it I would know all that I need to know about the length and the breadth and the height of God's love."

Jesus was taken to task for mingling freely with publicans and sinners; the religious leaders of His day were very critical about it. They themselves kept away from sinners; they did not believe that any good could come from moving with them freely. The best way to teach them a lesson was to have nothing to do with them; only then would they realize the seriousness of their offence and turn back to God. But Jesus did not do so. He moved so freely with sinners that He earned the title "Friend of publicans and sinners." He firmly believed that it was only by thus forgiving them and ignoring their past that He could

[20] Cf. a parallel Hindu story, quoted by Dr. Rudolf Otto in his *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity*, pp. 137, 138.
[21] Luke xv. 4–7.
[22] Luke xv. 8–10.

redeem them to a new life. In fact, He held that the greater the sinfulness the greater the forgiveness would be, and that the greater the forgiveness the greater would be the love generated.[23]

The story of a woman taken in adultery sheds further light on this question of forgiveness.[24] Modern scholars hold that this incident is likely to be authentic. The style is not like the rest of the Gospel of St. John, but is more in keeping with the style of St. Luke. It may have originally belonged to St. Luke's Gospel but may somehow have become attached to the Fourth Gospel. This story is quite revealing in its account of the attitude of Jesus towards sinners. We can imagine the complacency and self-righteousness with which the Scribes and the Pharisees, rigidly insisting on ethical laws, caught her and brought her before Jesus wondering what judgment He would pass on such a flagrant violation of morality. But Jesus forgave her, without condemning her. The object with which He forgave her is clear in His words to her: "Go and sin no more." He knew that the best way to redeem her was to forgive her. His method was very different from that of the self-righteous and critical hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees. But He was sure that by forgiving her completely He would help that woman to take a new step in life and to become an entirely different person.

It may be asked whether the doctrine of forgiveness which is taught here by Jesus does not actually negate the moral law that the one who does evil *Karma* should be punished. The suffering of Jesus, the incarnate God, throughout His life with the shameful and miserable death on the cross at its end shows us what suffering there had to be in God on account of sin. As Isaiah says: "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."[25] The Cross is the revelation of the tremendous cost which God has to pay for the redemption of men. It is not as if without any effort on His part He forgives men whatever they may do. The suffering He has borne for us is beyond our reckoning. We cannot

[23] Luke vii. 36–50.
[24] John viii. 3–11.
[25] Isaiah liii. 3–5.

possibly understand all the intensity of the suffering of the Man of Sorrows. The moral law is not set aside in any sense; where there is sin, there *is* suffering. The sin of men has brought about the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross. If God forgave without the Cross, He would be laying aside His own moral law which He has established among men. This He could not well do. If the moral law were thus abandoned, chaos only would prevail in the world. So the experience of the Cross is absolutely necessary. After the Cross no one can say that God forgives men because it is easy for Him or because He does not care to uphold the law that righteousness should prevail in the world.

The *Karma* doctrine of the Hindus proves to be very difficult as it places the burden of the whole law on human shoulders. Each man must bear his own punishment; no one else can do it for him. But the teaching of Jesus is that God Himself bears the burden for us. Tukārām's petition has been answered:

> "I am a mass of sin;
> Thou art all purity;
> Yet thou must take me as I am
> And bear my load for me." [26]

The burden has thus been shifted from us to God. Devout Hindus, who accept the doctrine of *Karma* with all its implications, feel terribly the burden because they are trying to carry it all by themselves. They totter under the heavy load and are completely exhausted by its crushing weight. The teaching of Jesus is that we transfer the weight from our feeble shoulders to God's, as He is willing to bear the greater share of the weight. In His abundant love He has become one of us; He has passed through all our experiences; He knows all our difficulties and problems; He has drunk the cup of human sorrow to its bitter dregs. If He forgives, He pays a tremendous price for it. The moral law, then, is not set aside but it is worked in a new way so that it may bring forth the best possible fruit. That evil *Karma* produces suffering has been demonstrated beyond all doubt on the mount of Calvary, where Christ was crucified; the evil *Karma* of men led to His untold suffering. No longer can the supremacy of the spiritual law that sin brings forth a harvest of pain and misery be called into question.

When considering the operation of the law of *Karma,* we must remember that the purpose for which it is established is

[26] N. Macnicol, *Psalms of Maratha Saints,* p. 65.

to purify the soul and to make it ready and fitting for communion with God. If this be so, the forgiveness of the penitent sinner achieves this purpose far more effectively than the inexorable grinding of the law of retribution. The forgiven man is more apt to seek the Presence of God than the sinner who feels that he is being crushed, no doubt for his own sins, by a righteous and unbending machine. If personal relationship is to be established between God and men, the more effective method would be the exercise of Divine forgiveness rather than the operation of an inexorable system of *Karma*. The experience of fellowship with God is the highest attainment open to man, and Divine forgiveness helps such an end far more effectively than the doctrine of *Karma* and rebirth.

2. The vital principle that each individual bears the responsibility for all that he does, which is embodied in the doctrine of *Karma*, is also found in the Christian idea of forgiveness. The first condition of forgiveness is repentance. That was the message which Jesus constantly preached when He was on earth: "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." [27] The primary responsibility for the change of heart which asks for forgiveness is thus assigned to man. While it is true that God takes the initiative and calls men to follow Him, He never forces them. The principle on which He rules the hearts of men is that they themselves must open the door and invite Him in. He never breaks any door open. For He treats us as men and women with freewill so that we can either accept or refuse His call. If He simply forced us, we should be merely machines obeying Him whether we like it or not; we should not be persons with the infinite spiritual capacities we have, either for good or for evil.

The share of the individual in deciding his own future destiny is a favourite thought in the Gospel of St. John. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life." "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." [28] "And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last

[27] Mark i. 15.
[28] John v. 24, 40.

day." [29] There are many other verses in the Gospel of St. John which point in this direction. By deciding to follow Christ, a man walks on the path to eternal life; by refusing to follow Christ, he chooses to dwell in darkness. The future destiny of a man is not decided by an outside God who sends a man to heaven or to hell according as He likes. Man himself, by his choices in this life, determines the nature of his future existence. By his attitude to Christ here and now he decides whether in the future the bliss of eternal life, lived in fellowship with God, is going to be his or not. If he believes in Christ such bliss will be surely his, and if he does not believe in Christ he can only expect in the future life sorrow and darkness as he can have no fellowship with God.

The principle of the sense of individual responsibility is carried too far in the theory of *Karma*. A man must bear his own burden; no one else can possibly help him. This utter isolation of the individual soul fills it with fear and trembling. On the other hand, in the Christian doctrine of forgiveness while a man has his clear and definite responsibility he can always be helped by others. His friends and relatives can pray for him. The Church can pray for him. In the great passage in Galatians, where St. Paul enunciates the principle that whatever a man sows he shall reap, he also says "Bear ye one another's burdens." [30] A man is seriously ill. He, of course, has to bear all the pain and suffering and yet others can do a great deal to help him. They can bring in a good doctor and give medicine which may often shorten the course of the disease. They can nurse him carefully and attend to all his needs. They do not simply say: "He must only suffer; we cannot do anything for him." But they do their best for him. Likewise in the spiritual realm while the individual bears the primary responsibility, others can help him by their prayer, by their sympathy and by their co-operation.

3. The idea that the soul needs all eternity for its full growth has never found favour with the majority of Christian theologians. In the early Church Origen says that departed saints first live on the earth in a place called Paradise where they receive spiritual teaching. If worthy they quickly ascend through the air and reach the Kingdom of God, through different stations or halting places on the journey. For this he finds the main Scriptural authority in the saying of Jesus recorded in the Fourth

[29] John xii. 47, 48.
[30] Galatians vi. 2.

Gospel. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." [31] Origen takes the term "mansion" to refer to the different stages in the progress of the soul to God. Clement of Alexandria understands this verse in a similar sense. He thinks also that the thirtyfold, sixtyfold and hundredfold harvests which are brought forth by good seed hint at the different mansions where the saints dwell according to their various merits. He holds consistently that there are different degrees of glory in the heavenly world. But modern scholars do not accept that the term "mansions" means the different stages of a journey. They rather think that God's house is spoken of as a hospitable palace with many chambers.[32]

The idea that the soul passes through different stages of growth after the death of the body may play an important part in the Christian thinking of India. The doctrine of many births and deaths, extending over an infinitely long period, makes the Indian mind naturally inclined to accept it. It is difficult to understand how a soul can reach its final character in the course of its brief life here on earth and then remain all through eternity without any change or progress. Is it not much more likely that eternity will provide endless opportunities for bringing out the infinite possibilities hidden within the soul?

This doctrine of spiritual development after death has never been popular in the Christian Church for fear that men will put off to the next life their decision for God. Christian teachers have felt that if people realize that all eternity is before them for the growth of their soul, they may delay indefinitely their conversion. They may say to themselves that there will be plenty of time after their death to look after their soul. But this fear of delay need not be considered seriously. Recently a writer has shown that even the most terrible teaching about hell and the torments there for sinners has not made many men to repent. Through the ages people have been led to God not by the fear of what they might have to suffer in hell as by the joy of realizing His love.[33] This being the case, we may say that emphasis upon the possibilities of growth through eternity by itself will not make any one delay his decision. Men with a feeling for religion will decide for God immediately. If the

[31] John xiv. 2.
[32] J. H. Bernard, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. II, pp. 531–33.
[33] See Clement F. Rogers, *The Fear of Hell.*

possibility of growing in the future life is likely to make them postpone their decision, it simply means that in any case they would not have made that choice immediately.

The really spiritual man, on the other hand, knows that the sooner he starts, the better it will be for him. If he begins his journey to God here and now, at the time of his death he will have made some progress and this progress will be all to the good. He will have completed the first stage of the journey and to that extent will be nearer his goal. So he will welcome this opportunity of commencing immediately the long and arduous journey to God so as to be sure that he accomplishes as much as possible even in this short life.

The thought of infinite growth through eternity is apt to provide a most effective incentive for spiritual effort. Let us suppose there are two boys in school. One of them thinks only of his present work; he does his lessons regularly and has no thought of anything beyond completing his education in the school. The other boy is full of ambition. He thinks of completing his school and then of going on to college and then of doing still more advanced work. The second boy is likely to work far harder and to take his work far more seriously than the first. In the same way, the man who fully believes that eternity will provide unlimited chances for spiritual advance will probably exert himself far more here and now. Our job is no doubt with the present. We must get on with our immediate tasks and duties. Our vision of future possibilities should not cripple our present activities in any way. The outlook upon the future is only valuable as it provides a strong incentive to put our best into the work on hand. By all means let us make the most of the present life. Let us cram into it as much as we possibly can but do not let us forget that the spiritual journey which we commence in this life stretches on through eternity and that there are vistas of glory all along the way.

This realization of the infinite character of the spiritual life gives us at once a new insight into God. God's love and power are so great that we cannot hope to fathom them in our brief life here on earth. The more we understand about God the more there will be to understand. The goodness of God cannot be exhausted within the brief span of our human life. It is only as we live in His Presence all through eternity that little by little He will reveal Himself to us and show us by degrees the wonderful riches of His grace.

This Christian doctrine of growth through eternity is free

from some of the difficulties attached to the Hindu theory of transmigration. There is no thought here of various forms of embodied existence which range all the way from the lowliest types of plant life to the highest forms of heavenly existence. Also there are no rapid falls in spiritual grace and no sudden descents into misfortune. The Hindu doctrine of transmigration becomes a source of dread because of all these possibilities of different forms of existence and of rapid falls and sudden descents. The Christian doctrine avoids these difficulties while making it perfectly clear that the infinite possibilities of the soul can only be realized through eternity.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

THE Gospel of St. John has much to say about the teaching of Jesus on a life of communion with God. It is likely that the Fourth Evangelist understood the teaching of Jesus on this matter more quickly and more clearly than the writers of the Synoptic Gospels; he may have had a special aptitude for grasping it. What he thus came to know from the actual words of Jesus, which he had heard or which had been reported to him, he developed considerably in the light of his own meditation and personal experience. In this chapter we shall show how at different points the fuller and more developed thoughts of St. John are supported by the record we have in the Synoptic Gospels of the teaching of Jesus on this subject. The account we have in the Fourth Gospel of the life and teaching of Jesus is built around the framework of steel which the Synoptic Gospels provide.

God begins the Fellowship

God calls us first. "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him." "No man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of the Father."[1] "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 ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."[2] The initiative comes from Him. Out of His abundant grace He summons us from our absorption in the things of the world to love Him and to be devoted to Him; from a life of sin and suffering He beckons us to a life of communion and joy with Him.

The call of the twelve disciples by Jesus is like God's choice of us. Jesus Himself selected these twelve men; He went out of His way to call them from their normal occupations to follow Him. They were not a specially choice set of men. They had not much education or position or influence. They were not men of any unusual spiritual attainments; in many ways they

[1] John vi. 44, 65.
[2] John xv. 16, 19.

were quite ordinary folk, impulsive, dull-witted, ambitious, and one of them had in him the making of a traitor. And yet Jesus selected them from among all the people whom He met. He took them into His confidence and allowed them to share His most intimate thoughts and aspirations. He put before them the highest ideals possible and generously gave to them some of His own spiritual gifts. This was a great and wonderful privilege for them. They had not done anything to deserve it; it was given to them through the sheer love and generosity of their Master. Even after their choice they did not change immediately; their weaknesses and failures often showed; they could not grasp the spiritual aspects of the teaching and ministry of their *Guru;* their perception was still dense and dim. And yet Jesus bore with them patiently. He continued to the last to share with them His vision and His power, though they were often quite incapable of profiting by His companionship and all that it meant.

Our call likewise is determined by no special fitness on our part; He calls us because He loves us; we have not done anything to be worthy of His choice. We live completely disregarding His Presence and from the depths of our soul He summons us to follow Him. Often we do not respond. He calls every one; there is no partiality in Him. But some do not respond at all, others respond only partially and others respond with their whole heart and soul. We cannot say why some fail completely to respond and others respond but little. Each soul is a citadel; He enters only when it is willingly thrown open. Some throw their doors wide open, and others only a little open and yet others not at all. He does not force any door; that is not His way. He only enters when He is wanted and welcomed. We know that the capacity of people to respond to the call of God varies widely, from St. Paul with all his rich intellectual and spiritual gifts to the humble illiterate farmer in a little village church who tries his best to follow God and yet again and again fails because of his drink or his lack of moral control. We cannot say why there are such immense differences in men's capacity to heed the Divine call, which is issued without any partiality to every one in the world; this seems to be one of those ultimate questions which we cannot answer fully and clearly. But this much is clear that it is the duty of every one to respond to the call of God to the full measure of one's ability. I may not be a saint with extraordinary spiritual gifts for prayer and service and sacrifice but all that I have (however

little it may be) must be given to God. It is quite clear that each person must heed this wonderful, unmerited choice of God to the very best of his ability, however small or great.

We may note here that many of the saints and seers of India have caught a glimpse of this profound truth. The *Katha Upanishad,* written between the fifth and third century B.C., says:

> " Not by instruction may this Self be gained,
> Nor intellect, nor by much Scripture-learning:
> Whomso He chooses, by him He may be gained,
> To him this Self reveals His own true person." [3]

Nammalvar, the Tamil Vaishnava saint, says:

> " 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? " [4]

Manikka Vacakar, the Tamil *Saiva* saint, sings:

> " To me, mean as I was, with no good thing, Thou didst grant grace,
> That I, with mind erewhile embruted,—pure one!—should
> Become commingling love, in soul-subduing rapture melt!
> Thou cam'st in grace on this same earth, didst show Thy mighty feet
> To me who lay mere slave,—meaner than any dog,—
> Essential grace more precious than a mother's love! " [5]

Fellowship with God through Knowledge

Wherever there is love, the presence of the beloved is necessary. A child wants his father, a bride her bridegroom and a man his friend. There may often be love in separation, but love is generally kept alive by the presence of the object of love. A friend told me that when he was in America his aged father, living in India, wrote to him by every mail, " I cannot stand this separation. Take the next boat and come back to India." Whoever loves God wants the Presence of God. We cannot

[3] J. N. Rawson, *The Katha Upanishad,* p. 112.
[4] Nammalvar, *Tiru-Voi-Moli,* 1, 7, 7.
[5] G. U. Pope, *Tiruvacagam,* p. 5.

love God with our whole heart and mind if we never see Him and if we are always separated from Him. It is in the immediate Presence of God that love for Him thrives. When we are united with God there is joy and when we are separated from Him there is sorrow. In our study of the inner life of Jesus we have seen how much the Presence of the Father meant to Him day after day.

Jesus must have been also familiar with the words of the Hebrew *Bhaktas:*

> "As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
> So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
> My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
> When shall I come and appear before God?" [6]

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and having thee there is naught on earth that I desire." [7]

Christ's beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" [8] shows how much importance He attached to the direct vision of God. The glorious privilege of seeing God is reserved for those who are clean of heart. Inner purity, that highest of virtues, will receive the priceless reward of the vision of God.

The desire to realize clearly the Presence of God is found again and again in the religious literature of India. The *Bhaktas* declare that they want God and God only; not even His highest gifts are desirable. He is greater than anything He can give. If we crave for His gifts we may be content with them and not realize Him and His love. We want to know Him as He is, feel clearly His love and enjoy fully His Presence.

When Swami Vivekananda was about seventeen years old he felt the stirrings in him of an irrepressible urge to find God. One day he went to Devendranath Tagore who was held in great veneration as a religious teacher and eagerly asked him, "Have you seen God?" The answer which he received did not satisfy him and his discontent and anxiety increased. He heard at that time that Rāmakrishna was to be found in the house of one of his disciples at Calcutta. He went to him and asked him the question he had put to the other religious teachers whom he had met—"Have you seen God?" Rāmakrishna's reply was quick and certain: "I see Him as I see you, only

[6] Psalm xlii. 1–2.
[7] Psalm lxxiii. 25, as translated by J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament in its Historical Development,* p. 390.
[8] Matthew v. 8.

far more clearly." "Can you make me see Him?" said the young spiritual aspirant. "Yes, I can" said Rāmakrishna in reply. From that day Vivekananda put himself under the spiritual instruction of Rāmakrishna, learnt from him all that he could and spread his message far and wide.

Utpaladeva says: "To me, this, in brief, is the definition of happiness and misery; listen, my Lord: union with you is happiness; and separation from you, misery." [9]

Rabindranath Tagore says: "That I want thee, only thee—let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry—I want thee, only thee.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is—I want thee, only thee." [10]

Swami Vivekananda says: "In *Bhakti* there is also no place for begging or bargaining with God. The idea of asking God for anything is sacrilege to a *Bhakta*. He will not pray for health or wealth or even to go to heaven.

One who wants to love God, to be a *Bhakta*, must make a bundle of all these desires and leave them outside the door and then enter. He who wants to enter the realms of light must make a bundle of all 'shopmaking' religion and cast it away before he can pass the gates.

It is not that you do not get what you pray for; you get everything, but it is too low, vulgar, a beggar's religion. 'Fool indeed, is he, who living on the banks of the Ganges, digs a little well for water. Fool indeed is the man who, coming to a mine of diamonds, begins to search for glass beads.' These prayers for health and wealth and material prosperity are not *Bhakti*. They are the lowest form of *Karma*. *Bhakti* is a higher thing. We are striving to get into the presence of the King of kings. We cannot get there in a beggar's dress." [11]

The desire to realize God clearly is quite natural. However much we may read about a person or hear about him we are not satisfied. Our knowledge of him becomes complete only when we see him actually and move with him closely. This is quite natural and reasonable. Frequent letters from the beloved

[9] V. Raghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, p. 241.
[10] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, p. 29.
[11] Quoted in G. K. Chettur, *Altars of Silence*, p. 103.

can never take the place of the actual presence of the beloved. Love is satisfied with nothing less than the real company of the lover. When Philip spoke to Jesus and said, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us," he was giving expression to a passionate longing which many saints have had. Jesus did not rebuke this longing but on the other hand He proceeded to point out that by actually seeing Himself (the Incarnate One) Philip saw God.[12]

The vision of God is not vouchsafed to every one and at all times. So earnest Christians have developed elaborate methods of meditation and have followed them for months and for years with unceasing effort and industry. The earnestness which is needed on the part of the devotee for a vision of God has been constantly emphasized by the religious teachers of India. Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa said:

"The Lord Jesus was one day walking along the sea-shore when a devotee approached Him and asked Him: 'Lord, how can one attain God?' The Lord directly descended into the sea with the inquirer whom He plunged under the water. After a short time He released him, and raising him by the arm asked him, 'How didst thou feel?' The devotee replied, 'I felt as though my last moment were come—the condition was desperate.' Upon this the Lord said, 'Thou shalt see the Father when thy yearning for Him will be as intense as thy yearning for a breath of air just now.'" [13]

I have not been able to trace from what source Rāmakrishna got this story. It does not, of course, occur in the New Testament. Though not authentic, it is an excellent comment on our Lord's first great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." [14]

Three objections, generally made against the attainment of a knowledge of God through mystic experience, may be considered here.

1. It may be said that all this effort and striving of the mystics is wasted time and strength. The elaborate methods of meditation, the time which is needed for following them and the strange experiences of sights and sounds which result from them are all absolutely unnecessary. Men who pursue these methods of meditation could be doing much better work if they devoted

[12] John xiv. 8, 9.
[13] Quoted by G. K. Chettur, *Altars of Silence*, p. 63.
[14] Mark xii. 30.

themselves to the service of the suffering and the needy. All this endeavour to see God as He is is futile and a vain expenditure of time and energy which could have been devoted to better purposes.

Take the way in which we breathe air. All of us are breathing air all the time without being aware of it and yet doctors tell us that the best health is maintained only when fresh air is breathed and breathed properly. Those who aspire after sound health are not content with breathing anywhere and in any way. They look for places where there is fresh air and by regular and careful breathing exercises try to inhale as much of this fresh air as possible until their lungs get filled with it. While every earnest devotee knows God and enjoys Him in a sense, the expert in prayer seeks by special methods to know God more clearly and to realize Him more fully than the others. His special methods of prayer and meditation have as much value to him as the breathing exercises have to the aspirant after good health.

I am writing this chapter at Kodaikanal, a beautiful hill-station 7,000 feet high, not far from the city of Madura in South India. From my window I can see on the loftiest hill in this neighbourhood the buildings of an observatory, with their white movable domes for the free movement of the large telescopes. This is the only solar observatory in India. In this place a staff of scientific men are constantly at work, observing the surface of the sun and gathering facts about the various occurrences on it which they are able to note. The sun is obvious to every one: even a small child can see it; we all know something about it and profit by it daily. And yet it is necessary that experts should work for years together studying the movements of the sun and adding to the stock of human knowledge about it. We are not content with what all of us see and know of the sun every day. We want specialists, well-trained and adequately equipped, to devote their whole time to observing it under all circumstances and to record their observations in the most accurate and scientific way possible. Such time and money and strength as are spent for this purpose are not regarded as wasted; they are considered absolutely necessary for the progress of scientific knowledge. The mystics likewise who shut themselves off, for longer or shorter periods, from the busy world of human needs and sorrows in order that they might reach a clearer knowledge of God are just as absolutely necessary to the progress of religion and the advance of human welfare.

2. It may also be said that all these efforts to see God are futile, for He is Spirit and has no form. When men declare that they see God, they only see something which is in their own mind. What actually happens is that all they know about God—what they have been taught, what they have read in books, what their conscience has told them, what they have learnt from Nature—appears before their mind in the form of a picture. They are not actually seeing God; they are only seeing what they think God is like.[15] This may be perfectly true and yet even this is of great value. Those who have not gone to Europe see a map of Europe and think that they know something about it when they see the mountains and the rivers, the plains and the towns marked on the map. The idea which millions of people have of Europe is only derived from such maps. When some of them actually go there they may have quite a different experience. The large city of London, with its teeming millions, its huge buildings, its heavy traffic, its broad roads, its narrow, winding lanes and its busy life is nothing like the little black square which they saw on their maps. And yet the little black square did help them to know something of London before they actually reached it; it enabled them to realize where exactly London was and to know that it was much bigger than all the other cities in England which were indicated by tiny dots. The visions which men have of God serve the same purpose. We do not and cannot know Him actually as He is for He is Spirit and has no form but they are of some help in bringing Him clearly before our minds.

Those of us who are artistic by temperament and have strong imaginations have such visions in moments of prayer. Others may come to know God not through visions but through perception which is as clear as vision. If God is Spirit, as we believe, our spirits can actually come into touch with Him; in some definite, clear way our spirits can know Him and commune with Him. Vedanta Desika, the Hindu philosopher, knew clearly that God is a Spirit and that He has no body or form which can become visible to our eyes, physical or spiritual. So he spoke about a perception *(Pratyksha)* of God which is as vivid as vision. He says: "Steady recollection is therefore specified by the term 'vision.' The equality between recollection and vision is due to the fact that, like vision, recollection is extremely clear. Recollection becomes the equivalent of vision by brooding thought as in the case of those who are filled with

[15] William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, First Series, pp. 91–93.

fear, passion and so forth. For example, 'in every tree I see Ram clothed with bark and deer skin and bearing a bow like the god of Death carrying his noose in his hand.' Likewise 'she is seen as if inseparably bound and reflected.'" [16] In his first illustration Vedanta Desika refers to the experience of Maricha, a servant of Ravana. Maricha was very much afraid of Rama, having once been fiercely dealt with by him and always saw him everywhere. The second illustration is taken from *Malati Madhava,* a drama by Bhava Bhuti, in which the hero Madhava sees his beloved Malati always in his mind; she is, as it is quaintly put, closely sewn up with him by the thread of continuous thought.

Mr. M. Sanjiva Rau, a Brahman convert, says: "This desire to see God, and to have fellowship with those who have seen God, is deep-seated in the soul of India. This reminds me of a conversation which my mother had with me twenty-eight years ago when I visited her for the first time after my conversion and baptism in 1902. Mother asked, 'Child, why did you do this? What happened?' And I replied 'God Himself laid hold of me and took me away—I could not resist Him, I had to yield.' Immediately mother asked the question '*Did you see God?*' I replied 'No, but mother, have you ever seen me, or have I ever seen you? You have seen this body wherein I dwell; but the "I" who speaks with this mouth, who sees with these eyes, you have not seen at all, cannot see at all. That physical body of yours which I see, that alone is not you. You that love me, you that have agonized and cried on my behalf, I cannot see. You and I though unseen each to the other, yet are very real, very living in our mutual relations which are very intimate. So also although we cannot see God with these eyes of flesh, God is very real and living to us and we can have intimate relations with Him.'" [17]

Mrs. Lindbergh describes in her book, *Listen! the Wind,* her flight around the North Atlantic Ocean in 1933. When going through the air in the plane she and her husband could only keep touch with the rest of the world through a radio. They got into radio communication with a German ship, *Westfalen.* After a message the ship's operator broke off abruptly, saying that he was able to see the plane; when Mrs. Lindbergh looked out of the plane she saw the ship steaming ahead with the men on deck. Her excitement when she saw face to face this ship

[16] Vedanta Desika, *Tatparya Chandrika.*
[17] M. Sanjiva Rau, *Types of Religious Consciousness,* p. 28.

with which she had been communicating before, through the radio, was great. "I held up my arm and waved frantically, conscious of that supreme thrill of communication. It is the most exciting thing in life anyway, whether you find it in a book or in conversation or in the understanding of two minds. But this, the momentary synthesis of two kinds of communication, was almost unbreakable in its intensity. All night and all day I had been able to contact people only through my fingers, and my ears, like someone who is blind. But now, suddenly, I could see. A veil had dropped away. I could see, face to face. One of those men waving on deck was the radio operator I had been talking to. I raised my arm again—wonderful!" [18] This gives us some idea of the joy which the mystics have in a vision of God and in feeling that they have seen with their own eyes the God of whom they had been thinking a lot, so to speak, in the dark.

3. Many Western scholars speak as if *Samadhi* in which all outer experiences drop off is a state of mere vacancy. The saints of India have always held that in that state they come in contact with God more clearly than in their normal waking life. Sādhu Sundar Singh relates how when he underwent a long fast (in imitation of our Lord's forty days' fast) all his physical powers practically ceased to function; he could not move his hands, he could not speak, he could not hear properly, his eyes were so dim that he could not see clearly and yet his spirit was most actively engaged in communion with the Spirit of God.[19]

The experience of Helen Keller has some bearing on this point. She has neither sight nor hearing but she has been trained to use her other avenues of sense-perception such as touch, taste and smell. Unlike others similarly handicapped, she is able to explain in books and lectures the workings of her mind. It may be thought that because two of the most important channels of communication with the outer world are closed to her, her life would be less full than the life of other people. But one who knows her well says of her: "Since she has lived in silence and darkness she has achieved tranquillity of spirit. She has set her thoughts in order, and I would describe her brain as a magnificent instrument that is controlled by an adept." [20] This shows clearly that even if some of the normal

[18] Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Listen! the Wind*, p. 225.
[19] B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Sadhu*, pp. 25, 26.
[20] *Helen Keller's Journal*, p. 7.

experiences which reach the mind through the eye and the ear are lacking, the spirit can function just as effectively as, perhaps even more effectively than, when all the sense-avenues are open. From Helen Keller's experience we may gather that the spirit need not necessarily be hampered by the closing up of any or all of the channels of sense-perception and that the life of the spirit may with some be at its best when the sense-activities are reduced to their minimum.

The desire then to know God clearly is a normal and natural desire. The time and strength which are involved in following different methods of meditation are not wasted and the results may vary according to the mental make-up of different individuals. All of us can come to know God, some more clearly than others, some through visions and some through knowledge which is as clear as vision. Wherever there is real love for God, this desire to see Him and to realize Him will always exist and it cannot be ignored or neglected without the quality of the spiritual life really becoming the poorer.

Fellowship with God through character

As a heavy log may block up a stream so that water ceases to flow through it, failure to keep the commandments of God will block up the free flow of God's life into our lives. There is a great deal about the keeping of commandments in the Gospel of St. John. "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." [21] The keeping of commandments does not mean the formal observance of laws and regulations: it means the carrying out of the Father's will in love. He who abides in love keeps the commandments. A loving son obeys his father not because he is afraid of his father, nor because he forces himself to obey, but because it is a joy for him to do what his father wants him to do. He does not strive; he does not fret. There is nothing to compel him. In a spirit of joy he does whatever is likely to please his father. So should a *Bhakta*. He should abide in the Father's love and keep His commandments. As his heart is filled with love for God it is a source of great joy to him to make God real to other men and to help them to come close to God.

In fullness of love there is always ethical conformity. In order that there might be communion between God and man,

[21] John xv. 9, 10. Cf. John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24.

there must be complete harmony of will between man and God. Man must desire the things that God wants him to do. We know that this is one of the most difficult things in the world. We know what God wants us to do and yet we are too weak to do it and that erects a barrier between us and God. Instead of the relationship of love, we stray away from God and are separated from Him. And so it is necessary that at the very outset we should realize that there should be this complete conformity between our will and the will of God. In the words of Tulsidas:

"Grant me, O Master, by thy grace
To follow all the good and pure:
To be content with simple things:
To use my fellows not as means but ends:
To serve them stalwartly, in thought, word, deed:
Never to utter word of hatred or of shame:
To cast away all selfishness and pride:
To speak no ill of others:
To have a mind at peace,
Set free from care, and led astray from thee
Neither by happiness nor woe:
Set thou my feet upon this path,
And keep me steadfast in it,
Thus only shall I please thee, serve thee right." [22]

God calls us, summoning us from our worldly occupations and interests to live with Him, to enjoy His love and to do His will. Having called us He does not leave us to our devices. He abides in us and we abide in Him. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me." [23] "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." [24] The word "abide" with this meaning is peculiar to St. John; he only uses it to express our fellowship with God. It shows the enduring nature of our experience. Our fellowship with God is not momentary; it does not occur to-day and cease to-morrow; it does not occur this year and end the next; it does not occur in youth and cease in old age. The relationship is permanent. It lasts through the storm and stress of sorrow as well as through periods of exaltation. It helps the growing youth; it helps the middle-aged man as he settles down

[22] M. K. Gandhi, *Songs from Prison*, p. 52.
[23] John xv. 4.
[24] John vi. 56.

to an active life; it helps the old man as his powers of body and mind decay.

The teaching here in the Gospel of St. John brings out beautifully that both God and man work together. Man does not merely make an effort, search after God with a passionate longing and make himself as fit as he possibly can to receive the love of God. If this were all that religion meant, it would not be very different from morality; it would be simply another way in which man by his own industry seeks to better himself. But religion is far more than man's effort. God all the time helps us. His spirit flows into our life bringing with it knowledge and power. His love encompasses us giving us a sense of security, peace and joy. There can be real fellowship only when there is such a relationship between God and man, God calling man, continually pouring into him spiritual power and ceaselessly helping him in his daily life and man responding to this willing and ready help of the Father with all his own feeble efforts. If man's effort is lacking there cannot be genuine progress; if God's help is not given all man's endeavour will be futile. There should be continual co-operation between God and man. This is what is meant by the words, "Abide in me and I in you."

In the Gospel of St. John God's relationship to man and man's relationship to God are connected together closely: "Abide in me and I in you." While in the Synoptic Gospels we do not find in any one verse such a linking up of God's love for man and man's love for God, we do find both the ideas emphasized. The first great commandment of our Lord shows us man's duty to God.[25] God's response to man is also set forth with unmistakable clearness. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"[26]

The recognition of the due necessity for man's effort, in response to God's first call and ceaseless help, lies at the heart of religion. There can be no real fellowship unless both God and man co-operate. Without God's help man's strivings after a

[25] Matthew xxii. 37, 38.
[26] Matthew vii. 7–11.

good life are only another method of ethical culture and do not yield the highest results. If man only depends on God, believes that whatever he thinks and feels and does is God's work and for that reason does not exert himself in any way, then too the results are far from satisfactory. Many people of weak will and feeble character have led immoral lives claiming Divine right to do so. Wherever serious moral effort is lacking, licence and immorality are found in the name of piety.

Some of the saints of India have realized that for true religion there should be both God's love for man and man's love for God. This is one of the central and fundamental truths of spiritual experience. Ramalinga Swami says:

> "Thou hast made me wakeful and possessed me as thy own child.
> Thou hast revealed unto me supreme secrets of knowledge divine and hast written in my heart unwritten *Vedas*.
> O Purity-Light! Thou art in me, I am in thee ever inseparable in oneness." [27]

Nammalvar says: "In return for thy great and good gift—thy mingling in my spirit—I have wholly yielded up my spirit to thee." [28]

Fellowship with God through Service

Once a little girl of four turned to her mother and said, "Mother, do you love yourself?" and then the girl went on to say, "I love myself and I love everybody and I love the whole world." This is a good paraphrase of the second commandment of Jesus: "Love thy neighbour as thyself." A Christian ought to love everybody and especially his neighbour, which is indeed very difficult. Jesus spoke the parable of the good Samaritan [29] and explained who a neighbour was. The Samaritan, who looked after the poor, wounded traveller so lovingly, has been the ideal which Christian social servants have followed through the ages. The traveller, who had been attacked by robbers and left half-dead, was a perfect stranger. Two religious leaders (a priest and a Levite) took no notice of him. Their conception of religion was worship of God in the temple according to carefully prescribed ceremonies. They had no idea that God required that they should look after this poor, lonely

[27] Shuddhananda Bharati, *Mahatma Ramalingam*, p. 9.
[28] *Tiru-Voi-Moli*, ii. 3, 4.
[29] Luke x. 25–37.

stranger. But the Samaritan delayed his journey, carefully bandaged up the wounds of the traveller and provided for his immediate needs until he got well. In describing what would take place on the day of judgment, Jesus laid great stress on the need to help the sick and the suffering. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." [30]

In the Gospel of St. John the connexion between a *Bhakta* and God is described as that between a plant and its branches. He who abides in God must bear fruit. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." [31]

God abides in us only as long as we bear fruit. If we bear fruit He purges us until we bear more fruit. If we do not bear fruit at all He casts us off and the fellowship comes to an end. We must love men if God is to abide in us. We must love the sick and the suffering and help them. We must love the poor and the down-trodden and work for their uplift. We must help to reorganize society so that every one has the maximum of happiness and the minimum of suffering. We must love those who have gone astray and fallen and help them to mend their ways. We must love those who are troubled by doubts and difficulties and think for them. Only then God will abide in us. A branch that does not bear fruit is of no use. A Christian who does not love men is of no use. God does not live in him. His fellowship with God comes to an end.

In this respect Hindu *Bhaktas* have failed. They have not, on the whole, realized that love for God involves the unselfish

[30] Matthew xxv. 34–36.
[31] John xv. 1–8.

devoted service of the suffering and the needy. As long ago as the tenth century A.D. the *Bhagavata Purana* complained of this failure of Hindu *Bhaktas* to love men and to minister to their needs as an essential part of their duty to God. "Not working for the welfare of others, sages generally, O God, desire their own salvation, and practise silent meditation in solitude. Leaving the pitiable folk of the world, I do not desire deliverance for my single self. And for this world, vagrant in misery, I do not see any other refuge except you." [32] Recently Sir S. Rādhākrishnan, who interprets the highest ideals of India in the most attractive light possible, has said that the saints of India have had the weakness of keeping to themselves their spiritual experiences and not sharing them with others who need to be helped. "Some of our holy men are inclined to become creatures set apart, beings who take flight from the temporal in order to cling to the heart of the eternal. If, in our eagerness to seek after God, we ignore the interests of humanity, we may produce a few giants but we will not elevate the race. We have shown how high individuals can rise by spiritual culture and how low a race can fall by its one-sidedness." [33]

But at the same time we do find in modern India a new stress on the need for service. There is a beautiful incident in the life of Maharishi Devandranath Tagore (the father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore); in his autobiography, a book of great value, the Maharishi himself tells the story. Once he went up to the Himalayas to spend time quietly with God in prayer and meditation. After about two years as he wandered among the hills he saw a pure and clear mountain stream and he said to himself, "What a lovely stream and how pure!" Then the thought came to him that this stream had to go down to the plains to get muddy and soiled in order to fertilize the earth, and he felt a call within himself. A voice seemed to speak to him and to say: "You must also become lowly like this river. You must go down to the plains and there mingle with men and help them." The Maharishi resisted this call as much as he could. With great trouble he had got away from men; he had found the world too difficult to live in; it had continually distracted his communion with God. And now there was an inner call to go into the world and to serve it. When he went home his conflict continued. No song would come to his lips; his soul

[32] *Bhagavata Purana*, VII, ix. 49, translated by V. Raghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, p. 135.
[33] S. Rādhākrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 57.

lost its inner peace. The next day he still found himself in that condition and finally decided to leave Simla. At once the clouds lifted and he found himself settling down to his usual state of serenity.[34] It must be said, however, that this has not been the characteristic attitude of all Hindu saints. Most of them have preferred to live on the mountain top, there enjoying undisturbed fellowship with God. They have regarded the world as something to be avoided. Whatever may have been the attitude of the other great saints of India, this beautiful episode in the life of Maharishi Devandranath Tagore brings before us an important point: it is that our devotion to God must find an outlet in practical service of man.

His son Rabindranath Tagore has made a powerful plea for service:

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow."[35]

Perhaps the greatest social servant in the world to-day is Mahātma Gandhi. The burden of the seventy millions of outcastes in India lies heavily on him. To break down the barriers, which keep them separated in dirty quarters allowed to do only menial work, he has taken some of them into his *Ashrama*. He and his co-workers often do the work of scavenging so as to show to people that there is nothing degrading about such work. He himself lives in the simplest style and is clad with only a loin cloth like one of them. Seeing that drink ruins millions of outcaste families, prohibition is in the forefront of the reforms which he advocates. To supplement their meagre income he

[34] Devandranath Tagore, *Autobiography*, pp. 261–263.
[35] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, p. 8.

has emphasized the need for reviving the cottage industries of India. He has pleaded that all the Hindu temples should be thrown open for their worship. Because of his enormous influence these reforms which he has advocated such as prohibition, the revival of cottage industries and Temple-Entry are being introduced on a wide scale all over India. Hundreds of workers have caught the inspiration of his ideals and are working selflessly and faithfully in all parts of the country.

In 1930 when he was imprisoned in Yervada Jail, Poona, he translated into English for the sake of his English friends some of the hymns which he constantly uses in his prayer and meditation. These hymns have been adapted for the press by Mr. John S. Hoyland and published under the title, *Songs from Prison*. Many of these hymns, drawn from old Indian sources, hold up the ideal of service. We may quote here one or two specimens:

"What words, what speech,
Can tell the joy of those who know our God?

Their life is lived
Not for themselves, but for the need of men:

In others' service
They suffer arduous adversity:

Mercy towards all that lives—
This is their special substance:

They give no second thought
To what may benefit themselves:

Their bliss they find in others' bliss alone:
And all unknowingly
They hand to other men the draught immortal." [36]

"This and this alone
Is true religion—
To serve thy brethren:

This is sin above all other sin,
To harm thy brethren:

In such a faith is happiness,
In lack of it is misery and pain:

[36] M. K. Gandhi, *Songs from Prison*, p. 143.

Blessed is he who swerveth not aside
From this strait path:
Blessed is he whose life is lived
Thus ceaselessly in serving God:

By bearing others' burdens,
And so alone,
Is life, true life, to be attained:

Nothing is hard to him who, casting self aside,
Thinks only this—
How may I serve my fellow-men?" [37]

Once a young man looking troubled came to Swami Vivekananda and said: "Swamiji, I find it very difficult to meditate. I shut my room, and close my eyes. But still the mind is not able to concentrate." The Swami sharply replied, "Young man, what right have you to shut yourself in a room, when the land is stricken with famine and suffering? Open your eyes and heart to the misery of the poor. That alone will lead to salvation." [38]

The Rāmakrishna Mission, which Swami Vivekananda started, has now become a powerful organization with its branches all over India. The unselfish and devoted service which the *Sannyasis* of this mission are rendering wherever there is distress and suffering is worthy of our highest respect and admiration. But the philosophical basis of their service is quite curious. We fail to understand how on this basis there could be such a wide and devoted ministry. The basis is explained by Swami Vivekananda with characteristic vigour. "We have always heard it preached, 'Love one another.' What for? That doctrine was preached, but the explanation is here. Why should I love every one? Because they and I are one. Why should I love my brother? Because he and I are one. There is this oneness, the solidarity of the whole universe. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings that ever lived, all have various bodies, but are the one soul. Through all mouths, you eat; through all hands, you work; through all eyes, you see. You enjoy health in millions of bodies, you are suffering diseases in millions of bodies." [39] This is the application of the *Advaita* doctrine to social service. It reduces finally the motive

[37] M. K. Gandhi, *Songs from Prison*, p. 66.
[38] Quoted in G. K. Chettur, *Altars of Silence*, p. 119.
[39] Quoted in G. K. Chettur, *Altars of Silence*, p. 75.

of social service to be the love of oneself. Can the highest social service be possible from such motive? Only when man forgets himself entirely can his ministry of others be truly helpful. Here Swami Vivekananda pleads that others should be helped because they are really identical with ourselves. In other words, self-love and not self-denial is urged as the motive for social work. Such work becomes tainted at its source and its moral quality suffers accordingly.

Fellowship with God through Suffering

The willingness to suffer is always implicit in love. Suppose a man says I love God and yet is not willing to suffer for Him, then that claim to love is not real. Suppose a mother says I love my child and yet does not look after it in illness, then that claim to love is not true. A friend of Sādhu Sundar Singh tells this about him: "We had been some hundreds of miles back into the interior, and had been forced to pass through some very unhealthy country. Sundar Singh was attacked by fever day after day and also by acute indigestion. At length one night as we were trudging along, he became so bad that he could no longer walk and fell almost fainting on the road. Our way ran through the mountains and there was a bank by the side of it. To this I dragged him and set him against it in such a way that his head might be higher than his feet. He was trembling with the chill which precedes the fever, and his face was drawn with the pain caused by his stomach trouble. I was anxious because we were alone and on foot and the weather was very cold. Bending close to his ears, I asked him how he was feeling. I knew that he would never complain, but I was unprepared for the answer which I received. He opened his eyes and smiled absently, then in a voice almost too low to be heard said: 'I am very happy: how sweet it is to suffer for His sake!' This spirit is the key-note of his life and the dominating influence in all he does." [40]

Fellowship with God, then, takes place through knowledge, through character, through service and through suffering. I will give an illustration. I know a father and his son between whom there is almost an ideal relation of fellowship. The son is a highly trained medical man but as his father is very old, he has practically given up all ideas of his own career and has devoted himself wholly to looking after his father during the last years of his life. They both live and sleep in the same room

[40] C. F. Andrews, *Sādhu Sundar Singh*, pp. 104, 105.

and the son is near his father both day and night. The son does not like to be separated from his father. He does not think primarily of his own comfort or convenience. He is always ready to serve his father even though it may at times mean considerable sacrifice to himself. Here we have fellowship between two persons maintained in the immediate presence of each other through service and sacrifice.

Fellowship with God but not Identity

Communion with God is not the same as the realization of the identity of the human soul with God. Many Hindu saints following the way of *Advaita* have aspired to reach the state of Ecstasy *(Samadhi)* in which they lose the sense of their own separate existence and realize themselves as one with the Divine. Such experience is not Christian. The highest bliss of the Christian life consists in communion between the human spirit and the Divine spirit. Christian saints often experience Ecstasy *(Samadhi)*. They lose all touch with the outer world; for hours they are absorbed in their vision. They do not know what happens to them; even if people prick them with a sharp point of a knife they are not aware of it; they forget the need for food and drink; so deeply are they immersed in their experience of God. They are not merely in a state of blank. Their physical powers and activities are, it is true, in abeyance. They do not see what happens around them; they do not hear the sounds which are heard where they are. But their spirits are active and alert and they are closely in communion with the Eternal Spirit.

We note that some Hindu *Bhaktas* also have not been content with the sense of identity between themselves and God. They have realized that such experience of identity is futile. The Divine Spirit is so much higher and nobler than the human spirit that it is impossible to speak of the Divine Spirit and the human spirit as being entirely one and the same. In the hymn entitled "Siva Panchastavi," Halayudha says: "If that identity with you which is said to follow the breaking away of bondage, for men, is liberation, what is it for, O Siva? Let it be thrown into the desolate well. You are my Master and, if I am your servant for all time, that is indeed laudable, O Siva. Servants do not desire their Masters' state." [41]

In the teaching of Jesus there is no room whatever for saying that the human soul is identical with the Divine Soul. Again and again Jesus states clearly and emphatically that the Father

[41] V. Raghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, p. 301.

is greater than Himself. "Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I."[42] "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, 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."[43] "For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."[44] "No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day."[45] "Jesus therefore said, 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."[46] "My Father, which hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."[47] It is significant that in the Fourth Gospel, which holds up such an exalted idea of Jesus, there should occur so many statements of Jesus to indicate that God is far greater than Himself. It is not likely that a thought which occurs so frequently in the Fourth Gospel is only one of the comments of the Evangelist. We may regard it as quite certain that Jesus thus considered Himself as only an instrument in the Father's hand. It was His joy and His duty to submit Himself to the Father. From the prayer which He offered during the critical hour in the garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His crucifixion, we know how He struggled to get into line with the Father's will. In the Synoptic Gospels we see many evidences of His submission, heartfelt and entire, to the will of His Father.

To understand aright the attitude of Jesus to God we must know something of the Hebrew conception of God on which He had been brought up. From the earliest days God was considered by the writers of the Old Testament as a holy God. At first the word "holy" meant dangerous and unapproachable. Sinai was regarded as a holy mountain and careful arrangements were made that the people should not touch it. The Sabbath was regarded as holy; any one who profaned it had to be put to death.[48] Consecrated bread could be eaten only

[42] John xiv. 28.
[43] John v. 19.
[44] John vi. 38.
[45] John vi. 44.
[46] John viii. 28.
[47] John x. 29.
[48] Exodus xxxi. 14.

by the priests at the appointed time; because it was holy it could not be eaten by others. All these holy objects were held in great fear. They were considered as dangerous to ordinary people as the switch board of a modern electrical power-house might be to a child. When God was considered holy it was meant that He was aloof and inviolable and that no one could approach Him without risk and danger. As Joshua said, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgression nor your sins." [49]

Gradually the meaning of the word "holy" changed. It began to indicate majesty and grandeur and power. When God was described as holy it did not mean that He was a dangerous Being but it meant that He was full of majesty and glory. He was not unapproachable but He was great in power and righteous in character.

> "Thy way, O God, is holiness:
> Who is a great God like unto God?" [50]

This meaning is well illustrated in the "Holiness Code" in Leviticus, Chapters xvii to xxvi. This code seems to have been prepared in Babylon from 597 B.C. to 444 B.C. when Israel was in exile. It sets forth various moral and ritual rules for the Jews. The reason for all these regulations is repeatedly stated to be this: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." [51] There are moral commands prohibiting child-sacrifice, adultery and sexual perversion; along with these are also found ceremonial rules reminding us of the old regulations connected with holy objects. This writer regards God as the one God, omnipresent and righteous. He is holy in an ethical sense and He demands from men absolutely righteous living. He is no longer content with merely ceremonial purity; He requires of them cleanliness of heart and purity of action.

The prophets were mainly responsible for this new conception of God. They took the old word "holy" which the people knew and put into it an altogether different content. Isaiah of Jerusalem, who wrote the first part of Isaiah about 738 B.C., said, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward." [52] "But the Lord of hosts is

[49] Joshua xxiv. 19.
[50] Psalm lxxvii. 13 (marginal translation).
[51] Leviticus xix. 2.
[52] Isaiah i. 4.

exalted in judgement, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness." [53] He thus connected up the idea of God with personal morality and social righteousness. Isaiah of Babylon, who wrote the latter part of Isaiah between 546 and 539 B.C., carried still further this interpretation of the word "holy" along ethical lines. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." [54]

The idea which Jesus had of God was that of a righteous God, possessed of majesty, power and grandeur. He is far above men and His thoughts are not as men's thoughts. His knowledge is not circumscribed like the knowledge of men. He knows the past, the present and the future. There is no limit to His power. The whole universe is under His control. Man is but a tiny, limited and weak creature, dependent wholly upon God for his daily sustenance, for his intellectual knowledge and for his moral achievement. There can be no question, then, of there being any identity between God and man. Man can never, by even the highest stretch of his spiritual effort, become one with God. There is a real spiritual and moral gulf between God and man. Though man is of the image of God, possessing some of His qualities, he can never rise to complete oneness with Him in His grandeur, majesty, purity and righteousness.

Fellowship with God and the Indian Church

It is a great pity that in preaching the Gospel in India the doctrine of communion with God has not received the emphasis which it has in the New Testament and which the Indian understands so readily and from which he profits so willingly. I speak about this doctrine to audiences of Hindus and of Christians at different times. I have been impressed by the ease with which Hindu audiences understand it and the interest which they take in it, whereas most Christian audiences respond but little as they have been brought up altogether on a different Theology.

The doctrine of fellowship with God is of primary importance not only in the Gospels but also in the history of the Christian Church. Many of the greatest Christian saints like St. Paul,

[53] Isaiah v. 16.
[54] Isaiah lvii. 15. H. E. Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 209–213.

St. John, St. Augustine, St. Francis, St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross and others lived for and in God. Their experience of such fellowship has inspired millions of others to follow their example with varying degrees of success.

It may be asked why the experience of fellowship with God has not been emphasized in India as much as it ought to have been. If it is found abundantly described in the New Testament and many of the great Christian saints have had it, it is but natural to expect that in preaching the Gospel in India considerable attention would have been given to it. As the devout Indian is particularly eager to attain this kind of experience, it is even more natural that such attention would have been given. Some reasons may be suggested to show why missionaries and Christian workers in India have failed to emphasize the idea of fellowship with God as much as they should have.

1. In European Christianity as a whole the idea of communion with God has not been the central doctrine or experience. The stream of such doctrine has now never ceased to flow in the Christian Church from the time of Jesus, John and Paul to the modern day. Though a deep stream, it has flowed not so much through the main fields as in out-of-the-way places. The bulk of religious people in the Christian Church in Europe have not profited by this rich, deep stream. Some of the highest mystical ideas are found in sermons which Meister Eckhart and Tauler preached, probably to large congregations. As to whether all the people in the congregations understood what the preachers said is questionable. The Society of Friends have built their Theology around such ideas as that of God dwelling in the depths of the soul and guiding it as the inner light. But their numbers have never been large, though many of them have been men and women of remarkable piety and power. It is safe to say that the bulk of Christian people in Europe have not given the central place to communion with God and Christ. Christian missionaries naturally taught in India the doctrines which they themselves had learnt in the West.

2. Again, the majority of missionaries have not had the type of mind which enables them to have such experience or to appreciate it. I remember a conversation with Dr. Farquhar at Oxford during the last years of his life. I had taken a distinguished English writer, who had made a special study of the mystical experience of the Christian saints, to see him. In my presence he expressed to this writer his regret that personally he had not been able to understand much that was written and

spoken in India about union with God. His remark made it quite clear that he felt that the usefulness of his own work had been quite limited by this lack in him.

3. Yet again, most missionaries are busy helping Christians who have come out from among the *Harijans*. Such Christians are not far advanced intellectually or spiritually. The deeper aspirations about realizing God's Presence are not so easily understood by them and they want teaching which is quite simple and practical.

4. One further reason may be mentioned to show why the doctrine of fellowship with God has not been taught in India. Some missionaries have been actually afraid that such teaching may lead the Christian devotee to think that the end of the religious life is absorption in God. As a student at Oxford I wrote to a distinguished missionary in India about my plan to study the doctrine of communion with God as found in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John. He wrote back to me saying that the monistic doctrine *(Tat tvam asi)* which holds that God and the individual soul are one has nothing in common with Christianity. Some Christian saints have indeed found it in the New Testament; though they were men of the highest piety they were wrong on this point. Jesus and the Apostles had no such experience of identity with God.[55] There is a real danger of Indian thinkers finding such a doctrine of identity in the pages of the New Testament. Thus argued the missionary friend who wrote to me. The reply to this fear is this. Many Christian saints have realized the Presence of God and lived in His company without thinking that they are one with Him. It is quite possible to seek to live in the Presence of God, to enjoy Him, and to be filled with His Spirit without necessarily saying or thinking that man and God are one, and that there is no difference between them.

[55] See my *Christianity as Bhakti Marga*, p. 5.

CHAPTER IX

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON ETHICS

A LIFE of fellowship with God shows itself in a life of love and service. Fellowship with God is not a selfish emotion which a *Bhakta* experiences; it no doubt fills him with joy but it flows through him to others in channels of love and service. We shall now consider some of the consequences for human conduct which arise from a life lived in communion with God.

The Duty of Forgiveness

When we study the teaching of Jesus we are impressed by the emphasis which He lays on the duty of forgiveness. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."[1] Prayer is the heart of religion; particularly in moments of prayer we see God and hold communion with Him. Jesus here teaches that prayer which is so vital to the Christian's life is ineffective if the one who prays has in his heart any grievance or ill-feeling against another. Often people are bitter against others and remember some hasty word of criticism spoken by them or some hostile action done by them, and this bitterness continues for years. Jesus teaches that where there are such bitterness and ill-feeling there cannot be real prayer. They should be immediately set aright. God is the God of Love. In prayer we seek to live with Him, know Him as He is and find out His will for us. This eagerness to come in contact with the God of Love is frustrated if there is any anger or hatred in our mind against others. Love can only come where there is love. Love cannot flow into a heart which is filled with animosity. The heart must be cleansed at once of all ill-feeling if God's abundant love is to stream into it.

We note how much importance Jesus attaches to the duty of forgiveness by making even God's forgiveness depend upon our readiness to forgive others. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye

[1] Matthew v. 23, 24.

forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."[2] God is full of love for us. He is always beckoning us to come to Him and to live with Him. This call from God never ceases. Even if we ignore it for months or for years and go far away from Him, enjoying our selfish pleasures, He is still willing to forgive us if we will only heed His invitation. There is no limit to the extent to which He will go to redeem us and to take us back into fellowship with Him. He lays down only one condition and that is our readiness to forgive others. He is ready to forgive us provided we are ready to forgive others. By making our willingness to forgive others the one and only condition on which His forgiveness of us depends, Jesus shows us the vital importance of the duty of forgiveness. He illustrated this with the parable of a cruel servant whose large debt had been cancelled by his master but who insisted on his fellow-servant paying up a small debt immediately.[3] The moral to which this parable points is almost terrible. It is that even God's love is checked by our unwillingness to forgive others. With hatred and ill-feeling we block up the free flow of God's love towards us. When we realize how the unlimited love of God is thwarted by our hatred and bitterness and our unwillingness to forgive others, we realize the importance of the duty of forgiveness as taught by Jesus.

The Oxford Group Movement, under the leadership of Dr. Frank Buchman, has made Christians to-day realize once again the great importance of forgiveness. After his conversion the first thing which Buchman was guided by God to do was to write half a dozen letters to people whom he had wronged or who, he had thought, had wronged him and against whom he had had ill-feelings, asking for their forgiveness. The Oxford Group Movement makes such reconciliation between people who have been estranged for years, on account of some grievance long nursed, almost the first duty of the Christian life. Because of their vigorous teaching thousands of Christians have exercised the duty of forgiveness and have come to know the deep joy that comes from it. All of us, whether we belong to the Oxford Group Movement or not, would do well to profit by this renewed emphasis on what was in the mind of Jesus the essential duty of every Christian.

Forgiveness has to be exercised not merely in personal relations between man and man but also in the wider relations such as

[2] Matthew vi. 14, 15.
[3] Matthew xviii. 23–35.

that between Church and Church and nation and nation. At the present day serious efforts are being made to bring the various Churches together. This is a most important task. It is a shame that we Christians, who profess to follow the same Lord, are divided into numerous Churches and that often there is so little good feeling and love among us. This state of affairs should be remedied as soon as possible. It is good to note that a great many of the Church leaders are keen about this and are engaged in serious negotiations for the purpose. One important hindrance to Church Union is the lack of the forgiving spirit. Members of some Churches might have been slighted or treated differently because their rites and doctrines were not regarded as truly Christian. Such people bear long in mind these insults, often making them worse by brooding over them; when proposals for Church Union are made they oppose them, not so much on principle as on the fact that once upon a time they were dealt with badly. Such men should forgive and forget and enter heartily into proposals for uniting the different Churches.

The duty of forgiveness should be exercised in our social relationships. I may give an instance. It was formerly the idea that all criminals should be treated sternly. The more serious the offence the more rigorous was the punishment. People believed that if the punishment was quite severe criminals would learn a bitter lesson and never again offend. We are now coming to realize that such stern penalties do not really serve any good purpose. The offenders often become worse while they are in prison. If they are allowed to talk with other prisoners they exchange their grievances over the harsh sentences which have been imposed on them and make plans to commit worse offences after they leave prison. They, as it were, want to take vengeance on Society for the penalties which have been given to them. Criminals are now treated more like men. In some prisons they are given plenty of freedom and every effort is made to teach them a useful trade and to inspire them with new ideals. If boys and young men offend, they are not sent to prisons where they mix with old and hardened criminals and learn their evil ways but they are sent to Borstal schools where juvenile prisoners are taught honest trades so that when their term is over they may be able to earn their living without getting into evil ways again. Discharged prisoners are always looked upon with suspicion and find it extremely hard to get jobs after they leave prison; such people are helped by Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies. Here

again the duty of forgiveness is exercised in a new way. When men commit offences the magistrates and other Government authorities, so to speak, forgive them and help them to reform their ways. More and more such ways of dealing with criminals should prevail.

A nation must forgive another nation. When the Great War ended in 1919, in the Treaty of Versailles the Allies punished Germany as severely as they could. They felt that Germany was responsible for all the loss and suffering caused by the war and so they made it as hard as possible for the Germans in that Treaty. The Germans have never forgiven the Allies for the way in which they were treated at that time. When I was in Germany some years ago that was the subject of conversation in many circles. That feeling of bitterness has been steadily fanned by propaganda and it has been the one desire of the Germans to-day to get even with the Allies. The Allies were wrong in imposing such hard conditions on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans have been wrong in harbouring bitterness and hatred towards the Allies and in seeking all these years to take vengeance upon them. As long as nations do not forgive each other, the world will be a chaos with wars and preparations for wars. Jesus lays down the duty of forgiveness clearly and emphatically. We must forgive not only in our personal dealings but also in the political dealings of one nation with another. Only then His Spirit will permeate the world and the Kingdom of God, in which love is the supreme principle of life, will become a reality among men.

We may now consider some of the difficulties connected with the practice of forgiveness. People sometimes say that they could forgive if only the offence were a light one; when it is such a grave offence they find it impossible to forgive. Jesus forgave His enemies while hanging on the Cross. "And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."[4] No offence could be more serious than that of the enemies of Jesus. He had gone about doing good; He had healed and helped the sick and the suffering; His life had been one continuous outpouring of love. And yet His enemies had joined together, had concocted all sorts of false charges against Him, had Him tried, scourged and insulted, and finally had Him crucified, a form of punishment which was at once the most painful and ignominious in the world. And yet Jesus prayed for them during that hour of agony. Time is said to heal many

[4] Luke xxiii. 34.

wounds. Many people are ready to forgive after the lapse of a few months or years. But Jesus forgave when He was passing through the greatest humiliation and pain; He did not wait for time to blur His memory or to soothe His pain.

This wonderful example of the forgiveness of Jesus on the Cross sheds light on another important difficulty. People sometimes say: "How can I forgive the person who has spoken ill of me behind my back? He has not made any apology. I can only forgive when the one who has offended is really sorry and expresses to me his sincere grief." Jesus did not wait for any apology from His enemies; He did not make their penitence a condition of His forgiveness; on His own initiative He forgave them completely.

Men sometimes say that they are willing to forgive once or twice but the offence has been repeated so often that they cannot forgive any longer; the limits of their forbearance have been reached; they are but human and it is too much to expect that they would continue to exercise their patience after the breaking point has been reached. The teaching of Jesus on this point leaves no room for any doubt or hesitation; it is absolutely clear and definite. "Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." [5] Jesus says here that there should be no limit whatever to our willingness to forgive. We must forgive as often as the offence is committed. When we speak of the limit of our patience having been reached we must remember the love of God which forgives us and keeps on forgiving us. We are daily and hourly offending Him. However hard we may try, we fail. And yet we always draw upon God's love and experience the joy of His forgiveness. We know that He does forgive the moment we turn back to Him. He does not keep count of the number of our sins; He does not remember their gravity; He forgives fully and completely whenever we confess them to Him.

Many people make out that if they do not forgive it is not from any sense of personal resentment; they bear no ill-will or grudge against the one who has spoken contemptuously of them. If they are stiff and stern, it is because they want to teach the offender a really good lesson. Their only motive is to make him better and not to give expression to their own ill-feeling. The parable of the prodigal son shows that the best way to

[5] Matthew xviii. 21, 22.

help one who has gone astray is to forgive him.[6] The father could easily have punished him. The prodigal son was in a mood to accept punishment; he knew he deserved it. As a matter of fact he came back prepared to receive a stern treatment. He did not expect to be taken back as a son; he only expected to be considered a servant. And yet the father fully forgave him. If others hurt us, we should forgive them and that will be the most effective way of helping them not to hurt others in the future.

Christ gives us clear directions as to how we should set about the duty of forgiveness. "Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."[7] We must pray for those who insult us or speak ill of us. As we pray, a new love for them rises in our heart. Another way in which we can help is by getting two or three people to talk the thing over. "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, shew him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican."[8] Often difficulties and misunderstandings are cleared by a frank discussion in the presence of two or three friends. A Christian priest may do a good deal to bring people together; as a peace-maker he has a large sphere of usefulness.

Our forgiveness must be entire and complete. "So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."[9] We cannot have in the heart even the least sense of resentment and say that we have forgiven. If there is even a little ill-feeling in us, the forgiveness is not complete.

Men and Women

The right relation between men and women raises some of the most important problems connected with Christian Ethics. Jesus was a *Sannyāsi* and never married. This was not because He despised the body. Neither in His teaching nor in His life do we find any trace of contempt for the flesh. In this respect He differs profoundly from the Hindu *Bhaktas* who have heaped

[6] Luke xv. 11–32.
[7] Luke vi. 28.
[8] Matthew xviii. 15–17.
[9] Matthew xviii. 35.

ridicule on the body. They have considered the flesh as the source of all sin and suffering and have often spoken contemptuously about it. The enemies of Jesus said that He was a wine bibber and a glutton. Apparently there was no asceticism in His ways of eating and drinking. He was invited to a wedding; He went there and joined in the festivities, thus giving His blessings to the couple who were getting married. His entire attitude on the subject of women and marriage was excellent and wholesome.

He insisted upon absolute purity of thought in relation to women. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell."[10] He taught that adultery included even incipient evil thoughts. The world condemns only outer acts; it does not blame a man if his imagination or his thought is evil. But Jesus said that even imagination or thought could be evil, for that was the beginning of all trouble. Thoughts led to words and words easily led to actions. If evil thoughts were allowed in the mind, sooner or later there would be evil acts. Modern psychologists have pointed out that sex desires influence a great many of the thoughts and deeds of people. The followers of Christ should not indulge in reading trashy novels in which the sex motive is prominent, in frequenting talkies with the sex appeal, in gazing on obscene pictures or in talking constantly about sex. Present day writers on education have shown the necessity for giving information on sex to the young in a clean and scientific spirit. Growing children and young people generally are curious on matters connected with sex and older people rebuke them and drive the curiosity underground. When such young people meet their friends who are evil-minded, they get from them with impure relish the information which ought to have been given to them in a detached way by the parent or the teacher.

In the Gospel of St. John a significant story is told about Jesus and a woman who had been taken in adultery. "And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in

[10] Matthew v. 27–29.

the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her? And this they said, tempting him, that they might have whereof to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more." [11]

This story is not found in many ancient manuscripts. It has been suggested that the reason for this was that the early Christians thought that the treatment of the woman by Jesus was far too lenient; in the Church itself there was strict discipline for any one guilty of adultery; on this account the story seems to have been dropped from many manuscripts. But scholars are of opinion that the incident is likely to have been quite authentic. It is certainly characteristic of Jesus. While He always taught the highest ideal, He was not hard on any one who failed to reach it. His method of helping sinners was not by rebuking them but by sympathizing with them deeply and urging them not to sin again. We behave quite differently; we delight to spread scandal about those who go wrong and seek to create a bad name for them; we like to make things as unpleasant and as difficult as possible for them. Not so Jesus. His attitude was one of moral compassion and intense suffering. The words spoken to her "Go and sin no more," in such a spirit of understanding, probably made a new woman of her. He did not condone her; His words left no doubt at all about His ideal for her future conduct. His exhortation, given with full trust and hope, was likely to have borne fruit in a clean life.

Jesus taught clearly the sacredness of marriage. "It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery." [12]

[11] John viii. 3–11.
[12] Matthew v. 31, 32; see also Mark x. 2–12.

In India marriages are often arranged for convenience and brides are selected for the amount of the dowry they bring. A couple who do not know each other are married off by their parents and relations. This ought not to be. The husband and wife should know each other before their marriage; they should understand each other's ideals and weaknesses. With such knowledge they are likely to be more faithful to each other and more happy than if they are simply married off by their relations. Happiness cannot spring from dowries. When once a couple are married, after coming to know each other fairly well, they should observe the utmost loyalty and faithfulness to each other.

The sanctity of the marriage tie has been well recognized in India. The devotion of the wife to the husband in India is wonderful. It forms the theme of some of the best known stories and poems, such as those of Sīta, Sāvitri and Damayanti. In actual life one sees many instances of complete and devoted loyalty of the wife to the husband. There should be the same loyalty on the part of the husband to his wife. The ideal of Christ is such love and fidelity of the husband and wife to each other.

Jesus associated women with Himself in His ministry. They went about with Him on His tours helping Him in His spiritual and social work. This principle was quite new at the time Jesus introduced it into the world. It has gradually spread all over the world in all spheres of life. We have now women doing every type of work. As doctors, as teachers, as politicians and as social workers they are co-operating with men in all departments of life. Such co-operation, which is really the application on a wide scale of the principle which Jesus introduced in His own public ministry, is a very effective way of removing some of the difficulties connected with relationships between men and women. As long as unmarried women are secluded and are asked to confine themselves to their domestic occupations, they look upon themselves only as prospective wives. They make themselves as attractive as they can. When they meet men on social occasions they think of them mainly as possible partners in life. If, on the other hand, they enter the professions, mix freely with men and co-operate with them the old idea that marriage is the only goal for a woman ceases to dominate. Common tasks and the sharing of common difficulties and problems bring men and women together and change their attitude towards each other.

The Practice of Non-violence (Ahimsa)

Jesus taught clearly and emphatically that one's enemies should be loved and that evil should not be resisted by violence. The important passage in which this teaching was given may be quoted in full. "Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." [13]

Jesus was a perfect example of non-violence in all that concerned Himself personally. His enemies came to arrest Him and He surrendered Himself to them without making the least resistance. One of His disciples eager to help Him cut off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the High Priest. Jesus immediately healed the wound and bade His disciple to sheath his sword, for said He: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." [14] While He hung on the Cross going through untold pain, suffering and humiliation, He prayed to God to forgive His enemies for they knew not what they did.[15] Another such example of forgiveness is unknown in history. No one else in the throes of agony on his own initiative forgave his enemies fully and completely and besought God to forgive them on the plea that they did such awful things from their ignorance. His life had been one of continuous service and goodness and the only requital which His contemporaries made Him was to crucify Him on the Cross. Never was there a worse outcome of a life of goodness than this. But Jesus, whatever inward pain He might have felt, forgave His enemies fully and prayed to God

[13] Matthew v. 38–48; cf. Luke vi. 27–38.
[14] Matthew xxvi. 51–54.
[15] Luke xxiii. 34.

on their behalf that He might extend to them His complete forgiveness.

Jesus was never angry or impatient in things which concerned His own personal comfort or honour but He was ruthless in His denunciation of the enemies of God. The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, where His mighty works had been done but where no signs of repentance were seen, were severely condemned by Him. He was extremely violent in speech about them.[16] He was also bitter against the Pharisees and the Scribes, the religious leaders of His day. They were formal and hypocritical, they put on the people burdens too heavy to be borne, they made much of small things and had no true love or devotion. Jesus was very angry with the Scribes and the Pharisees and often denounced their formalism, hypocrisy, deceitfulness, love of show and lack of true spirituality.

He also practised both violence of speech and violence of action against those who desecrated the temple of God. "And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers."[17] He was devoted to the temple; to Him it was His Father's house where He and other worshippers drew near to God and held communion with Him. When He found worldly men turning it into a place of merchandise and polluting it with their wrangle and their deceit, He was angry with them and drove them out with an improvised whip. Such was His devotion and love to the Father that He felt justified in dealing sternly with those who were the enemies of true religion. For a person of His loving and tender disposition such rigour was not natural or easy. But He felt it necessary to practise it because of His devotion to God.

The teaching of Jesus about non-violence is in line with some of the best traditions in India. The importance given to gentleness, meekness, love and forbearance in the ethical and spiritual teaching of India is closely allied to Christ's teaching about loving one's enemies.

[16] Matthew xi. 20–24.
[17] Mark xi. 15–17.

We may now give some illustrations of the Hindu teaching about non-violence.

"Those who abstain from injury to all,
Who bear with all, and offer an asylum
To all mankind, are journeying to heaven." [18]

"The noble-minded dedicate themselves
To the promotion of the happiness
Of others—e'en of those who injure them.
True happiness consists in making happy." [19]

"This is the sum of all true righteousness—
Treat others, as thou would'st thyself be treated
Do nothing to thy neighbour, which hereafter
Thou would'st not have thy neighbour do to thee.
In causing pleasure, or in giving pain,
In doing good, or injury to others,
In granting, or refusing a request,
A man obtains a proper rule of action
By looking on his neighbour as himself." [20]

"Do naught to others which if done to thee
Would cause thee pain; this is the sum of duty." [21]

"Bear railing words with patience, never meet
An angry man with anger, nor return
Reviling for reviling, smite not him
Who smites thee; let thy speech and acts be gentle." [22]

"Conquer a man who never gives by gifts;
Subdue untruthful men by truthfulness;
Vanquish an angry man by gentleness;
And overcome the evil man by goodness." [23]

[18] *Hitōpadesa,* Book I, 66, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 539.
[19] *Kiratarjuniva of Bharavi,* VII, 13, 28, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 462.
[20] *Mahābhārata,* XII, 5571, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 450.
[21] *Mahābhārata,* V, 1517, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 446.
[22] *Mahābhāhata,* V, 1270, 9972, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 446.
[23] *Mahābhārata,* III, 13253, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 444.

" Treat no one with disdain, with patience bear
Reviling language; with an angry man
Be never angry; blessings give for curses." [24]

" Wound not another, though by him provoked,
Do no one injury by thought or deed,
Utter no word to pain thy fellow-creatures." [25]

" Mercy is the might of the righteous." [26]

" To injure none by thought or word or deed,
To give to others, and to be kind to all—
This is the constant duty of the good.
High-minded men delight in doing good,
Without a thought of their own interest;
When they confer a benefit on others,
They reckon not on favours in return." [27]

About the second century of the Christian era there lived near Madras a weaver, Tiruvalluvar by name. He was a poet and wrote the *Kural* containing over one thousand and three hundred splendid ethical maxims in Tamil, which are dearly loved and are often quoted in the Tamil country. The *Kural* is one of the great books of the world. Several scholars have borne testimony to its intrinsic worth. The latest European scholar to appreciate its value is Dr. Albert Schweitzer. Dr. Schweitzer is a Christian theologian of wide reputation who, hearing Christ's call to service, has gone out to Africa as a medical missionary. From his hospital on the edge of a primeval forest he has been studying the different religions of the world. He has recently written an important book on Hinduism under the title *Indian Thought and its Development.* In this book he says: " With sure strokes the *Kural* draws the ideal of simple ethical humanity. On the most varied questions concerning the conduct of man to himself and to the world its utterances are characterized by nobility and good sense. There hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find so much lofty wisdom." [28]

[24] *Laws of Manu,* VI, 47, 48, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 279.
[25] *Laws of Manu,* II, 161, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 279.
[26] *The Vishnu Purāna,* Book I, Chapter I, translated by H. H. Wilson in *Vishnu Purāna,* Vol. I, p. 8.
[27] *Mahābhārata,* III, 16782, 16796, translated by M. Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom,* p. 444.
[28] A. Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and its Development.*

We find in the *Kural* some excellent maxims bearing on the subject of non-violence.

" As earth bears up the men who delve into her breast,
To bear with scornful men of virtues is the best."

" Forgiving trespasses is good always;
Forgetting them hath even higher praise."

" Who wreak their wrath as worthless are despised;
Who patiently forbear as gold are prized."

" Though others work thee ill, thus shalt thou blessing reap:
Grieve for their sin, thyself from vicious action keep! "

" With overweening pride when men with injuries assail,
By thine own righteous dealing shalt thou mightily prevail."

" To punish wrong, with kindly benefits the doers ply;
Thus shame their souls; but pass the ill unheeded by." [29]

In recent years Mahātma Gandhi has interpreted the principle of non-violence and applied it to modern conditions in a very wide and effective way. He says:

" Causes of hatred everywhere obtrude themselves on one's gaze. The seers of old saw that the only way of dealing with the situation was to neutralize hatred by love."

" Hatred ever kills, love never dies. Such is the vast difference between the two. What is obtained by love is retained for all time. What is obtained by hatred proves a burden in reality, for it increases hatred. The duty of a human being is to diminish hatred and to promote love."

" I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him." [30]

Following the ancient ideals of India and the teaching of Jesus, Mahātma Gandhi has courageously taught the wide implications of the duty of non-violence. Though he is not an avowed follower of Christ, he has interpreted Christ truly and applied His teaching fearlessly to our present-day problems,

[29] G. U. Pope, *The Sacred Kural*, 151, 152, 155, 157, 158 and 314.
[30] D. S. Sarma, *The Gandhi Sūtras*, pp. 34 and 37.

both national and international. While all the developments of Mahātma Gandhi's teaching (such as his insistence on the protection of the cow) may not be acceptable to us, we cannot but acknowledge that he has caught, perhaps more than any one else, the true spirit of the teaching of Jesus and the implications of this teaching for our modern life.

Jesus taught that His disciples should love every one, not merely those who loved them. Even if others speak ill of us or treat us badly we should not be angry or retaliate. It may be asked whether Jesus laid down this principle only to help us in our personal relationships or whether He meant it to be carried out in the realm of international politics. No doubt the immediate aim of the teaching of Jesus was to guide men in their individual relationships one with the other. But we are now coming to realize that we cannot have one set of rules for personal conduct and another set of ideals for national or international affairs. If the principles of truth and love are absolutely important in the personal sphere, they are equally important in the wider spheres of national life and international dealings. We cannot have a high standard of conduct for our personal relationships and be content with lower ideals in our contacts with different races and nations. What holds good in the smaller sphere is also true in the larger.

A Christian must practise complete non-violence in his personal dealings. If another man insults me or injures me I must not retaliate; I must turn off his wrath by soft words and kind deeds. A harsh remark, sometimes made unwittingly, leads to a disastrous quarrel; the words become more and more bitter and as the parties become enraged, words give place to blows and at times even end in murder. If we remember the teaching of Christ and bear kindly with those who ill-treat us, we avoid all such disastrous consequences. There is no quarrel, no volley of bitter reports and no blow or wound. Jesus taught that we should not merely refrain from vengeance but should also actively love our enemies. The mere absence of retaliation, though it is excellent in itself, does not go far enough. There should be active love and such active love can only be generated and supported by prayer. For human nature by itself, unaided by God's grace, is unable to rise to positive love for its enemies.

The principle of love and non-violence should be applied also in the realm of international politics. One nation should not hate another nation and there should be no wars to decide matters of dispute. There has been after the Great War an

influential and far-flung movement in favour of abolishing war altogether from human affairs. In Indian villages to-day if two men disagree about any matter they easily come to blows. But men of education and refinement do not generally do so. If there is violent disagreement between them they may go to court. But public opinion does not approve even of that; there is always an odium attached to washing dirty linen in public. So, as far as possible, matters of dispute among educated people are decided quietly and decently. Again, not long ago slavery was a common and widespread institution. The ownership of slaves was not regarded as wrong. There were many good Christians who had slaves and who made them work in their homes or on their fields. But now this ignoble institution of slavery, which places men and women with spiritual and intellectual possibilities under complete subjugation to their masters who may treat them as chattels, has been abolished from the world; it is agreed at present by all that it is quite against the Christian principle of love to allow or encourage any form of slavery. In the same way there is a vigorous movement now on foot to abolish wars as a means of settling disputes between different nations. Wars as they are waged to-day work havoc and destruction on a colossal scale. Aeroplanes, submarines, torpedoes, bombs, poison gas and all the latest inventions of science are used to spread misery and suffering not only in the fighting lines but also among civilians, including women and children. Applied science has forged new and powerful weapons of warfare and has placed them at the disposal of men for harassing and killing their fellow men. Instead of people becoming more and more civilized, they seem to be relapsing into primitive barbarism and the ways of the jungle.

When the Great War came to a close in 1918 the League of Nations was founded to settle disputes among nations. The establishment of this representative body roused the hopes of many good folk. It was believed that a new day had dawned and that thereafter no recourse need be had to wars for settling international disputes. But as the years passed by it became evident that the League of Nations was not a success. America never joined the League and Japan and Germany withdrew their membership after some years. When Italy invaded Abyssinia and annexed it, the League of Nations took no effective step to stop Italy. When Japan invaded China, the League of Nations kept quiet. The present League of Nations is as dead as a door nail. We must not, however, lose hope. This is the first time

in the history of the world when an international body has been established for such a purpose. The failure of the League of Nations does not mean that never again can there be an effective organization to settle the quarrels among nations. From our experience of the present League of Nations it may be possible to establish another more powerful body for deciding matters of dispute among different countries.

After the Great War, hundreds of Peace organizations sprang up all over the world to educate public opinion that there should be no wars among nations and that questions of dispute between them should be settled by peaceful means. These organizations steadily grew in number; their membership ran into millions; men and women, especially young men and women, of all classes and creeds joined them. It was widely taught that non-violence was a more effective way than violence, that love should prevail among nations as well as among individuals, that the way of love should be followed whatever the consequences might be and that people should be prepared to suffer for the sake of righteousness and love. Just as Jesus followed the way of the Cross in order to redeem men from their sin and suffering, so His followers must be prepared to suffer in order to end wars. It looked from the rapidly spreading Pacifist Movement as if a new day had actually dawned when love and not might would decide the destinies of nations.

The outbreak of the present war has shattered all these hopes. But the words of Mahātma Gandhi probably reflect the feelings of a good many thinking people all over the world. "I have become disconsolate. In the secret of my heart, I am in perpetual quarrel with God that He should allow such things to go on. My non-violence seems almost impotent. But the answer comes at the end of the daily quarrel that neither God nor non-violence is impotent. Impotence is in men. I must try on, without losing faith, even though I may break in the attempt." [31]

The Race Problem

The world to-day is torn by racial conflicts. In Germany the Jews are cruelly persecuted. The African races are exploited for cheap labour. America and Australia do not welcome Asiatic immigrants. The Arabs resent the return of the Jews to Palestine. Here in India the *Harijan* problem is acute. Probably the *Harijans* (seventy millions in number) were a different race of people who were subjugated and taken into Hindu society long ago.

[31] *The Hindu*, September 5, 1939.

All these centuries they have been allowed to follow only menial and dirty occupations. Now when progressive Hindus are working for their uplift there is much opposition from orthodox quarters.

The economic motive is the most important factor which brings about racial conflicts. The Arabs do not want the Jews in Palestine because they think that the Jews will hold the jobs and do the work which they ought to be doing. Asiatic immigrants are hated in the new countries like the United States of America and Australia because the Europeans who have already settled there are afraid that, Asiatic labour being cheap, they will not be able to earn much money as wages or as profits. This desire to get as much money for oneself and not to share it with others is completely contrary to Christ's teaching. He taught that no man can serve both God and mammon.[32] No nation can make money for itself at the expense of other nations and claim to love God. Jesus also taught that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.[33] He made it clear that the love of money is a dangerous thing and that he who builds all his hopes on wealth and prosperity is a fool.[34] Whoever wants to follow Christ truly must be prepared to share his possessions with others.

The present policy of nations owning colonies and governing them primarily in their own interests and not in the interests of the inhabitants of the colonies is not Christian. Colonies are prized because they produce raw material such as cotton for factories or because they serve as markets in which the finished goods from factories are sold. Nations which have colonies do not want to give them up and other nations which do not have them are constantly coveting them. Causes such as these lead to modern wars with all their incalculable suffering and misery. There are many excellent Christians who, in their own individual spheres, are unselfish and are prepared to share what they have with others. The same spirit of unselfishness does not inspire the policies of Christian governments. The teaching of Jesus about love should be applied not only within the family and the town but also all over the world. The Christian Church is the salt of the earth; it has to set up a high ideal before men and to persuade them to follow it courageously and to the utmost limits.

[32] Matthew vi. 24.
[33] Matthew iv. 4.
[34] Luke xii. 13–21.

Racial conflicts are also due to differences in racial origins, languages, cultures and customs. One of the biggest racial problems in the world is in the United States of America where the negroes are treated very differently in many of the states from the European settlers. The negroes are the descendants of the slaves who were taken over to America and who were emancipated after the Civil War. The facts that they came from a different country, that they belonged to a different race and that their ancestors were slaves handicap the negroes even to-day. Even if they are well-educated and possess sterling qualities of heart, the taint is still on them. Men are essentially conservative and they look with suspicion on any one who speaks a different language, comes from a different country and follows different customs.

The parable of the good Samaritan shows us the ideal relationship which ought to exist between men of different races.[35] Christ taught that every man should love his neighbour as himself. When He was asked to explain who a neighbour was, He told this inimitable parable. Whoever showed mercy to a needy person was that person's neighbour. A traveller was attacked on the way by robbers, plundered of his possessions and left half-dead. A Priest and a Levite who passed by paid no attention to the man; they were only interested in carrying out the rites and ceremonies of religion. A Samaritan, who saw the wounded traveller, bandaged him up and entrusted him to the care of a near-by inn keeper. There was a good deal of ill-feeling between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Jesus. Partly on religious and partly on racial grounds the Jews and the Samaritans were always in conflict. The Jews would not even pass through the country of the Samaritans; such was the tension between the two races. Jesus rose far above this ill-feeling. He made a member of this despised Samaritan race the hero of His parable and invested him with some of the finest qualities of character known to us such as unselfishness, generosity, courage and willingness to serve at all cost. A neighbour, Jesus taught, was any one who was in need. We are often willing to help those who belong to our country and are in trouble. But that is not true neighbourliness. Real love is not confined to the limits of one's own country, race, language or customs.

In those days there were not the same opportunities for travel as to-day. In the course of His brief ministry Jesus met but few people of different races. It is interesting to see how He moved

[35] Luke x. 25–37.

with them. He appreciated the goodness and depth of faith of a Roman army officer.[36] He met a Samaritan woman of doubtful character and taught her some of the highest truths in religion.[37] This poor Samaritan woman was despised for her sex, race and character. And yet Jesus, breaking through the barriers of convention, talked with her freely and frankly and gave her some profound spiritual instruction. The Greeks had heard of Him as a great teacher and sought a personal interview with Him. He welcomed them also and spoke to them on the subject of self-sacrifice and death as the way to a deeper and more real life.[38]

Jesus, then, came in contact with men of three races, each with a different history and prestige. The Romans had conquered the Jews and were ruling Palestine with an iron rod; most of the Jews hated the Romans, because of their oppression and tyranny. But Jesus was prepared to see goodness and faith in a member of the race held in such universal contempt. The Greeks possessed great culture and deep philosophy and He welcomed them and taught them what they most needed to know. The Samaritans possessed neither the social prestige of the Romans nor the intellectual greatness of the Greeks. But Jesus opened His treasures wide and gave lavishly from them to one of the Samaritans.

Both as individuals and as groups, the followers of Christ should show in their relations with other races the same magnanimity and generosity and love as Jesus showed. The Christian Church has now woke up to the tremendous importance of the racial problem. It is not enough that Christians should be unselfish and loving in their family, in their church or in their town. The Christian duty of love is far wider. It must permeate the policies of Government in their treatment of alien races in foreign lands. In these democratic days when people have votes and have a share in the government of their country, each man has a definite responsibility which he cannot shirk. No doubt some have greater influence than others and the consequent responsibility is far more. But every one has some influence, even though it may be of a limited character, and it must be used for introducing the Christian principle of love into the relationships among different races. Only when Christians, both as individuals and as governments, rise above the limitations

[36] Luke vii. 1–10.
[37] John iv. 1–42.
[38] John xii. 20–36.

of language and race and nation and practise the Golden Rule of Christ everywhere can they claim to be the followers of Him who said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

The Distribution of Wealth

At present there are enormous differences between the rich and the poor. It is being recognized to-day that these enormous differences are not really Christian and that the Christian Church should preach that all the wealth which is in the world should be distributed evenly and justly.

For a long time the Church regarded the present arrangements in the world by which some people are very rich and others are very poor as ordained by God. An excellent parish priest I knew taught the children every Sunday to sing in the Children's Service:

> "The rich man in his castle,
> The poor man at his gate,
> God made them, high or lowly,
> And order'd their estate."

The Church has been blamed, and rightly, as being on the side of the rich. Often the influential members of Churches who give most of the money needed for Christian work are wealthy folk and the religious leaders do not want to speak on matters which are likely to annoy them. For this reason most modern Communists and Socialists have nothing to do with the Church; they think that it is not impartial and just on the subject of how the wealth which is available in the world should be distributed.

Jesus Himself was a poor man, born in the working class; He had to work hard with His hands all through the day to earn a living. When He became a religious teacher He gave up His regular occupation as a carpenter and went about from place to place, depending upon God for His daily needs. He and His disciples had a common purse which was replenished by His friends. They lived as a small community and we may be sure that they used the money which was placed at their disposal in the most economic way, meeting only their most urgent needs such as plain food and simple clothes and not wasting their money on comforts and luxuries. To understand the teaching of Jesus about wealth we must keep clearly in mind His own mode of life.

From the parable of the talents [39] we gather that Jesus is

[39] Matthew xxv. 14–30.

quite aware of the wide variety in the intellectual and moral gifts of men; some possess five talents, some two and others only one. Jesus does not question the wisdom of God in equipping different men so diversely. As to why some men should be much cleverer than others or why some should be much more self-restrained and careful in conduct than others has always perplexed human thought. On this question Jesus does not say anything in the parable. But He urges every man to make the utmost use of the talents entrusted to him and to multiply them by industry and care. While the reference of the parable is primarily to intellectual and spiritual gifts, we may say that, by implication, Jesus here commends the men who by care and industry increase the wealth which is entrusted to them.

The parable of the vineyard [40] shows that in the opinion of Jesus money rewards are not always proportionate to the work done. The value and the quality of work is often computed by people in terms of money. So much work, so much money; the better the work the more the money. But the workers in the vineyard of whom Jesus spoke were not paid thus. Some of them worked all through the day bearing the burden and heat of the day and others began work later in the day and did perhaps one or two hours of labour but in the end all were equally paid. This shows that, according to Jesus, there is no real connexion between the value of work and the payment which is made. Every one should do his best regardless of what he is paid; this holds true of intellectual as well as of manual workers. The popular idea that if really good work has to be turned out higher wages should be paid is not accepted by Jesus.

These two parables do not, however, mean that no efforts should be made to distribute more justly the wealth now produced in the world. Often in a large factory where thousands of people work, the bulk of people are paid poor wages and are asked to do difficult work for long hours while all the profits are carried away by a few wealthy share-holders. Many thinking people to-day feel that the profits made in a factory should not be distributed so unevenly and unjustly. Jesus laid down the great law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." [41] This law should be applied widely; it should be observed not merely in the family but wherever human beings work together. In a factory, for instance, where thousands of workers are employed

[40] Matthew xx. 1–16.
[41] Matthew xxii. 39.

there would be no doubt differences in salaries and wages. Men are so differently endowed. Some do good work and others are inefficient; some receive a long training for doing the more intelligent types of work whereas others are only capable of unskilled forms of labour for which little or no training is necessary. Some have no cash whereas others contribute the necessary capital to run such an enterprise. It is not meant that the profits from the factory should be divided equally among all the people connected with it. This would be unjust in view of the different types of work they do and of the different degrees of efficiency with which they do them. But the large profits which are taken away by the share-holders should be reduced considerably so that all the workers in the factory are paid better wages, eat better food, live in cleaner homes, have more leisure for enjoyment and are able to give their children the education they need. At present in the world the opportunities for education, for healthy living and for enjoyment are so varied. Some have all the means which they desire in order to enjoy themselves and to give their children a good education whereas others have to struggle hard day in and day out and are not provided with even the bare necessities of life. In the Kingdom of God, which Christ came to establish in the world, such differences in opportunities and in enjoyments cannot be regarded as just. If every Christian were really to practise the precept of Jesus: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," the wealth which is created in the world would be divided more justly among the different people.

Jesus insists on the need for detachment both among the poor and among the rich. The poor are incessantly worried about the problem of how to meet their daily needs. Their house rent has to be paid, their food has to be bought, their clothes have to be stitched and their children have to be educated. If there is illness in the house medicines have to be provided for and money is also needed for occasional enjoyment. These are the utmost necessities of life. Millions of men and women in the world today are living on the edge of poverty. All their time and energy is consumed in meeting their various urgent needs. To such Jesus speaks of the importance of detachment. "I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment?" [42] God provides even for the needs of birds and of plants. Will

[42] Matthew vi. 25.

He not provide for human beings who are so much more valuable than they? Often peace and joy are not dependent on an abundance of means. Many poor people are really happy because they believe in a Loving God who will look after them. They know that God is their Father and that He is intimately concerned with all living creatures in the universe. There is nothing so small that escapes His attention. Many wealthy people with abundance of means, on the other hand, are worried and anxious, both about the present and about the future, because they do not believe in a Loving God. They have no faith to support them. The future is all dark, dreary and uncertain. With or without money, peace and joy are found wherever there is real faith.

The parable of the rich fool shows the folly of attaching too much weight to wealth and prosperity.[43] As far as we know the rich fool was not unjust in his dealings with others; he did not follow doubtful methods of business. His main weakness, for which he was rebuked by God, was his utterly worldly outlook. He thought that the abundance of goods which he possessed was everything. In his spiritual ignorance he believed that eating and drinking and making merry constituted the whole of life; that there could be anything higher or nobler seemed to have completely escaped his thought.

The need for detachment is constantly taught in India. Rabindranath Tagore tells the story of a disciple who took a pair of costly bangles set with precious stones to the Sikh *Guru*, Govinda. As the teacher examined one of the bangles it slipped from his hand and fell into a stream. The disciple was quite distressed and immediately plunged into the water in search of the bangle. After a long and vain hunt he returned to the teacher, exhausted and dripping with water, and asked him to show where that bangle had fallen. With supreme disdain the teacher threw the bangle which he had in his hand into the water and said: "It is there." [44]

Jesus calls some of His disciples to absolute poverty. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the labourer is worthy of his

[43] Luke xii. 13–21.
[44] Rabindranath Tagore, *Fruit Gathering*, pp. 14, 15.

food." [45] The call here is to complete renunciation. Those who want to follow Jesus closely must give up all their ties of family, friendship and wealth, take up the Cross as He did and walk in His footsteps. In the Christian Church thousands of ascetics *(Sannyāsis)* have given up everything and followed Him. Obviously all Christians cannot obey the call. The world has to go on, people have to toil, houses have to be built, lands have to be cultivated, clothes have to be made and all this implies that the followers of Christ have useful and important work to do in making life possible. The monastic movement on a wide scale in the Christian Church failed; this was made clear at the time of the Reformation. It is not likely that the Christian Church will return in any large measure to the ideal of Monasticism. But some earnest and sincere disciples of Christ will accept this tremendous challenge of Jesus and live a life of complete renunciation. They will demonstrate to the world the absolute importance of the spiritual life and by their radiant faith and utter self-sacrifice make millions of others who are in the world, living the normal family life, devote themselves more earnestly to the service of God.

Jesus did not believe in class-war. He was known as a friend of publicans. The publicans of His day would correspond to the capitalists and government officials of our day. Though they were wealthy and could exert considerable power, they were held in contempt by the people. They were regarded as the tools of oppression which the Roman Government used. Contrary to popular feeling, Jesus associated closely with them. He took the publican Matthew into the intimate circle of His twelve disciples. He went as a guest to the house of a rich publican, Zacchaeus. There was a frank and friendly spirit in the conversation which took place on the occasion.[46] Zacchaeus spoke freely what was in his mind and Jesus likewise made clear His own attitude. Such a conversation would have been possible only when the two persons who were engaged in it moved with each other on terms of confidence and affection. Jesus ministered mostly among the poor; He sought in every way to relieve their suffering and misery. But at the same time He did not boycott the rich; He had no bitterness against them; He did not rouse the people to conflict with them. His close friendship with Lazarus, who had apparently a home of his own, is another

[45] Matthew x. 7–10.
[46] Luke xix. 2–10.

evidence of His attitude towards the rich. He was willing to associate with women of substance, who provided for His needs and for the needs of His band of disciples. This free and happy comradeship between Him and His rich women disciples is yet another evidence of the fact that He was no red revolutionary, hating everything connected with wealthy folk.

CHAPTER X

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE CHURCH

The Church and Fellowship

THE question as to whether Jesus founded the Christian Church is being hotly debated to-day. Until recent times any Christian would have answered this question without hesitation in the affirmative. He would have said that the Gospels contained ample evidence that Jesus founded the Church as an instrument for carrying on His work in the world after He left. The conviction of modern Biblical scholars on this point is not so sure. The word *Ecclesia* or Church appears only twice in the Gospels and in both cases they are found in the Gospel of Matthew. The first reference occurs when the duty of Christian forgiveness is discussed. "And if thy brother sin against thee, go, shew him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican. Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [1] This passage is now regarded as not containing a genuine saying of Jesus. It occurs only in Matthew and is not supported by the other Gospels. The contemptuous reference to the publican is not consonant with the love and tenderness which Jesus showed when He moved with the publicans in spite of public opposition and sought to win them over. The saying about binding and loosing seems to echo the early practice of excommunication in the Church. It is likely that the verse in its present form was put into the Gospel at a later date with a view to provide the discipline of excommunication with Christ's own authority.

The other passage in which the word "Church" occurs is found after the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him,

[1] Matthew xviii. 15–18.

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." [2] The reference of the word "rock" has been much disputed. The rock on which the Church would be built has been understood as (1) Peter himself, (2) Peter's faith, (3) the acceptance of Jesus as the Christ or (4) Jesus Himself. If Peter was considered by Jesus to be so important and if His disciples were aware of it, how did they dispute as to who was the greatest among themselves? This controversy could have had no meaning if Peter had been acknowledged so clearly and emphatically by Jesus as the greatest among His disciples. It is now held that the passage reflects the conviction of certain Jewish Christians who regarded themselves as the followers of Peter rather than of Paul.

The commission to preach and baptize and to spread the Church everywhere is found in the following passage: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." [3] It is only in this passage in the whole New Testament that we read of baptism in the name of the Trinity. The practice of baptism in the early Church seems to have been in the name of Jesus only. So it is held that this verse reflects later beliefs. There is a further difficulty in accepting the genuineness of this verse. If Jesus laid down so clearly the universal character of the Christian religion, we fail to understand the controversy which raged in the early Church about preaching Christianity to the Gentiles. The first Christians were all Jews and they held that the non-Jews should first become Jews and be circumcised and accept the Jewish law before they could become Christians. It was only St. Paul who, though an orthodox Jew himself before he was converted, took the wider view

[2] Matthew xvi. 15–19.
[3] Matthew xxviii. 18–20.

that Christ is for all men and won a triumph for his cause by his able and persistent advocacy.

It is clear, then, that the references in the Gospels to the Church are not of great value. Jesus did not found a Church in the sense in which we understand it. But He called together a band of twelve disciples; the number is important; it is meant to refer to the twelve tribes of Israel. "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." [4] "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." [5] At the Last Supper He spoke also of the covenant. "And he said unto them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many." [6]

To understand these references correctly we must go back to the Jewish ideas which were the basis of His teaching. God had chosen the people of Israel as the means of revealing Himself to the world and patiently He had trained them through the centuries for their special vocation. The story of this education is told in the Old Testament. The children of Israel were given up to idolatry and superstition like the surrounding nations. God had slowly taught them to believe in Him as Spirit without any form or image and to worship Him with purity of heart and rightness of conduct. Prophet after prophet had arisen among them to call them back to the true worship of God. And yet they had often relapsed into idolatry, unbelief and evil living. But there was a small remnant who were faithful to God whatever happened.

It was the belief of Jesus that the old Israel was not faithful to its vocation but that a new Israel would arise to give to the world the knowledge of God as He is and of His power to help and redeem His people from their sin and suffering and to bring them into close, unbroken fellowship with Himself. His obscure saying that His disciples shall sit on the twelve thrones of Israel probably means that they shall be the nucleus of a new Israel who shall be the means of the salvation of the world. He had no intention of founding a new Church. His only purpose was to give a new lease of life to Israel and to give it an opportunity to exercise aright its vocation in the future.[7]

[4] Luke xxii. 30.
[5] Matthew xix. 28.
[6] Mark xiv. 24.
[7] See W. R. Matthews, *Christ*, pp. 126–134.

If Jesus did not found a new Church, it is clear that He regarded that in some special sense God works through a community of people rather than through individuals. His saying: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" [8] reflects His belief that God makes His Presence felt to groups of people in a sense in which individuals do not feel it. Religious people everywhere believe that God speaks to individuals. All earnest and sincere men who seek God do so with the unshaken conviction that God will make Himself known to them and their belief is confirmed by their practical experience in which they are led by God and receive of His Spirit. The Christian religion holds that not merely individuals but also groups as such in some special way come to know and experience the Spirit of God. It is necessary to understand clearly this truth, for it lies at the root of all our beliefs about the Christian Church.

From time immemorial religion has been considered by many thinkers to be a matter which concerns only the individual. Plotinus, the Greek philosopher, spoke of "the flight of the alone to the Alone." The modern philosopher, Whitehead, speaks of religion as what a man does with his solitariness. There is, or course, a measure of truth in these sayings. The highest and the truest religious experience seems to take place in the sphere of the individual's relation to God. This is clearly illustrated in the experience of Jesus. On the eve of His Crucifixion, when He wanted to pray earnestly, He took with Him only three of His disciples and He sought the Presence of God in their company. But as His spiritual struggle became more intense, He left behind even this inner circle of His disciples to deal with His spiritual problems alone in the Presence of God.

While we need not doubt that God does speak to individuals and often to them alone, we are taught by Jesus to believe that in a special way God reveals Himself to groups of men. There is good reason for this. We are never alone in this world; for good or ill, we are always connected with other people. When we are born we inherit qualities of mind and heart from our ancestors. In childhood, we are nurtured by other people and imbibe all too well their ways of thought and life; if they are good folk we profit from such contacts and if they are wicked people we suffer. In school we continually move with others and our development for good or ill is determined by what we hear and see others saying and doing. When we grow up into

[8] Matthew xviii. 20.

manhood our contacts increase and we experience joy or sorrow along with others, struggle with or triumph over them, and love or hate them. There is perhaps not a single moment in our waking lives in which we are not influenced by others and in which we do not influence them. All the time we help or hinder and are helped or hindered by our fellow-men. It is in this hard and difficult school of social life that the virtues of love, meekness, gentleness, patience, service and self-sacrifice are learnt. No man can separate himself completely from human society. So many of our duties are determined by our relations with our fellow-men that it is only in a society or Church we can learn aright the art of living. To be complete, religion must deal with the individual in his own secret, inner life and at the same time teach him to live in peace with his fellow-men. If we are to learn to practise the Golden Rule of loving our neighbours as ourselves, we can only do so in a society or Church and not in an anchorage or retreat. It is for this reason that Jesus teaches that God deals not merely with individuals but also with His Church.

Having said this we may safely assert that Jesus laid down no precise directions as to how the Christian Church should be organized, what officers should be appointed, how they should carry on their work and what disciplines should be enforced for making the Church receptive to the will and purpose of God; all these are later developments.

In India there is no clear recognition of the social character of religion; we have only some glimpses of it. Again and again it is taught in the Hindu Scriptures that if a man is to reach a right experience of God he must seek the help of a *Guru*. This immediately takes him into a wider sphere. A *Guru* has often many disciples; the greater the teacher the larger the number of his disciples. The spiritual aspirant lives in the company of other disciples patiently waiting for his turn; he meets them at all times and under all circumstances; he carries on his studies and takes part in worship along with them. Thus he learns to exercise the virtues of patience, meekness, gentleness and love. The only tie which binds together this company of disciples is that of personal loyalty to their teacher. The organization is loosely knit. The disciples may live in various places following different occupations. They may come to the *Guru* for a few weeks or months of spiritual instruction and then return to their own homes. It is not suggested here that the relationship between the different disciples of a *Guru* is of the same intimate and close character as exists or should exist among the

members of the Christian Church. All I am saying is that in a dim and remote way the ties which bind them together are the same as those which prevail among the members of a Church.

The faith of the Hindu *Bhaktas* in the saints is another important fact which has a bearing on our subject. Again and again Hindu *Bhaktas* express a longing to be devoted to the feet of the saints. This again shows that religion is not wholly a matter between God and the individual. Other relationships and duties enter into it. A *Bhakta* seeks the company of other devout men. He feels that by living with them and worshipping with them he reaches a new experience of God; in their company he realizes that he is able to understand God far more clearly and to serve Him far more truly than when he is by himself. Their longing for God kindles in his soul a new ardour; their earnestness stimulates him to more persistent efforts. He learns to practise their methods of meditation. He is moved to ecstasy by their fervent hymns. In their fellowship he feels God speaking to his soul more clearly and more effectively than when he is engaged in private prayer. But this again is only a glimpse of the profound truth which lies at the bottom of the Christian belief about the Church.

When the Tambaram Conference met, a group of Indian Christian laymen produced a volume of essays entitled *Rethinking Christianity in India* with a view to put before the delegates their views on the Indian Church. This book has attracted much attention. The writers in the volume are well known in India and are held greatly in respect. They and their friends have been meeting regularly once a year for the past twenty-five years to discuss the problems connected with the progress of Christianity in India. The views set forth in the book are the result of careful and prolonged thought on the part of the writers and deserve our most careful consideration. It must, however, be remarked that the writers represent only a small, though influential, section of the Indian Church. The majority of Christians in India do not hold their views. Though the essayists are men of different temperaments and hold different outlooks, they are all agreed in strongly condemning the Indian Church as it is. Again and again they come back to this theme. They hold that the Christian Church in India as it is at present is entirely opposed to the spiritual genius of India.

"That Western church organizations are the only possible things, cannot be admitted. They are the products of other aims and circumstances. In the absence of any instructions of

the Lord, the Indian mind, when it is free, as it is not free, will fashion forms for the maintenance and spread of Christianity, as the Lord directs in accordance with its natural genius. While it may absorb some elements from the West, it will transform them. Let us draw the picture of the Indian Church to be, though prophecy is sure to err. In Hinduism there is no central authority: it is not an authoritarian religion nor a totalitarian religion with the dictator. No church council or synod formulates or fulminates, though there must have been some attempts of that kind. It is, therefore, inevitable that the Indian Christian religious community should look askance at authority in religion. In all that has been stated, we do not say anything of the Roman Church. A formal authority is not constituted by the Lord and in the New Testament. There is the authority of the spiritual that may degenerate into that of the formal. It is not possible to conceive of the Indian Church or community organizing itself into huge federations or even unions. The Indian David cannot fight in the armour and with the sword of Saul. Simpler and more psychological forms of spiritual obedience will come into vogue, deriving their power not from commissions and holy orders and councils. There will be individual churches, managed by trustees and carrying on worship and preaching the word according to varying forms and traditions." [9]

There is a large measure of truth in the contention of the writers in *Rethinking Christianity in India* that the spiritual genius of India is, on the whole, opposed to the idea of a well-organized Christian Church. The question about this as well as about other matters is "What did Christ teach and practise?" If our traditions in India conform to Christ's teaching we are at a distinct advantage; it is easier for us to accept and follow these precepts of His which are in line with our own best ideals. We should be constantly on the look-out for such points of contact with the ancient heritage of India. There is a great deal in the teaching of Christ which is clear and easy for us to follow because of the spiritual values which have been cherished in India. But if there are any distinctive elements in His teaching for which there are no parallels in Indian thought we cannot abandon them. That would be to diminish altogether the importance and the value of the message of Jesus; we must be prepared to accept all that is fundamental in it whether we have anything in India to support it or not. If there is anything in India to correspond to it, our task is comparatively easy; if there

[9] *Rethinking Christianity in India*, p. 114.

is nothing to correspond to it, our task would be arduous and difficult but should not for that reason be given up.

Individualism may, on the whole, be considered to be the characteristic of the religious life of India. In the social life of India this tendency of individualism to reign supreme has been curbed by the caste system. The individual becomes a member of a caste and acts according to its mandates. He does not follow his own inclinations; he conforms to the regulations of his caste. Unfortunately the caste system, which has divided Hindu society into innumerable conflicting groups, is not much of an improvement upon the inherent tendency of the Hindu to individualism. We are concerned here with the Hindu emphasis upon individualism in the spiritual field. This cannot be regarded as an ideal or noble characteristic. As Christianity develops in India it should not follow the individualistic lines of the Hindu religion.

The utter confusion which prevails in Hinduism even on the most fundamental doctrines is due to the lack of a religious organization to state its doctrines. There is no agreement even on such fundamental questions as, Is there a God? Is He a personal or an impersonal Being? How best can He be worshipped? Has the world any reality? What is the relation of the world to God? There is considerable difference of opinion on these problems. Some Hindu thinkers assert that there is no God, others that there is a God but that He is impersonal and others again that He is personal and that He is rich in the qualities of love and goodness. The world, according to some Hindu theologians, is real and according to others unreal. This complete lack of unanimity is due to the fact that there is no common organization to pronounce on questions of orthodoxy. Indian Christians, who have come to love the complete freedom of religious thought which is current in India, must see to what a variety of conflicting beliefs it gives rise to. If there had been a Hindu Church for considering and formulating its different doctrines, Hinduism would have been saved much of the chaos in thought which prevails within its borders.

Though there is considerable difference of opinion in the different branches of the Christian Church, all Christians are agreed, at least, on the fundamentals. Members of all the Churches, whatever differences might exist in their methods of Church government, worship or doctrine, fully believe that there is a God, that He is a personal Being, that Christ is the Incarnation of God, that His life and death are the means of the world's

redemption and that the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts to help and guide us. This profound unity of thought is due to the existence of the Christian Church and of the part which it has played in the formulation of doctrine. In view of this enormous gain in unity of doctrine, we ought to be prepared to give up some of the religious freedom which individuals have claimed in India and to submit to the guidance and discipline of the Church which seeks to pronounce upon the orthodoxy or otherwise of doctrines.

Just as in the sphere of the individual's relationship to God it is imperative that constant effort must be made to eliminate human error and prejudice from God's direction, so in the life of the Christian Church strenuous endeavour must be made to distinguish between the voice of God and the wilfulness of man. Often the guidance of God in the Church is not clearly understood through man's ignorance and sin. To give only one instance, the divisions of the Christian Church are clearly the result of men's sin. There are many Christian Churches—Roman, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist—each claiming to hold to the true ideals of Christ. Though all follow the same Lord there is often little or no fellowship among them. For this God is not responsible; man's sinfulness alone is. The fact that the Christian Church believes firmly that it is led by God does not prevent the operation of human error and sinfulness. All that it does is not right; there is much in its history which can only be attributed to human frailty and waywardness.

A great deal of the opposition to the Church, which is reflected in the pages of *Rethinking Christianity in India* and which is current among some Christians in the country, is due to the fact that the Christian Churches of the West which have established themselves in India have held that their various doctrines and practices alone truly convey the mind of Christ. The Indian Church is only a copy of the Christian Church in the West. "To any one coming from the West, with a keen interest in Christianity, the Indian Churches will present no new features with which he is not familiar in Churches in the homeland. The Indian Churches will be but pale replicas. They cannot open out to him any new vistas into unknown regions of Christian experience. Ecclesiastical architecture, dress, music, rites, ceremonies and thought will be echoes, strong or feeble as the case may be, of Western religious life. There was no conscious fault on the part of the early missionaries when they planted the banner of the only Christianity they knew which they took to be

the absolute. Nor can their modern successors get rid of the same complex. Here lies the tragedy, for it is the tragedy of training and character against an alien environment. Adaptation is difficult, if not impossible." [10] The Christian in the Anglican Church is taught that whatever the Church of England has believed and practised should be the norm for the Church in India. The same with the various other Churches, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist and Methodist. It is only very slowly that the Indian Church is allowed to think or act for itself. This rigidity of the Western Churches as established in India is mainly responsible for the feeling that Indian Christians with their different spiritual heritage should have nothing to do with them. It is to be hoped that as years go by the Indian Church will be allowed complete freedom to follow Jesus in her own way. This may not be the way of Western Christianity, but as long as the Indian Church is sincere and earnest in its effort to understand the mind of the Master and to conform to it, so long must it be considered to be within its rights. The Churches of the West cannot impose upon the new and growing Indian Church all their own doctrines and practices, however valuable they themselves may have found them to be. If such wholesome freedom could be given to the Indian Church, a great deal of the criticism which is now urged against it would disappear.

The blame for the lack of freedom in the Indian Church lies not merely with the missionaries but also to some extent with the Indian leaders. Our Indian leaders are often far more conservative than the missionaries. They are unwilling to take the trouble to pioneer in the difficult field of rethinking Christianity for India and are only too content to follow literally the Christian traditions which have been brought to India from the West. Indian leaders should become conscious of this lethargy and really stir themselves up.

It has been pointed out that there is not much fellowship in the Church as worshippers gather together only once a week for about an hour's service and then disperse. This criticism is true in a large measure of the Indian Church. Here in India most Christians gather in the Church probably only once in the week and that for a short period of worship. But in the older Churches in the West there is an element of genuine fellowship. In any town or city the Church is an active centre of spiritual and social work. A great many services are held throughout the week and

[10] *Rethinking Christianity in India*, p. 104.

the people frequently come together for worship. In the parish hall every night various activities take place and the members of the Church gather together for the study of the Bible, for the discussion of modern problems, for keeping alive an interest in foreign missions and for various forms of social work among the poor in the locality. In an active Christian Church where the members of the congregation come together constantly for prayer and work, a real sense of fellowship grows up. While it is perfectly true that a great deal more needs to be done in this direction, let us gladly acknowledge that the Christian Church, especially in the lands of the West, is often a real centre of fellowship. Here also in India our Churches must become living and busy cells of worship and work. We must not merely come together once a week for prayer. Every Church in the city or village must be the means of bringing Christians together constantly so that they may worship God and serve Him in all such ways as are possible for them.

The Church and its Worship

We note an extraordinary catholicity in the methods of worship which Jesus followed. As a child of twelve He was attracted by the temple and its worship. We see the same devotion to the temple during the years of His public ministry. Like every devout Jew He went faithfully to the temple to take part in its worship. The account we have of the cleansing of the temple gives a clear insight into His love for the temple. "And they come to Jerusalem: and he entered into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and them that bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold the doves; and he would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple. And he taught, and said unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers."[11] This shows how dearly He loved the temple and how much He resented those who defiled it with their merchandise.

The worship which took place in the temple was of an elaborate nature. The building itself was a beautiful structure, on which all that devotion and money could buy had been lavished. The priests were clad in gorgeous robes. Lovely music was played during the times of worship. The sacrifices, offered by hereditary priests, followed most minutely the regulations

[11] Mark xi. 15–17.

which had been laid down of old. All the requirements of the law about worship were fulfilled; there was not a departure from them even by an iota. Only the Levites (a people set apart) officiated and there were strict regulations as to which of them could take part in the various ceremonies and at what times. The type of worship which was followed in the temple was highly ritualistic, appealing at once to the eye and the ear. It is striking that Jesus conformed faithfully to this worship.

The suggestion has been made that there is no note of sadness in His prophecy about the destruction of the temple. "And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to shew him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." [12] This saying cannot be considered as indicating clearly His attitude towards the temple. When He was speaking about the destruction of the temple He was merely foretelling a future event without saying anything about how He Himself felt about it. The cleansing of the temple which seems to have taken place twice, once at the beginning of His ministry and again towards its close, is a more adequate indication of His attitude to the temple.

Jesus was equally at home in the worship of the synagogue, though there was a world of difference between it and the worship in the temple. There was only one temple in Jerusalem whereas there were many synagogues scattered up and down Palestine. The synagogues were plain, simple buildings and the worship which took place in them was of an informal character. The important part of the service was the exposition of a passage of Scripture. Any pious Jew, who was respected by his fellows, could be invited to read a passage from the Old Testament and to explain its meaning. We know from the Gospels that in the early part of His ministry Jesus worshipped regularly in the synagogue (wherever He was) on every Sabbath day. As the nature of His revolutionary teaching became evident and as opposition to Him from the religious teachers of the day increased, it looks as if He was not called upon to expound Scripture during worship in the synagogues in the latter part of His ministry; for that, of course, He was not responsible; the short-sighted and conservative nature of the rulers of the synagogue must be blamed for it. There is plenty of evidence in the Gospels for us to say that Jesus worshipped regularly in the synagogues

[12] Matthew xxiv. 1, 2.

and that He took active part in their services whenever He was called upon to do so.

It is quite remarkable that Jesus who loved the temple loved also the synagogues. Among His followers those who love ritualistic services find it difficult to worship in a simple, informal service. Those who are accustomed to the freedom of a simple service find it equally difficult to understand what spiritual help can be gained from an elaborate form of worship.

To these services of public worship Jesus added His own constant and abundant private prayer. In the chapter on His inner life we have tried to understand something of the intensity of the methods of prayer and meditation which Jesus followed frequently in private, often seeking the quiet of a mountain top or of the seaside for His devotions.

The writers in *Rethinking Christianity in India* suggest that there can be no real and genuine religion in a well-organized Church. They hold the opinion that where there is careful organization with rules and disciplines about worship, real spiritual life cannot flourish.

" In the Acts we have a conspicuous instance of the movement of life; highly dynamic without any institutional support. The situation may be said to be unparalleled in religious history. The disciples were under the immediate command of the Holy Spirit who planned, directed, arranged. Every worker looked to the invisible Spirit for orders and implicitly obeyed them. The directing agency was real enough and near enough to be consulted and was as much available as Jesus when He was in the body. The disciples threaded in and out, banded and disbanded, combined and separated—all the time working in union and precision—for the spreading of the Gospel. No visible institutions, no concrete sources of power are to be found anywhere. Such was the vision of Jesus. If the Acts of Apostles gives us a picture of the state of things which Jesus desired, the place of the visible Church should be taken by the invisible Holy Spirit. The Church as we know it was not in the scheme of Jesus. It came into existence only when the Holy Spirit ceased to be a reality and the sense of His immediate direction evaporated." [13]

The example of Jesus, who profited both from the temple and from the synagogue, is an effective answer to this criticism. Also among His followers many mystics with deep spiritual experience have flourished within organized Christianity. St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross.

[13] *Rethinking Christianity in India,* p. 95.

St. Theresa, St. Catherine of Sienna and several others were religious geniuses of the first rank. They sprang from the Roman Church with its elaborate ritual and rigid organization. While they were unhappy about its errors and often protested against them, initiating large movements of reform, they fully conformed to the ways of the Roman Church. They worshipped in it regularly, received its sacraments frequently, sought the spiritual help of its priests and implicitly obeyed its rules. To suppose that there cannot be real spirituality where there is organized religion is to ignore the clear, abundant and indisputable evidence of history.

The Quakers in the Christian Church have as a body protested against elaborate and rigid organization in worship and in Church government. Their leader, George Fox, was a genuine *Bhakta* who lived close to God and depended daily upon His immediate direction. His followers have now been in existence for over three hundred years in England and in other parts of the world. Among them there have been many saintly men and women who have had a first-hand experience of God. The Quakers have also to their credit many remarkable achievements in the application of the principles of Christ to the social problems of the day. They have stood up courageously for the position that all wars should be given up and that wealth should be equitably distributed among the different classes of people. It is worthy of note that, in spite of the splendid record of the Quakers both in the spiritual and in the social realms, their numbers have not increased to any great extent. The total membership of the entire Quaker group throughout the world stands somewhere about a hundred thousand. This demonstrates clearly that simple and unorganized forms of worship and church government do not have a wide appeal. It is only the elect few who can respond to this call to worship God in silence and to follow His immediate guidance; the vast majority of people require for their needs carefully organized and more or less set forms of prayer and worship.

In India Hinduism comprehends both ritualistic and mystical religion. The temples themselves are carefully built according to the instructions given in the *Agāmas* of yore. The worship which takes place in them is most elaborate; it follows to the letter regulations which have come down from ancient times. The priests who offer the worship are a hereditary caste who for generations have done this work following the strictest rules. The prayers which are recited are also of ancient origin. No

freedom or spontaneity is allowed in the various rites which are prescribed in connexion with worship in Hindu temples.

There have also been always *Sannyāsis* in India who have sat loose to temple worship. They have regarded themselves as being above the requirements of ceremonial religion as they have attained to a high stage of spiritual development in which worship in a temple is not essential. Those who speak as if all Hindu religion is free and unorganized are no doubt thinking of the *Sannyāsis,* always few in number, who do not take part in popular worship, but who seek God in the solitudes of the forest or of the mountain. When talking about Sri Sankarācharya of the Sringeri Mutt, I inquired whether he took part in temple worship and I was told that he did so, not so much because he found it helpful for himself as because he wanted to set a good example in public worship to other Hindus. As a follower of Sankara and as his greatest present representative, he would believe that he himself is above the need for worship, having realized his oneness with the Supreme *Nirguna Brahman* who neither demands nor enjoys the worship of devotees. But whatever his own personal experience may be, Sri Sankarācharya identifies himself with the mass of Hindus and fits into their religious organization. On the basis of what a few *Sannyāsis* in India may say with regard to religious rites, it is incorrect to maintain that the institutional element in religion is entirely alien to the Hindu spirit.

The opposition to an organized Church in India will lose much of its point if more freedom is allowed to the Christians in India to worship in their own way. When missionaries came first to India they built churches exactly like those in their homelands and taught the people to worship just as their own people worshipped in Europe or in America. A slow but perceptible change is now taking place in this matter. The new churches which are being built seek to follow whatever is characteristic and attractive in Hindu architecture. Hymns of devotion sung from the hearts of Christian people in their vernaculars are replacing gradually the quaint translations of English or German hymns. Experiments in new forms of service are permitted in a limited way in the various Churches, both liturgical and free.

It is significant that the Tambaram Conference gave its authoritative approval for the forms of worship in the different Churches in the mission lands to conform more closely to their national heritage. "We have seen that the use by every wor-

shipping group of its native heritage of speech and posture, of verse and music, of craftsmanship and architecture, not only helps to make Christ's Church the true home of men, but should be the offering of each nation's gifts to the Crucified and Risen Lord. At the same time we have realized that many of the ancient treasures of Christian worship, as well as some that are modern, are a part of the heritage of the whole Christian family and may become at home in any land. In this connexion we have noted that poems, prayers and meditations from the non-Christian past, have sometimes found and may yet find their place in the devotional treasures of the Christian." [14]

In a country like India far more attention should be given to advanced methods of prayer and meditation than is being paid now. From the rich storehouse of the religious experience of India a great deal can be drawn which will prove of use to the Indian Christian. At present far too few people know anything of the higher methods of contemplation about which there is so much valuable teaching in India. There is a great deal of literature about different types of *Yoga* and innumerable hints could be gathered from them for our use.

The Church and its Witness

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." [15]

The duty of the Church to witness to the power of Christ is urgent during these difficult times. Here in India with so many communities scrambling for political power and with a future so uncertain, the duty of the Christian Church to preach its message effectively is daily becoming more insistent. Indian Christians should not separate themselves from the rest of India as a social and political unit. There is much danger along this line. Already most Christians in our country tend to live in their own separate quarters and to pursue their own distinctive interests. They seem to have no real share in the larger life of

[14] *The World Mission of the Church*, p. 64.
[15] Matthew v. 13–16.

India. This is not as it should be. As the children of India we should identify ourselves with all the best movements in the country making for its political and social uplift. The desire that we should have separate votes in the political assemblies and that in the various services we should have a representation proportionate to our education and numbers seems to be the only ambition of some Indian Christians. What is far more important is that the Christian Church should clearly bear witness to the ideals of love, selflessness and service which were put forward by its Lord.

The critics of the Christian Church in India have been zealous in pointing out its drawbacks and there is much truth in what they say. In spite of vigorous propaganda carried on by missionaries from the West on a large scale for over a century, the Church is still a lowly factor in the national life of India. There are less than seven million Christians, most of them drawn from the depressed classes. The mass movements which have taken place in the country have had their dangers and it is not possible to say clearly that the people who have been drawn into the Christian Church through them have always been led by the deepest and truest of spiritual motives. The higher castes with their culture and social position have been barely touched. In the Christian Church itself there is far too little unity. The many divisions of the Western Churches have been established and perpetuated in India. There has been little original or creative Christian theology. Except one or two outstanding persons like Sādhu Sundar Singh and Pandit Rāma Bāi, the Indian Church has not produced many persons remarkable for their spiritual attainments. All this, we must confess with shame, is quite true.

At the same time the Christian Church in India must be considered to have initiated certain momentous changes. The India of to-day is vastly different from the India of a generation or two ago. There is a powerful movement on foot to raise the social position of the seventy millions of *Harijans* and to give them the same opportunities and responsibilities as the other people in India possess. The women in India are coming to their own. They are entering schools and colleges in large numbers and are taking an active share as leaders in many departments of life. Both these profound and amazing changes in the social life of India have been probably influenced by many factors such as the spread of modern education, the facilities for travel and intercourse with the other nations of the world and the awakening

of a keen desire for political independence. No impartial student of Indian affairs can possibly deny that, along with these factors, Christianity must be given the credit for a large and real share in this social and political awakening which has swept over the country. The millions of outcastes who have been absorbed into the Christian Church, the love and care with which they have been educated and the striking intellectual and spiritual gifts which they have shown must also be reckoned as among the potent factors which have been at work in recent years in India, making for the uplift of the *Harijans*. The freedom which has been given to women in Christian circles, the thousands of schools for girls which missions have run and the scores of women's colleges which missions have established have had a large influence in the mighty change which has taken place in the social position of Indian women.

In the religious sphere the most striking change is the new attitude of love and devotion to Christ which has spread throughout the country. The figure of Christ has made an irresistible appeal to the religious heart of India. There is a real and profound desire to understand what He taught and to practise it. The new spirit of service and sacrifice which is widely seen in India to-day is no doubt largely due to the influence of Christ in the hearts of men.

The Christian Church in India cannot remain content with this record of service. It must ceaselessly bear testimony, both by word and deed, to the need for Christ in the complex situations of modern India. The tension between the different communities in India—Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Parsee—can only be solved by a real application of the spirit of Christ's love. In the new democracy which every lover of India desires for this country, the purity, selflessness and service which are required of its citizens can only be found in Christ. The work of emancipation of the seventy millions of *Harijans* has just begun. There is a great deal to be done before this vast body of people can really enjoy their birthright as human beings with full opportunities for education and leadership in all spheres of life. The problem of widespread illiteracy has to be tackled effectively; there is a tremendous amount of hard, continuous and unselfish labour ahead of us in this matter and only Christ can provide the vision and power necessary for such service. The education which has been given to women has only touched a fringe of their vast numbers. The problems created by India's appalling poverty must be dealt with; the distribution of wealth must be

made just. All these and other tremendous social and spiritual tasks are waiting to be performed. The Indian Church must bear its steady witness to the power of Christ in these and various other directions. The work before us is far beyond the resources of the small Indian Church, with its limited spiritual and moral resources. But with the power of God to strengthen it, the Indian Church could and must bear effective witness in the coming days in India.

The Holy Spirit in the Christian Church

In *Rethinking Christianity in India* Mr. P. Chenchiah says: "The Church as we know it was not in the scheme of Jesus. It came into existence only when the Holy Spirit ceased to be a reality and the sense of His immediate direction evaporated." [16] This is a stupendous charge to make against the Christian Church and needs to be examined fully.

All Christians believe in the Holy Spirit of God and realize that He makes Himself evident to those who earnestly and sincerely wait on Him. We hold that to-day, if we are sincere in our prayer, He will guide us and strengthen our feeble efforts. If this is true of the present time we must accept that throughout the history of the Christian Church during the twenty centuries of its existence there have been millions of earnest Christians who have waited on Him, both as individuals and as Churches, and who have fully believed that they have received His help. Who are we to say that He helps us only to-day and that He did not help the devout and earnest Christians of old? If there is a Holy Spirit, as we believe there is, and if He is willing to come into the hearts of earnest seekers after Him, as we believe He is always willing, then we cannot but say that He has been at work in the past as well as in the present. It is not possible to mark off clearly the past from the present and to maintain that He is present only now and that He was not present in the past ages of the history of the Christian Church.

Let us examine briefly the history of the Christian Church to see whether the Holy Spirit was at work during the previous centuries of its existence. There is a great deal of truth in the charges which have been made against the Christian Church in the West. The step which Constantine took in the fourth century A.D. to make the Christian Church a powerful political organization has left an evil mark on its subsequent history for all ages.

[16] *Rethinking Christianity in India*, p. 96.

Time and again in the various countries of Europe the Christian Church has associated itself closely with current political powers and degraded the purity and strength of its message. We have already referred more than once to the divisions in the Church. We may also speak of the uncertain voice with which the Church has spoken on such important questions as economic injustice and the muddled relationships between the different nations.

While all this is true, we cannot but say that the Church has kept alive in the world the vision and power of Christ through the centuries. The roll of Christian saints, remarkable for their sincere devotion, spiritual fire and unselfish service, is a long and distinguished one. To the long list of well-known saints must be added the names of humble, obscure Christians who lived in communion with God, knew the joy of forgiveness and peace and served their fellow-men in many noble ways.

The student of the Christian Church must also recognize that steadily its vision of Christ has become clearer and its understanding of His purpose for men has become richer. To give only two examples, Christians are advocating to-day a new outlook about the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means and about the distribution of wealth. Not long ago Christians were content to practise the ideals of truth, love and justice in their own personal spheres. Now it is being widely recognized throughout the Christian Church that it is not enough to practise truth, love and justice in our personal dealings; we must also practise them, if we are true Christians, in the wider spheres of national and international life. Disputes between nations cannot be settled by force; they must be decided by arbitration in a spirit of love and justice. The wealth that is available in the world must be available to all classes—educated men and manual workers. Every child that is born in the world must be given the opportunity to make good. It is true that even in the Western countries where the Christian Church has a great prestige and an immense following, the voice of the Church when it speaks on such matters is still ineffective. Not long ago a party of Christians went to Geneva to influence the members of the League of Nations to deal with the questions which came up before it in the Christian spirit but nothing came out of their effort. The point, however, is that the Christian Church is understanding more and more clearly the mind of Christ and trying to apply it in various directions which were not even thought of before.

The Indian Church cannot afford to ignore the lessons writ

large in the history of the Christian Church. As a student at Oxford I was once invited to lunch with a distinguished theologian. The talk turned on the subject of God's revelation to man and I expressed my firm belief in God speaking to men today and guiding them. The following morning I received a long letter from my host in which he urged me to remember that not merely in the present but also in the past God had spoken to men. There are many questions such as methods of church government, forms of worship and rules of discipline which arise in connexion with the existence of the Christian Church. Jesus has given no clear instructions on these matters. We, beginning afresh our life as a Christian Church in India, cannot neglect the accumulated experience of the Christian Church. This would be to blot out of our vision twenty centuries of Christian life and of the work and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. Unfortunately the voice of God which spoke through the ages was not always clearly heard; it was often lost in the clamour of politics, worldly ambition and human sin. The discerning student must sift the wheat from the chaff and decide which is the work of God and which is the work of man.

As new problems in the life of the Indian Church arise, we would do well to draw not merely upon our own heritage as Indians but also upon our heritage as Christians. The Christians in India have a double heritage, the heritage of India and the heritage of the Christian Church; it would be folly to ignore either heritage. To suppose that we can deal with all the problems before us by direct guidance from God is to forget the existence of history. We are dim of understanding and God's purpose is not always clearly revealed; so we must use all the possible resources at our disposal; the study of Church History is one such important help. Many things become quite clear as we watch the work of the Holy Spirit at operation in the course of the long and chequered career of the Christian Church.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion

On the eve of His Crucifixion our Lord instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many

unto remission of sins." [17] We may now inquire what exactly Jesus meant by calling the bread which He blessed His body.

We all know what the human body does. The body is the instrument by which the human spirit works in the world. We have been reading recently a good deal in the papers about C. F. Andrews. No one saw or touched the actual spirit of C. F. Andrews. It was invisible and intangible. When Andrews heard about suffering anywhere, caused by a flood or by some unjust legislation or by the greed of capitalists, he immediately went to the place, gathered the necessary information and sought to relieve the suffering by using all the power he had with the pen and the tongue. Thus his feet, his hands and his tongue enabled him to fulfil his purpose of helping the poor and the needy. His body was the instrument which obeyed his will and enabled him to achieve the purpose he had in mind.

The idea that the world is the body of God is central in Bhakti religion and philosophy. There is a famous passage in the *Brihad-Āryanyaka-Upanishad* which speaks of the world as being the body of God:

"He who, dwelling in the earth, yet is other than the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who controls the earth from within—He is your soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the waters, yet is other than the waters, whom the waters do not know, whose body the waters are, who controls the waters from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the atmosphere, yet is other than the atmosphere, whom the atmosphere does not know, whose body the atmosphere is, who controls the atmosphere from within him —He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the wind, yet is other than the wind, whom the wind does not know, whose body the wind is, who controls the wind from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the sky, yet is other than the sky, whom the sky does not know, whose body the sky is, who controls the sky from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the sun, yet is other than the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body the sun is, who controls the

[17] Matthew xxvi. 26–28.

sun from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the quarters of heaven, yet is other than the quarters of heaven, whom the quarters of heaven do not know, whose body the quarters of heaven are, who controls the quarters of heaven from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in breath, yet is other than breath, whom the breath does not know, whose body the breath is, who controls the breath from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in speech, yet is other than speech, whom the speech does not know, whose body the speech is, who controls the speech from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the eye, yet is other than the eye, whom the eye does not know, whose body the eye is, who controls the eye from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the ear, yet is other than the ear, whom the ear does not know, whose body the ear is, who controls the ear from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the mind, yet is other than the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is, who controls the mind from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who, dwelling in the understanding, yet is other than the understanding, whom the understanding does not know, whose body the understanding is, who controls the understanding from within—He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal." [18]

Rāmānuja has made this teaching about the world being the body of God fundamental in his philosophy. "Brahman—essentially antagonistic to all evil, of uniform goodness, differing in nature from all beings other than itself, all-knowing, endowed with the power of immediately realizing all its purposes, in eternal possession of all it wishes for, supremely blessed—has for its body the entire universe with all its sentient and non-sentient beings . . . and constitutes the Self of the Universe." [19]

[18] *Brihad-Āryanyaka-Upanishad*, III, viii. 3–10, 16–20, 22. Tr. by R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, pp. 115–117.

[19] Rāmānuja, *Sri Bhāshya*, I, iv. 27. Tr. by G. Thibaut, *The Vedanta Sūtras* with the commentary of Rāmānuja, p. 403.

What do Hindu thinkers mean when they speak of the world as being the body of God? Let Rāmānuja explain. "We are thus led to adopt the following definition—Any substance which a sentient soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purposes, and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation, is the body of that soul. . . . In this sense, then, all sentient and non-sentient beings together constitute the body of the Supreme Person, for they are completely controlled and supported by him for his own ends, and are absolutely subordinate to him." [20]

As Christians we may also well say that God has made the entire universe as His body. God is love. His great purpose is to manifest His love to men and to receive their love in return. Love desires love. God does not remain aloof, immersed in His own bliss. He is not an impersonal being, devoid of all qualities. Only when men realize His love and return it fully, yielding themselves up voluntarily into His control, is He satisfied. How does He achieve this purpose? As a spirit God has no form. He cannot be seen or heard or felt. So He creates the world in order that through it His character may be revealed. The world of physical objects is the instrument by which He makes known His nature and evokes the worship and love of His devotees. The material universe makes clear His infinite wisdom and power. The natural laws in the world and the faithfulness with which all objects obey them reveal the nature of God's mind.

It may be asked whether the whole world in all its parts reveals the mind of God equally well. There are many sights and sounds of nature; do all of them manifest God with the same clearness? We must acknowledge that some aspects of nature reveal Him more clearly than others. The light of the sun is a wonderful thing; its beauty and grandeur are beyond words. The light of the sun is also the source of life; but for it millions of beings would perish. And yet normally we do not appreciate the light of the sun. In a tropical country like India when the sun blazes with fierce heat we are rather apt to grumble about it. But in the cool of the evening when we see the splendours of a sunset, we are more inclined to adore God for His power and glory. This means that all natural phenomena are not equally effective in revealing God to us and in calling forth our adoration.

The world of nature reveals primarily the wisdom and power

[20] Rāmānuja, *Srî Bhāshya,* II, i. 9. Tr. by G. Thibaut, *The Vedanta Sūtras* with the commentary of Rāmānuja, p. 424.

of God. The love of God is not so clear from nature. Many thoughtful persons have been troubled by such questions as these: Why should there be earthquakes and floods which destroy thousands of men and women in a moment? Why should there be lions, tigers and cobras which kill men and beasts? That is why the English poet speaks of nature as being "red in tooth and claw." To make manifest His love God took a human body and became incarnate as Jesus Christ.

Thus God took, as it were, a second body, the fleshly organism of Jesus. He lived on this earth and passed through the various experiences of men. He was hungry and thirsty, He had friends and He felt the emotions of joy and sorrow. God revealed Himself to men through the human body of Jesus. The words which Jesus spoke about God gave an entirely new idea of Him. The life of active goodness which He led, His ready compassion with the suffering and the needy and His willingness to relieve suffering immediately, all these showed the infinite love of God. The physical world with its beauty and power does not manifest clearly and beyond doubt the goodness and love of God. What the material universe impresses us with is rather the power, glory and wisdom of God. The teaching of Jesus and His life of selfless service and suffering conveys an altogether different conception of God. This life of selfless service and suffering culminated in the death on the Cross. Jesus was crucified and endured untold agony and shame. The manifestation of God's love became absolutely clear on the Cross. God endured the utmost suffering in order to demonstrate His love for us and to win our love and fellowship in return. There are many beautiful sayings in the scriptures of the world which may be placed alongside the teachings of Christ. The growing knowledge of different religions brings to our attention many parallels to the utterances of Jesus in the Gospels. It may also be possible to gather from the lives of the saints from different parts of the world incidents which remind us of events in the life of Christ. Nowhere but in the Gospels do we read of the suffering and shame which God endures with the purpose of making clear His love to men. Thus the suffering and death of Jesus on the Cross is the culmination of God's manifestation of His love to men. This revelation takes place gradually, becoming clearer little by little, until on the Cross it reaches undoubted certainty.

God took yet another body—the bread and wine which He blessed on the eve of His crucifixion. The Lord of the Universe selected bread and wine and made them the instrument for fulfilling His purpose. The bread and wine which He blessed were

henceforth to be His body and blood. They were to reveal to men His utter love for them leading to the complete sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. The institution of this sacrament immediately before His death on the Cross is deeply significant; it shows the intimate connexion between this sacrament and the sacrifice on the Cross. The bread and wine were to become a new body of our Lord. In tasting them we taste His Love. In seeing them we see Him yearning for mankind and ready to suffer to the utmost for them. This sacrament deepens our love for Him and unites us with Him. Truly the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord because through them He fulfils His end of making known His love to men and gathering them into the intimacy and closeness of fellowship with Him.

The question may be raised as to whether communion with God is not possible without the use of such a sacrament. As Archbishop Temple says, "No doubt Christ is always and everywhere accessible; and He is always the same. Therefore it is possible to make a 'spiritual communion' which is in every way as real as a sacramental communion. But it is far harder. Our minds are greatly affected by our bodies. When with our very bodies we repeat the sacrificial act by which the Lord interpreted His death, we find ourselves empowered to intend with fuller resolve our union with Him in His obedience to God. The consecrated elements are quite truly and certainly a vehicle of Christ's Presence to our souls." [21]

God took yet another body—His Church. The life of Jesus on earth came to an end. His contact with men under human conditions drew to a close. So God planted in the world His Church as an instrument by which His rule over men would become real. The Church was to be another medium through which He would make plain His will and render it effective in the world.

There may be times when we envy those who lived in Palestine during the life of our Lord. We may think that they were specially blessed because they saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears the Lord Jesus. But let us remember that just as, when they opened their homes, He walked into them with His human body and discoursed with them and helped them, so to-day when we open the doors of our hearts, He enters them with His own body and blood at the time of Holy Communion. His Presence becomes real to us. We behold Him full of grace and truth and experience fellowship with Him.

[21] William Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 241.

CHAPTER XI

THE TEACHING OF JESUS ON THE FUTURE LIFE

ANY attentive reader of the Gospels marks a difference between the teaching of Jesus on the future life as given in the Synoptic Gospels and His teaching as recorded in the Fourth Gospel. The main difference consists in the fact that in the first three Gospels we read about the Kingdom of God and in the Gospel of St. John we read about eternal life.

The Kingdom of God

The very first words in the Gospel of St. Mark describing the public ministry of Jesus are these: "Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the good news.'"[1] This is the outstanding note of the whole life and teaching of Jesus Christ. To understand the conception of the Kingdom of God, we must go back to the books of the Prophets. The idea that Jehovah rules over His people occurs again and again in the Old Testament. There we find that men constantly looked back upon the reign of King David (which they idealized) and imagined that a far greater king would come from the house of David and inaugurate a glorious era of peace and prosperity to the people. There was also the idea of "the Day of the Lord." At first it was thought that the Lord of Hosts would conquer all Israel's enemies on that day and pass judgment on them. The Hebrew prophets gave a new content to this idea. They did not think of the Kingdom of God merely in terms of nationalist triumph and revenge. In the book of Isaiah, for instance, the knowledge of God which the Hebrews had was regarded as spreading throughout the whole world and all the nations were considered as being bound together by a common worship, with its spiritual home at Jerusalem.[2] At first divine judgment meant the slaughter of the enemies of the children of Israel. Amos wrote trenchantly against those who looked forward with hope to God's day; on that day, said he, Divine

[1] Mark i. 14, 15.
[2] Isaiah ii. 2–4.

wrath would be poured out upon them.[3] It was the deep conviction of the Hebrew prophets that the judgment would certainly take place. John the Baptist had this in mind when he exhorted men to flee from the wrath to come by repentance.

We must now turn for a moment to the picture of the Kingdom of God as it is given in the Apocalyptic writings. The word "Apocalypse" means unveiling and the Apocalyptic books are so called because they lift the veil from the future and try to penetrate into the secrets of God's dealings with men. The book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the Revelation of St. John in the New Testament are examples of Apocalyptic books. As parts of the Bible they have always been known in the Christian Church. But in recent years several other Apocalyptic books have come to our knowledge and they are held to have been written from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100 by anonymous authors.

The Jews had been independent for a brief time under their own rulers, known as the Maccabees. This period of independence, though quite short, had been a glorious one. But they soon lost their independence and were finally absorbed in the vast Roman Empire. The Hebrew Prophets had thought that the judgment of God and His reign would come as a normal historical event. But the future was so black that the Apocalyptic thinkers began to say that the reign of God would come not through any historical event (such as victory in a battle) but through powerful divine action, which would usher in a new age with a new heaven and a new earth. The divine judgment would take place and the wicked Jews and the Gentiles would be sent to hell. The dead, who had all suffered under the iron rule of oppressors, would rise from their graves to participate in this era of peace and prosperity. But the Day of the Lord will only come after great tribulations—wars, famines and earthquakes. We cannot be quite sure whether these Apocalyptic ideas were current only in small circles or were widely spread.

Jesus took over many of these ideas of the Prophets and Apocalyptists and put into them His own distinctive message. One day as He sat on the mount of Olives some of His disciples asked Him, "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign that these things will be accomplished?" The long reply of Jesus to this question is given in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark. It is so much like the Apocalyptic books that it has been called "the Little Apocalypse." The material in this chapter is found also in Matthew and Luke. In His

[3] Amos v. 18, 19.

reply Jesus describes the woes which must take place before the Kingdom of God could come. In His reply occurs also the saying, "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." [4] Here Jesus plainly intimates that He did not know when the Kingdom would come in its full glory. But He seems to have expected its coming very soon. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." [5] He exhorted His hearers earnestly to watch and pray because they did not know the hour. He said that that day would come when no one expected it, like a thief in the night.

Along with the Prophets and the Apocalyptic writers, Jesus connected the coming reign of God with God's judgment. In the Day of the Lord, which began the new age, there would be retribution and the just would be separated from the unjust. In the Apocalyptic books all the Gentiles were condemned indiscriminately. But Jesus taught that the members of the chosen race of Israel were just as likely to be punished as those outside. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." [6] He also said that while the children of Israel, who regarded themselves as possessed of special spiritual prerogatives, would be excluded from the Kingdom of God, outsiders would be taken in. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth." [7] During the reign of God the powers of evil would be finally defeated; in a moment of ecstasy Jesus saw "Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." Those who attain to the Kingdom of God would be as the angels and earthly conditions such as marriage would not prevail among them. In it the rule of God would be complete and His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus looked forward to the advent of a new and glorious

[4] Mark xiii. 32.
[5] Mark ix. 1.
[6] Matthew xxiii. 37, 38.
[7] Matthew viii. 11, 12.

era with Himself as the Son of Man to inaugurate it. This belief was fully accepted by the early Christians. In St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians we read: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."[8] This is the earliest Christian book known to us. From this we may gather that in the early Church the Christians fully expected Christ to come and judge the world soon and we may also conclude that this hope of theirs was based upon the teaching of Jesus Himself.[9]

The Christians in the first and second centuries earnestly expected the second coming of Christ. This eagerly looked for event did not take place. The meaning of Christ's teaching about His second coming has always been a real problem in the Christian Church.

Eternal life as Fellowship with God

In the Gospel of St. John there is a significant answer to the great question of the real meaning of the second coming of Christ. This book was written about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century after Christ. The Christians at that time were sore perplexed about the second coming of Christ not taking place. The phrase "the Kingdom of God" which occurs so frequently in the Synoptic Gospels is found only three times in the Gospel of St. John.[10] Even in these three passages its spiritual and unworldly nature is clearly set forth. In the Gospel of St. John the doctrine of eternal life takes the place of the conception of the Kingdom of God. This change of phraseology is attributed by modern scholars to the influence of Greek Philosophy. The Apocalyptic ideas of the Jews were utterly alien to Greek Philosophy and the early Christians, who had either studied Greek Philosophy or had imbibed the fundamental ideas of Greek Philosophy which were floating in the air at that time, found it impossible to understand the Apocalyptic picture of the Kingdom of God. Such an Apocalyptic Kingdom

[8] 1 Thessalonians iv. 15–17.
[9] W. R. Matthews, *Christ*, pp. 38–64.
[10] John iii. 3; iii. 5; xviii. 36.

had not actually come and perhaps Jesus did not mean that it would come.

Jesus had sometimes spoken about eternal life and He had used it as the equivalent of His great phrase, "the Kingdom of God." In Matthew, for instance, we read: "And if thy hand or thy foot causeth thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee *to enter into life* maimed or halt, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. And if thine eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is good for thee to *enter into life* with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the hell of fire." [11] Jesus says in St. Mark, "And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out: it is good for thee to *enter into the Kingdom of God* with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell." [12] Here it should be noted that life and the Kingdom of God are used synonymously. "And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest *enter into life,* keep the commandments." [13] "And Jesus seeing him said, How hardly shall they that have riches *enter into the Kingdom of God!*" [14] Here again life and the Kingdom of God are both used interchangeably. It is probable that in His own teaching Jesus sometimes said "the Kingdom of God" and sometimes said "Life" or "Eternal Life." The Fourth Evangelist practically drops out the doctrine of the Kingdom of God with its many Apocalyptic associations which are so difficult to understand and replaces it by the doctrine of eternal life.

St. John's attitude towards this question, then, seems to be that the phrase "Kingdom of God" raises in the minds of people all sorts of wrong ideas (e.g. that the Kingdom is a worldly Kingdom or that it is likely to come immediately), and that therefore it is safer to speak of eternal life, which has no such associations.

There are two main features in the teaching about eternal life as given in the Gospel of St. John.

I. Eternal life is fellowship with God. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live." [15] "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;

[11] Matthew xviii. 8, 9.
[12] Mark ix. 47.
[13] Matthew xix. 17.
[14] Luke xviii. 24.
[15] John xi. 25.

and that believing ye may have life in his name." [16] Believing in Christ does not mean here that we should accept with our mind certain intellectual propositions about Him but it means that we should devote ourselves entirely, with all our thought, feeling and will, to Him. In other words, believing in Christ means being in fellowship with Him. We take Him as the Lord of our life, accept the ideals which He puts before us, practise them to our utmost ability and receive of His indwelling spirit, which is also the Spirit of God. Again in St. John's Gospel we read: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." [17] From these two verses it is clear that eternal life is the life of endless fellowship with Christ.

We must note that in speaking of life as fellowship with Christ, John is only developing fully certain germs of thought which are found in the Synoptic Gospels. The most important passage in this connexion occurs in a discussion which the Sadducees had with Jesus.[18] They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. This may have been either because as descendants of the old aristocracy they were conservative in their thinking or because they were worldly in their outlook and rejected any belief in the future life as likely to interfere with their worldliness. Our Lord said to them: "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living: ye do greatly err."

In the Old Testament God is often called the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. In some important directions Christ rejected its teaching about God. In the Old Testament, for instance, God is often spoken of as a vindictive and jealous Being. This idea finds no place in the teaching of Christ. It is significant that Christ accepts this name for God—the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—and sets the seal of His approval on it. We may assume that He regards this name as giving an adequate idea of His Father. It is therefore worthwhile seeking to find out what exactly it means.

God is the God of individuals. He is, it is true, the Lord of

[16] John xx. 31.
[17] John vi. 54, 56.
[18] Mark xii. 10–27.

the whole human race. But He is even more; He is the Lord of each member of the human race. God is not merely the Lord of the whole Christian Church; He is the Lord of every individual being who composes it. Sometimes it seems difficult to accept this teaching. People ask: How can God be vitally concerned in each one of the millions of beings whom He has created? It is easy enough to say, as some do, that He takes a personal interest in all the great men of the world. But how can He watch over every one, whether important or not? Our Lord's teaching is that the very hairs of our head are numbered. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows."[19] A Psalmist says, "The Lord is my shepherd."[20] All the sheep in a flock may appear alike to a stranger, but the shepherd knows each one of them by name. He understands the tricks and the ailments of each sheep. A mother may have several children. To others all these children may more or less seem alike, but she knows them as quite distinct persons. She remembers the food they had when they were young, the bright things they said and the friends with whom they played. Years may pass but the mother's memory of their individuality never fades. God is deeply interested in each person; He is the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

It is not merely in this life that God is concerned with different individuals but also in the future life. God continues to be the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob through eternity. Christ uses this name for God when speaking of the future life, indicating that this is one of His names through eternity. This name implies that in the future life Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will continue to be separate persons and not lose themselves in God. The same thought is clear also in His words: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."[21] In the Kingdom of Heaven, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob shall continue to be different individuals and not become merged in God.

The question as to whether human personality survives in the future life or is lost in God has been discussed again and

[19] Luke xii. 6, 7.
[20] Psalm xxiii. 1.
[21] Matthew viii. 11.

again in India. Every thoughtful person who thinks of the future life at all is perplexed about it. Many Hindus hold that the final goal of religion is absorption in God. The fascination of this ideal for the Indian mind is tremendous. Perhaps the reasons for such attraction are these:—

1. There is a genuine desire to recognize the absolute supremacy of God *(Brahman)*. No one is equal to Him; He is all in all. The highest ambition of the human soul is to lose itself in God. Once a Christian theological student said to me in class, "Is it not a glorious ideal—this ideal of merging one's self in God? Does it not show that ultimately God alone is supreme and that nothing else matters?"

2. The futility of the ego is another reason underlying this doctrine. We are weak, miserable creatures; all our life is suffering and struggle; the sooner it ends the better.

3. The world moves in cycles. Life and death take place alternately. Trees put forth their fresh young leaves and afterwards shed them. Men and women are born and then die. The universe comes into being and is then dissolved into its original elements. For this reason Hindu thinkers speak of different *Kalpas* or ages, in the beginning of which the worlds with all their living beings come into existence and at the end of which they all go back into *Brahman*. Once a Hindu friend said to me: "God is responsible for all His creatures. He brings them into existence and His responsibility for them continues as long as they live. That is why I hold that they are finally absorbed in Him. This means that He takes them back into Himself. Otherwise they are thrown on their own resources through eternity and His responsibility for them seems to cease."

It is clear, then, that for various reasons the ideal of absorption in God has proved most attractive to thoughtful men in India. The Christian teaching on this subject is quite different. It is that all through eternity men continue to be their distinctive selves. They never lose their personality in God. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob do not cease to be separate persons. They continue all through eternity their varied existences. They have their different thoughts and feelings, their different spheres of activity and their different tasks, but they are all wholly surrendered to God in love and devotion.

In a matter like this we cannot go merely by our own desires and hopes. Some crave that their personality should be lost in God and others are anxious that their personality should survive in fellowship with Him. The real question is, what is the nature

of God, not what we desire or like. God is love. That is His eternal character. There can be love only when there is someone to love and someone to be loved. God can be said to love only when there are other beings whom He could love. If they cease to exist, how could He exercise His love towards them? To speak of God as love in and by Himself is meaningless.

There is a measure of truth in all the reasons which influence the Hindu mind to accept the doctrine of absorption, but not the entire truth.

1. God is supreme. But this does not mean that He is supreme in His isolated splendour. Such supremacy counts for nothing. He is supreme in His relation to His creatures. They depend on Him completely. Their life is wholly centred in Him. His love for them is the greatest fact in their life; when it is gone, everything becomes dark and gloomy.

2. It is true there is a great deal of suffering and struggle in our life. Much of this is due to a wrong development of our ego. I think too much of myself. I am attached too much to my own inclinations and desires. I love certain things and hate certain others. All this leads to misery and trouble, but life is not all misery. As a Hindu friend once told me, "The ego is the source of our enjoyment too." There is much joy in the world which is quite legitimate. This joy is due to the fact of our separate personalities.

3. When God takes us back into Himself, He does not necessarily fulfil His responsibility in the best sense. God's ways with us are mysterious and often unfathomable. But in the light of our highest knowledge, there is a nobler and higher way in which He could continue to be responsible for us all through eternity. That is, even if we have our separate feelings and thoughts and activities, He could go on helping us and guiding us. He could stimulate our highest desires and stir up our noblest longings. In this way He will continue to exercise His responsibility for us. He does not leave us stranded on the shores of eternity. His Presence is real to us. His love for us is unbounded. Just as these experiences are true of this life, so are they true of the life to come.

Dr. W. R. Inge writes: "'God is not the God of the dead but of the living.' This is the only argument for immortality from Christ's own lips; and we cannot go much further." [22]

An interesting story is told in the *Katha Upanishad*. A Brah-

[22] W. R. Inge, Article on "Eighty years Old," *The Madras Mail*, June 18, 1939.

man youth went to the land of Yama, the god of death. The god himself was absent and no one took the trouble to entertain the guest, who remained unfed for three days. When Yama returned home he came to hear of the grievous offence he had committed; to neglect a Brahman guest was regarded as a serious crime. To compensate for the insult, Yama offered to give Nachiketas (that was the name of the Brahman youth) anything for which he asked. Nachiketas availed himself of this generous offer and asked Yama to tell him what would happen after death:

"This doubt there is about a man departed,—
Some say, 'He is,' some, 'He does not exist';
This would I know, instructed well by thee." [23]

Yama was surprised at this request. He had not expected it. He did not want to reveal what was in store for men after their death. So he tried his best to put off Nachiketas from pressing for an answer to this question by offering him sons and grandsons, cattle, elephants, gold and horses, far-flung dominions of the earth and long life. But Nachiketas rejected them all scornfully:

"Ephemeral things! They wear away, O Death,
Whatever vigour of his powers a man may have.
All life, moreover, at the best is brief:
Thine be the chariots, thine the dance and song!

Never with wealth can man be satisfied.
Shall we get wealth if we have seen thee?
Shall we even live as long as thou shalt reign?
That boon then must I choose, and that alone." [24]

Thus pressed, with no way of escape, Yama expounded his teaching about the future life:

"The wise self is not born and does not die,
From naught else comes it nor does aught become:
Unborn, eternal, endless, this the Ancient,
Is slain not with the slaying of the body.

If the slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
Both of them do not understand,
This slays not, neither is it slain." [25]

[23] *The Katha Upanishad*, i. 20, translated by J. N. Rawson, *The Katha Upanishad*, p. 75.
[24] *The Katha Upanishad*, i. 26, 27. (*Op. cit.* p. 77.)
[25] *The Katha Upanishad*, ii. 18, 19. (*Op. cit.* p. 103.)

The meaning here is that the soul or self is eternal and death a mere bodily appearance. Then the *Upanishad* goes on to teach that immortality comes from the yoking of the individual spirit with the Supreme Spirit, which forms its inmost being and inspires it for the highest ends:

"Less than an atom, greater than the great,
The Self is hid in every creature's heart:
The unstriving man beholds Him, freed from sorrow;
Through the Creator's grace, he sees the greatness of
the Self." [26]

There is a special aptness in St. John describing our fellowship with God as life or eternal life. These terms indicate the genuinely inward character of the life lived in God. There is nothing in the world which is more closely bound up with us than our life. Life forms an absolutely essential part of ourselves and is the source of all that we are and do. God is often spoken of in the writings of the Hindu saints as their life or as the life of their life.

"As the Lord of Creation, thou movest in the womb.
'Tis thou thyself that art born again.
To thee, O Life, creatures here bring tribute—
Thou, who dwellest with living beings!
This whole world is in the control of Life." [27]

Eternal Life here and now

II. The other main feature in the teaching about eternal life as given in the Gospel of St. John is that it begins here and now.

According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus teaches that the judgment of men is always taking place. Christ does not sit in judgment on men on the final day, but men themselves by their various choices decide their own future destiny either for good or for evil. This point has been discussed at some length elsewhere in the book and need not be considered again here.[28]

The great experience of eternal life, the Fourth Gospel teaches, is here and now possible to the soul. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth *hath* eternal life." [29] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, *hath* eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but

[26] *The Katha Upanishad*, ii. 20. (*Op. cit.* p. 106.)
[27] *Prasna Upanishad*, ii. 7, 13, translated by R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principles of Upanishad*, p. 382.
[28] See Chap. VII.
[29] John vi. 47.

hath passed out of death into life." [30] "And this *is* life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." [31]

Was this a part of the teaching of Christ or was it an addition by the Fourth Evangelist? In the Synoptic Gospels we find that Jesus regarded the Kingdom of God not merely as coming in the future but as already being here, a fact which men have to accept immediately. "And turning to the disciples, he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not." [32] When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples He instructed them to teach, "The Kingdom of God has come nigh unto you," which does not mean that the people to whom the missionaries went had to prepare for the Kingdom which would come very soon but it means that the opportunity of entering the Kingdom, which is here and now, has been given to them.[33] When the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come He answered: "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the Kingdom of God is within you." [34] According to Jesus the main evidence for the Kingdom of God having come is the manifestation of new divine energy. In this He is at one with the Prophets and the Apocalyptists. To assure John the Baptist that the Messiah had indeed come Jesus said, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me." [35] Thus we see that the thought that the Kingdom of God had already arrived is clearly present in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. What St. John has done has been mainly to change the name from "the Kingdom of God" to "eternal life."

Before leaving the topic of the difference between the conception of the future life as found in the Synoptic Gospels and that in the Fourth Gospel, we may quote a remark by Dr. Fosdick: "Far from being a matter of merely historic interest,

[30] John v. 24.
[31] John xvii. 3.
[32] Luke x. 23, 24.
[33] Luke x. 9.
[34] Luke xvii. 20, 21.
[35] Matthew xi. 5, 6.

this contrast in the New Testament between Jewish and Hellenistic ways of thinking about the future life has remained ever since an unresolved dilemma in Christianity. In general, the best thinking of the Church has followed the Fourth Gospel, but always the old picturesque apocalyptic drama, with its intermediate state, bodily resurrection, theatrical parousia, and millennial reign, has lured the imagination of multitudes." [36]

The idea that it is possible to experience here and now fellowship with God is quite popular in India. A man who has attained such an experience is known as a *Jīvan Mukta*. Practically all the schools of Hindu Philosophy accept the fact of this experience. Only Rāmanuja holds that to call a man *Jīvan Mukta* is a contradiction in terms; for if he is still in the body, he is not released.

In an interesting poem that modern Hindu saint, Aurobindo Ghose, says:

" There is a silence greater than any known
To earth's dumb spirit, motionless in the soul
That has become Eternity's foothold,
Touched by the infinitudes for ever.

A splendour is here, refused to the earthward sight,
That floods some deep flame-covered all-seeing eye;
Revealed it wakens when God's stillness
Heavens the ocean of moveless Nature.

A Power descends no Fate can perturb or vanquish,
Calmer than mountains, wider than marching waters,
A single might of luminous quiet
Tirelessly bearing the worlds and ages.

A Bliss surrounds with ecstasy everlasting,
An absolute high-seated immortal rapture
Possesses, sealing love to oneness
In the grasp of the All-beautiful, All-beloved.

He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills
Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal's breast,
Unrolls the form and sign of being,
Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

Although consenting here to a mortal body,
He is the Undying; limit and bond he knows not;
For him the aeons are a playground,
Life and its deeds are his splendid shadow." [37]

[36] H. E. Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, p. 290.
[37] *Six Poems of Sri Aurobindo*, pp. 22–26.

It will be noted that the thoughts emphasized in this poem are the experience of God which is attained by the devotee in deep silence and the joy and the peace which flow into his soul from such experience. A Christian *Jīvan Mukta* has also an experience of wonderful joy. When Sādhu Sundar Singh was thrown into prison for Christ's sake he wrote on the fly-leaf of his copy of the New Testament, " Christ's Presence has turned my prison to heaven." A Christian *Jīvan Mukta* not merely experiences joy but he also works for God. The reality of his fellowship with God is tested by the abundance of his good deeds. The Hindu doctrine speaks as if all action is wrong and that the saint who has become a *Jīvan Mukta* goes on acting because of certain impulses already present in his experience and that his actions will not in any way involve him in future births. Thus the actions of the Hindu *Jīvan Mukta* are, as it were, conceded to him by the backdoor, whereas actions are the very life and soul of the Christian *Jīvan Mukta.*

CHAPTER XII

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS

THE fact of suffering had long engaged the thought of Old Testament writers. Why should there be so much suffering in the world? Why should good men suffer and wicked men flourish? Such suffering was regarded either as a penalty for sin or as a means of discipline. The man who suffered had either committed some grievous sin and was being punished for it or he was being trained to walk along the path of goodness. It was not merely the suffering of individual men which perplexed the Hebrew thinkers; it was also the suffering of the Jewish nation. They had been constantly harassed, their lands invaded and their possessions taken away. At one time they were in exile in Babylon far away from their native country and suffering untold miseries. What was the purpose of all this suffering and persecution? Why should it fall to the lot of the Jews to suffer thus? Was there any meaning in such suffering?

The prophet "Isaiah" who lived in exile in Babylon between 546 and 539 B.C. and who wrote chapters xl.–lv. of the book of Isaiah had a new revelation given to him. He saw that the purpose of the suffering was redemptive. Israel did not suffer as a penalty for its sins. Israel did not suffer because God wanted to purify it through affliction. But Israel suffered so that it might save the world. This great thought is set forth in several passages, which modern scholars have called "the poems of the Servant of the Lord."[1] We quote here the most important passage. "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."[2]

[1] Isaiah xlii. 1–4; xlix. 1–6; l. 4–9; lii. 13; liii. 12.
[2] Isaiah liii. 3–6.

Isaiah's discovery of this new meaning of suffering was a momentous event in the history of mankind. Never until then had such an understanding of the purpose of suffering been revealed to any seer. Even those who had seriously meditated on the fact of suffering in the world had come to the conclusion that the suffering was meant by God either to be a punishment or a discipline. Isaiah's illuminating discovery consisted in the fact that such suffering was now realized to be a means of salvation. He did not explain how exactly this salvation was achieved but he was sure that suffering was a means of salvation. Though this idea was expressed in stirring words by Isaiah it did not immediately affect the thought of the Hebrews; the prophets who came after him did not take up this idea nor did they use it in their preaching and writing.

The Suffering of Jesus

Five centuries after Isaiah, Jesus realized that He was the Suffering Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah had spoken. Jesus had studied carefully the book of Isaiah.[3] He quoted directly from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah and said: "I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors."[4] Again, Jesus said that He came "to give his life a ransom for many."[5] This saying of Jesus reminds us of some of Isaiah's words.[6] At the Last Supper Jesus said, "The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him."[7] This verse probably refers to the poems of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah; there is no other passage in the Old Testament to which they could possibly refer. Isaiah had spoken of Israel as a Suffering Servant and had said that their suffering would prove to be the means of the salvation of the world. Jesus identified Himself with the Suffering Servant. He would suffer, the innocent for the guilty. By His pain and suffering men would be redeemed; they would be brought close to God; they would realize His great love for them.[8]

The life of Jesus was one of great suffering. We may mention briefly the several ways in which Jesus suffered.

1. *The renunciation of the family.* Jesus taught clearly and emphatically again and again that those who would truly follow

[3] Luke iv. 16 ff.; Matthew xi. 2 ff.
[4] Luke xxii. 37; Isaiah liii. 12.
[5] Mark x. 45.
[6] Isaiah lii. 3; liii. 11, 12.
[7] Mark xiv. 21.
[8] Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, pp. 172–195.

God should renounce their families and friends. Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the Gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." [9] He literally followed His own teaching. He had a tender and loving heart and yet He placed the Kingdom of God above the ties of family. The misunderstanding between Him and the members of His family was serious. "And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself." [10] We see here the extent of the misunderstanding even among His own relations and friends about His work. To say that a man is beside himself is the hardest criticism which his people could make. Even if they suspect that he has gone mad they would try to keep it a secret as long as possible. If other people begin talking about it they would try and hush up the rumour. Only when it is absolutely impossible do a man's friends and relations tell others that he is not quite well. We note how deep the misunderstanding must have been when we see that as Jesus was actively engaged in His ministry they went out openly to Him and tried to stop His work. His conduct seemed to them strange. He no longer frequented His own house; He ceased to see His relations and friends. He was surrounded by new friends and disciples; He taught strange doctrines; He always worked for others without taking any care of Himself; He wandered from place to place. All these struck His people as marks of insanity. He might have expected that at least His own intimate friends and relations would have understood Him. This blow must have been terribly hard for Him to bear. He really gave up His mother, His brothers and His friends for the sake of the Kingdom of God. He was a true *Sannyāsi*.

2. *The failure of His mission.* His work at Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum and other cities was a failure. "Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Howbeit I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in

[9] Mark x. 29, 30.
[10] Mark iii. 21.

the day of judgement, than for you." [11] Here we see the sorrow of Jesus for the cities which had not profited by His preaching. He was full of love for men and He longed that they should come close to God and live according to His will. But the Kingdom of God meant nothing to them and work for God became irksome. Jesus preached forcefully that men should repent. He explained His thoughts with the help of parables which every one could understand and which no one could easily forget. His sayings arrested immediate attention. His own life was even more powerful than His preaching. His devotion to God was complete; He worked for Him day and night; He did not think of His own comfort or convenience. The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had beheld His wonderful ministry. They had heard His words; they had seen His life; they had come to know the spirit of devotion and selflessness in Him. And yet they had not repented. This was a source of great sorrow to Jesus. That is why He condemned them so severely. We can understand how it must have hurt Him to use such harsh language in condemnation of others. His was a naturally loving disposition. It was easier for Him to speak kindly and gently than critically and violently. He believed in the virtues of patience, gentleness, kindness and mercy, and always practised them. The conduct of the people who had seen His ministry and had not repented exhausted even His patience and He could not but condemn them strongly. The failure of His mission in these and other places must have given Him real suffering.

3. *The bitterness and hatred of the religious authorities.* All that was connected with religion was dear to Him. The temple and the law attracted Him greatly. But He knew that the Pharisees and the Scribes were hypocritical. They were careful about the letter of the law and not its spirit; they made long prayers and devoured widows' houses; they made a fuss about small things and neglected weighty matters. All this distressed Jesus. He did not like that religion should be made a cloak for wickedness. It troubled Him that the leaders of religion who ought to have set an example to others were themselves so corrupt. He condemned severely their hypocrisy, self-complacency, deceitfulness and fanaticism. "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter. . . . Woe unto you,

[11] Matthew xi. 20–22.

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that hath sanctified the gold? Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgement, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel." [12] This is only a part of what He said against them. There was a great deal more He spoke by way of condemning them. These words also must have pained Him deeply. He could not have uttered them lightly. He did not like using such violent language and yet such language seemed quite necessary.

Such bitter words of condemnation provoked the wrath of the Pharisees and scribes. They could not bear Him. They did not like the freedom with which He interpreted the Scriptures; they did not like the familiar way in which He spoke of God; and certainly they did not like His popularity. Men flocked to Him to hear Him and to witness His wonderful ministry. They walked for miles to see Him and hear Him. Even if He was in a desert place they went out in thousands in search of Him. They listened so eagerly to His teaching that they did not notice the passage of time. They forgot that it was getting dark, that they were in a desert place, that they had to return home and that otherwise they would have to remain hungry and famished through the night. Jesus had to think of these things for them. His immense popularity aroused the opposition of the Pharisees and the scribes. They thought that their religion was in danger and tried to make Him unpopular by trapping Him in His words. But His popularity only increased. They finally decided to kill Him. The bitterness and hatred of the acknowledged religious leaders, with whom He would naturally like to have co-operated, must have certainly added to the suffering of Jesus.

4. *Anticipations of the Cross.* Jesus knew where all this would lead Him. Even early in His ministry He had said that there would come a time when He, the bridegroom, would be taken away and His disciples, the friends of the bridegroom,

[12] Matthew xxiii. 13–17, 23, 24.

would mourn His loss. And Jesus said unto them: "Can the sons of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day." [13] On three different occasions during His ministry He spoke clearly about the suffering and death which were ahead of Him. He might have spoken on other occasions equally clearly, but there is no record of them. First occasion: "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." [14] Second occasion: "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again." [15] Third occasion: "And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again." [16] Once He said: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." [17] At the Last Supper He repeatedly spoke about His betrayal.[18] Thus Jesus spoke several times about His suffering and death. We may gather from this how deeply rooted the idea of His suffering must have been in His own mind. One does not speak so frequently about a matter unless it occupies a great deal of one's thought. So through the years of His ministry the shadow of the Cross was on Him.

5. *His anticipated suffering and death and the Transfiguration.* The account of the Transfiguration given in all the three Synoptic Gospels describes a significant prayer.[19] Apparently

[13] Mark ii. 19, 20.
[14] Mark viii. 31.
[15] Mark ix. 31.
[16] Mark x. 32–34.
[17] Matthew xx. 28.
[18] Matthew xxvi. 17–35; Luke xxii. 7–38; Mark xiv. 12–26.
[19] Luke ix. 28–36; cf. Matthew xvii. 1–8; Mark ix. 2–8.

the thought of His coming death was seldom out of His mind. The purpose of the suffering before Him also constantly engaged His mind. In an hour of intense prayer He had an ecstatic experience. His figure was bathed in glory and His face shone with light. The spirits of the two great prophets of old, Moses and Elijah, appeared to Him and He communed with them about His coming death. All this shows the extraordinary depth and intensity of His anticipation of His death. He knew that He was the Suffering Servant, that His suffering, severe and prolonged as it was, would only end in death and that His death was for the salvation of men.

We should note here that the suffering of Jesus was accompanied by real joy. He was prepared to do whatever the Father required of Him. The thought of His suffering and death created in Him a genuine joy which showed itself in the light which shone on His face. On this point we have to say more later in this chapter.

In the accounts of the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, we have an hour of great agony described.[20] The cruel death which He had anticipated all along was now near. He knew that He was the Suffering Servant. He knew that His suffering would be the means of the world's salvation. And yet as the death drew near He was afraid and His soul was deeply troubled. He prayed to God earnestly that if it were possible He might be spared this crisis. "And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt."[21] He submitted Himself entirely to the Father's will; He was prepared to make any sacrifice which the Father wanted of Him. This readiness which He had throughout His life showed itself in a wonderful manner during the crisis. His life was not His own but the Father's. There was no suffering He was not prepared to undergo if God demanded it of Him; there was no manner of death He would not accept if it was God's will for Him; there were no insults He would not endure, no pains He would not bear if it was part of God's plan for Him. The earnestness of His prayer was seen on His tense face. The prayer was repeated three times. Sweat fell down from Him like drops of blood, showing His intense spiritual struggle.

6. *The denial of Peter and the desertion by His disciples.* In the beginning of His ministry Jesus called together a few

[20] Mark xiv. 32–42; cf. Matthew xxvi. 36–46; Luke xxii. 40–46.
[21] Mark xiv. 36.

disciples. He fixed His hopes on them and fully expected that they would understand Him and carry on His work. He chose them with great care after earnest prayer, and He spent much time in training them. They lived with Him; they listened to His preaching; they saw His life. They were impressed with its unequalled devotion, selflessness and power, and yet they never seemed to enter fully into the purpose of His work. They thought that His mission was primarily a political one, with the object of freeing the Jewish people from the tyranny and oppression of Roman rule. They aspired after places of importance in the new worldly kingdom which they expected Him to bring in. Even if He taught spiritual things they understood them in a material way. All the personal contact with His rare character seemed to make little difference to them. When their Master was arrested they were seen at their worst. They deserted Him during the critical hour. And Peter, who had a ripe spiritual knowledge and who had said that he would even die for the Master, denied any knowledge of Him.[22]

This disloyalty of the disciples at the critical time must have burnt itself into the soul of Jesus. The bulk of people, He knew, were untrustworthy. Religion did not mean very much to them. A good many of them probably flocked to Him only from curiosity. In any case they never came into close contact with Him; they did not move long with Him; they only saw a glimpse of Him now and then. If they were fickle and failed Him, it was not a matter for great surprise. Not so the disciples. They had had unusual opportunities for knowing Him. They had moved with Him closely and intimately and for a long time. He had laid bare His soul to them. He had patiently explained everything to them. He had tried to awaken in them a vision of the Kingdom of God. He had tried to infect them with His own enthusiasm for social work. He had put before them the lofty purpose of His mission in the world. And yet, after all this long and careful training, they failed to support Him during the hour of His crisis. The unusual opportunities they had enjoyed for coming into close contact with Him had meant nothing to them. They were as unreliable as the common people who had gathered in their thousands to see Him, often from mere curiosity.

7. *The shame of the Cross.* The form of death penalty which was chosen for Jesus was that of Crucifixion. This punishment was given to the worst offenders and criminals. Jesus was

[22] Mark xiv. 66–72.

the noblest among men. He had lived a life of complete self-denial. He had been fully devoted to God; work for the Kingdom of God had been His passion and into this toil He had thrown Himself heart and soul. He had sought to bring men into intimate communion with God. He had gone about doing good, helping the sick and the suffering, asking the poor to cast their cares on God, teaching the rich to return their ill-gotten gains and pleading for real religion and true love among men. The end of such a life of selfless service and devotion was the death on the Cross. No more disgraceful punishment could have been chosen. In suffering this penalty He had the company of those who had violently rebelled against Roman rule and who had shed innocent blood. The disgrace of this awful form of death which was inflicted on Him as if He were a low-minded, ignoble, mean rebel or murderer must have added considerably to the suffering of Jesus. Had He hoped till the last that even if He was going to die it would be by a different manner of death than this? We do not know. But this we can say that when it was finally decided that He should be crucified, His heart must have sunk in despair.

8. *The Loss of the Presence of God.* "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [23] The sense of the Presence of God was the deepest need in the life of Jesus. "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." [24] "Yea and if I judge, my judgement is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." "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." [25] He always lived in the company of His Father; He worked as the Father wanted Him to work. The Father's joys were His joys. He identified Himself with the Father's love for mankind and He sorrowed over the sins of the world as the Father also did. And now at this awful hour as He hung on the Cross He felt the sense of the Presence of God leaving Him. We do not understand this mystery. God never forsakes His children. He never leaves those who seek Him without making His Presence felt to them. He would never have left Jesus, particularly during

[23] Mark xv. 34.
[24] John xvi. 32.
[25] John viii. 16, 29.

that hour of His direst need. But so it was that Jesus felt that the reality of God's Presence was no longer there to comfort and support Him.

The words " Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? " are the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm. The twenty-second Psalm describes the feelings of a saint as he experiences a sense of separation from God. " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? All they that see me laugh me to scorn: They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, Commit thyself unto the Lord; let him deliver him: Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him." [26] Jesus must have been familiar with this Psalm from His childhood. It now flashed through His mind as He hung upon the Cross. Added to all the suffering through which He was passing there was a new spiritual pain, deep, intense and real, that His Father had forsaken Him.

9. *The physical agony.* Then there was the unbearable physical agony. He was scourged until blood flowed from His veins. A crown of thorns was pressed on His head. He was spat upon and slapped by the soldiers. While weak and exhausted from these punishments He had to carry a heavy Cross until He stumbled and fell down under its crushing weight and another man had to be found to carry it. Nails were driven into His hands and feet to fix Him on the Cross, on which He hung in great pain. His tongue was dry with thirst. This story of the unrelieved physical pain and suffering of Jesus on the Cross has never lost its appeal to the Christian Church. The saints have again and again meditated with deep sorrow on the details of this agony. Archbishop F. Temple, who was not easily moved by emotion, could never speak about the love of God without tears and his Good Friday sermons were always stirring.[27] Not merely the saints but all those who follow Christ and to whom their faith means anything have been moved by this sight of the purest and noblest among men passing through such indescribable pain and suffering.

St. John's Account

We have so far drawn all our information about the passion and death of Jesus from the Synoptic Gospels. We now go on to set down what St. John's Gospel says on this subject. When reading St. John's Gospel we must remember that it was written

[26] Psalm xxii. 1, 7, 8.
[27] William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel,* First Series, p. 15.

long after the lifetime of Jesus and that it is likely to contain some of the later beliefs and ideas of Christians. In the course of their experience Christians had come to understand Jesus better. Their knowledge of Him had deepened; their faith in Him had become stronger; their understanding of His work had become clearer. This advance in Christian knowledge and faith is often found in the Fourth Gospel.

Here also we see something of the intense struggle which took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. "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." [28] Here also we see Him deliberately laying down His life. "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. This commandment received I from my Father." [29] Here also we see that from His death new life will come forth. "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." [30] Here also He says that His death on the Cross will be the means of the world's redemption. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." [31] They will have fellowship with God, who will become real to them. His life will flow into their souls; His power will support them and His love will encompass them. They will live in God and God will live in them. There will be the closest and the most intimate connexion between them and God. Sin will no longer separate the children from their Father. A reconciliation will take place and the children will return to the bosom of the Father. Instead of living away from Him, busy with their own follies and sins, they will live close to Him. His wisdom will illumine them and His Presence will be clear to them. All this will come about through the death of Jesus.

In the Gospel of St. John the passion and death of Jesus are

[28] John xii. 27.
[29] John x. 17, 18.
[30] John xii. 23–25.
[31] John iii. 14, 15.

spoken of as the manifestation of His glory. "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." [32] "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him." [33] "And Jesus answereth them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified." [34] "When therefore he was gone out, Jesus saith, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; and God shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall he glorify him." [35] "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: And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one." [36]

Here we have a new glimpse of the meaning of the suffering of Jesus. The word "glory" was often used of God by the ancient Jewish prophets and thinkers. "And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." [37] "And ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth speak with man, and he liveth." [38] "And the glory of the Lord mounted up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory." [39] These ancient prophets saw God as light and splendour; He was radiant with beauty and He appeared before them with the brightness of the sun. They came to think of Him as the God of glory.

In the Fourth Gospel the passion and death of Jesus are

[32] John vii. 39.
[33] John xii. 16.
[34] John xii. 23.
[35] John xiii. 31, 32.
[36] John xvii. 1, 5, 22.
[37] Exodus xxiv. 16, 17.
[38] Deuteronomy v. 24.
[39] Ezekiel x. 4.

regarded as occasions for the revelation of His glory. As Archbishop William Temple says: "It is from the Cross that the light of God's love shines forth upon the world in its fullest splendour; that therefore is in a supreme degree the 'effulgence of his glory' (Hebrews i. 3). Even if the Cross had had no results, it would still be His glory; for His death is the sealing of His victory. That His body should die was no defeat; defeat for Him must have taken the form of cursing His enemies or sinking into self-concern. But through all the anguish love was serenely unshaken. To die thus was, in and for His own person, to conquer hate. But it was more than that, it was the means of winning that great multitude of whom the first-fruits were now ready to be gathered in. From the Cross He puts forth His might—

'The Man of Sorrows! And the Cross of Christ
Is more to us than all His miracles.'" [40]

When St. John describes the meaning of the death of Jesus as the revelation of His glory we note in his words a spirit of joy, confidence and dignity. The death of Jesus is radiant with hope for mankind. A feeling of exaltation is aroused in us as we contemplate the death of Jesus and all that has and will come out of it. We are no longer weak, mean, sordid creatures, close to the dust of the earth. The possibilities in us are immense. We are redeemed into a new life and are lifted to higher levels of feeling and achievement. We begin to experience that union with God which is our birthright, and which we have lost through our sin. The things of the world have taken us away from God but the death of Jesus brings us back to Him. Our spiritual status increases. We are immortal beings and are destined for undying fellowship with the Eternal Spirit. We do not live our brief lives and die, to be forgotten for ever. Our bodies may perish but our spirits live in unending communion with the Supreme Spirit. This is possible through the death of Jesus, which is the manifestation of His glory and ours. With Him we are glorified, for we are moved to higher spheres. In Him we live a new life and through Him we do great things and He is glorified thereby.

In St. John's Gospel we also see the joy of Jesus. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be fulfilled." [41] "But now I come to thee;

[40] William Temple, *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, First Series, p. 195.
[41] John xv. 11.

and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." [42] Jesus uttered these words on the eve of the Crucifixion and shed a new light on His inner life. We have seen in this chapter how deeply and intensely Jesus suffered. When thinking of His suffering we must not forget His joy or our account of Him will be incomplete.

One who believes in God truly has real joy. God is joy and it flows into His soul. He is not moved hither and thither like other men. Changing circumstances of the world do not affect him. Whatever it be, success or failure, victory or defeat, health or sickness, he knows that God is with him. The infinite resources of God are available to him. The unlimited power of God is his. In moments of doubt and difficulty he can draw upon the clear knowledge and wisdom of God. When troubled the peace of God sustains him. The love of friends and relations may change, but the love of God never changes. So a *Bhakta* is always filled with joy. Jesus was always filled with joy. He was established firmly in God. The power and love and knowledge of God were always available to Him, and so His joy was never disturbed.

From a passage in St. John's Gospel we understand further the nature of the joy of Jesus. " Jesus perceived that they were desirous to ask him, and he said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves concerning this, that I said, A little while, and ye behold me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world. And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you." [43] In these verses Jesus describes the joy of His disciples, but we may say that this account of the disciples' joy gives us some idea of the Master's joy as well. The pang and travail of a woman during childbirth is followed by the joy that a boy has been born. This is a universal experience. Suffering yields place to joy. The suffering of Jesus is likewise followed by joy, for a new life is born for the world at the foot of the Cross. We are redeemed from the terrible burden of our sin and guilt. A new power

[42] John xvii. 13.
[43] John xvi. 19–22.

becomes ours, the power to love God fully, the power to live constantly in His wonderful Presence and the power to bring others within the reach of that Presence. We see a clear vision of God's love. Great is the joy of Jesus at these spiritual triumphs of men. For their sake He is willing to suffer to the utmost. That is why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus as "the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame." [44]

Some of the Christian saints sought to follow Jesus literally in this respect. Along with their suffering there was real joy. St. Francis of Assisi gave up all for Christ and lived in constant recollection of His passion. Francis saw and felt the print of the wounds of Christ on his own body. And yet what a joyful soul his was! He was always radiant in his faith. His life was a continuous song. Here in India we have the example of Sādhu Sundar Singh who knew the joy of the Cross. The more he suffered the deeper became his joy. At Rasar he was thrown into a well which was full of dead bodies, as a penalty for having preached the Gospel in forbidden territory. There his joy was immense. "The physical suffering was great, but in spirit I was happy. I began to pray to God, and His joy flowed into my heart to such an extent that I forgot the gruesome place I was in. A wonderful peace filled my heart, so lovely that I cannot describe it." "Never have I experienced greater blessedness in the peace of Jesus, received through prayer, than during those very days. Christ's peace turned that deep well into the Gate of Heaven." "How was it possible to have the peace of God in the pitch-dark night, in the midst of corpses and dead men's bones? Joy like this, peace like this, comes from nothing in this world. God alone can give it. While I was sitting there in the well I reflected that I never felt this kind of happiness while I lived in the house of my parents in comfort and luxury. Whence, then, came this overflowing joy in that terrible den? I saw then, more clearly than ever, that Jesus is alive, and that it was He who was filling my heart with peace and joy." [45]

Hindu Teaching about the Value of Suffering

In modern India there is a clear recognition of the value of suffering as the most effective means of winning men. Mahātma Gandhi has coined the word *Satyāgrahi* to describe any one who

[44] Hebrews xii. 2.
[45] Friedrich Heiler, *The Gospel of Sādhu Sundar Singh*, pp. 114, 115.

seeks to establish a noble cause by his personal suffering. *Satyāgrahi* literally means one who uses the force of truth, that is, soul-force. This is how Mahātma Gandhi describes the work of a *Satyāgrahi*. "In a reform the *Satyāgrahi* seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore resign himself to being excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully, but he must actively love his persecutors. The latter honestly believe that the reformer is doing something sinful and therefore resort to the only means they know to be effective to wean him from his supposed error. The *Satyāgrahi,* on the other hand, does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments, but by penance, self-purification and suffering. Any resentment of the persecution, therefore, would be an interruption of the course of discipline he has imposed upon himself. It may be a prolonged course, it may even seem to be never ending." [46]

"Man's abiding happiness," says Rabindranath Tagore, "is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God. They make it easier for him to part with all that he has, not excepting his life. His existence is miserable and sordid, till he finds some great idea which can truly claim his all, which can release him from all attachment to his belongings. Buddha and Jesus, and all our great prophets, represent such great ideas. They hold before us opportunities for surrendering our all. When they bring forth their divine alms-bowl we feel we cannot help giving, and we find that in giving is our truest joy and liberation, for it is uniting ourselves to that extent with the infinite." [47]

Rādhākrishnan says: "The Cross is not an offence or stumbling-block to the Hindu, but is the great symbol of the redemptive reality of God. It shows how love is rooted in self-sacrifice. The story of Hinduism has many instances of *Rishis* and Buddhas, who have . . . suffered more than they deserved for the sake of the world. This avoidable suffering is not the result of past sins." [48]

Speaking of India, T. L. Vaswani says: "Centuries ago she

[46] D. S. Sarma, *The Gāndhi Sūtras,* p. 43.
[47] Quoted in G. K. Chettur's *Altars of Silence,* p. 93.
[48] Quoted in E. W. Thompson, *The Word of the Cross to Hindus,* p. 191.

abandoned the pursuit of knowledge, truth for creeds and ceremonies. She confounded religion with externalism and caste. She disregarded the human claims of the poor. She forgot that knowledge was fellowship with life. She lost touch with the *Atman*. For of the *Atman* it hath been written, 'He hath established Himself eternally in sacrifice.' And in another passage the Lord hath declared: 'Sacrifice am I.' India's hope is in the day when her educated sons and daughters will realize that knowledge is Fellowship with the God of the Poor and will return to the ancient worship of *Yajna Purusha*—the Spirit of Sacrifice." [49]

It is clear from these utterances of the leading modern thinkers of India that the value of suffering and sacrifice is fully recognized. Is this a new thought in India or is it an ancient Indian ideal? They are agreed in saying that Jesus helped men supremely by His suffering and death, but they are also inclined to think that this method is not new to India. Buddha is mentioned as one who suffered and won men by virtue of his suffering. Buddhism is a vast religion with great ideals and traditions and it is impossible in this book, which confines itself to the Hindu background, to consider how far or in what sense Buddha helped men by his suffering. Rādhākrishnan speaks of the *Rishis* who have followed this method to establish truth and righteousness but he does not give the names of any of them. Mahātma Gandhi often writes about the ideal of the *Satyāgrahi* and he mentions the names of Harischandra, Prahlādha, Nandanar and Mīra Bāi as its supreme examples in India.[50]

Harischandra was the king of Ayodhya and promised to give the sage Visvāmitra a hundred thousand pieces of gold for performing a costly sacrifice. Visvāmitra, being a wicked *Rishi*, put forth all his supernatural powers to make Harischandra break his word. By a ruse Visvāmitra obtained from Harischandra his entire kingdom. As a king Harischandra would have had no difficulty in fulfilling his promise, but now he was a poor man and had no money to draw from. But Visvāmitra taunted him constantly to give him the promised sum of money or if that was impossible to say that he had never made the promise. Rather than break his word Harischandra sold his wife and son as slaves and himself became a slave and raised the needed money. He was placed in charge of the burning ground of Benares and had

[49] Quoted in G. K. Chettur's *Altars of Silence*, p. 26.
[50] D. S. Sarma, *The Gāndhi Sūtras*, p. 115.

to execute persons who had received the sentence of death. For every dead body that was burnt Harischandra collected some cloth and money and gave them to his master; he also received a handful of rice which he kept for himself and cooked in the burning ground as his food. Further misfortunes happened to his family. His son was bitten by a cobra and the mother brought him to the burning ground for his cremation. At that time the prince of Benares was murdered and the officers of the city arrested her as the murderer, for her child looked very much like the murdered prince. As the executioner, Harischandra was ordered to cut off the head of his wife, when the gods intervened and saved her. Thus for the sake of the truth Harischandra suffered terribly and the story of his sufferings is constantly remembered in India with all its harrowing details.

Prahlādha was the son of Hiranyakasipu who was the king of the demons. As a child Prahlādha showed great devotion to Vishnu. He talked of nothing but Vishnu and spent much of his time in teaching the boys around to worship him. Hiranyakasipu, being a proud king, declared that nowhere in the world was there any god but himself and that every one must worship him alone. He was very angry when he found that his own son Prahlādha was devoted to the worship of Vishnu. He ordered his son to give up the worship and when he refused to do so he had him persecuted. He was put on a stone slab, huge blocks were piled up on top of him and the entire mass was thrown out into the ocean. But Prahlādha miraculously escaped destruction and when the king asked him "Who brought you out of the sea," the child said, "Vishnu." "Where is Vishnu?" thundered Hiranyakasipu. Prahlādha said, "He is everywhere." "Is he in this pillar?" said Hiranyakasipu pointing to a pillar and challenged Vishnu to make himself visible. The story goes on to relate that from the pillar an incarnation of Vishnu, who was half like a man and half like a lion, came forth and tore Hiranyakasipu to pieces.

Nandanar was a Pariah saint who lived about six hundred years ago. Even as a child his recreation was to make images of clay and to worship them. Gradually his piety grew and he was often found absorbed in ecstasy. The people of his village mistook him for a mad man, put him in fetters and persecuted him in various ways. A passionate desire to visit the famous shrine of Chidambaram awoke in him. When he approached his Brahman master and asked for leave to visit Chidambaram his master rebuked him: "What have you, a *Pariah*, to do with

worship at Chidambaram? You must only attend to your duties on the farm." Nandanar, however, could not give up his wish to go on a pilgrimage to Chidambaram. He repeated again his request later when the master relented and let him go. He visited Chidambaram and after being made by the Brahmans to pass through an ordeal of fire worshipped there to his heart's content. Mahātma Gandhi says: "I always cling to every true example of *Satyāgraha* that comes under my notice, as a child clings to its mother's breast, and so when I heard and read the story of Nandanar and his lofty *Satyāgraha* and his great success, my head bowed before his spirit and all the day long I have felt elevated to be able to be in a place hallowed by the holy feet of Nanda. . . . Nanda broke down every barrier and won his way to freedom not by brag, not by bluster, but by the purest of self-suffering. He did not swear against his persecutors, he would not even condescend to ask his persecutors for what was his due. But he shamed them into doing justice by his lofty prayer, by the purity of his character, and, if one may put it in human language, he compelled God Himself to descend and made Him open the eyes of the persecutors." [51]

Mīra Bāi was a princess in Rajaputana and was married to the heir apparent of Mewār. He died and she was left a widow. She was a worshipper of Krishna from childhood and constantly offended her husband's family by refusing to worship as they did and by her generous gifts to wandering *Sādhus*. She was persecuted so much at home that she fled from it and became a disciple of Raidās, a religious teacher who had come from the ranks of the leather workers. This event probably took place about 1470. Her songs of devotion are well known in India.

Two points strike us about these *Satyāgrahis*. It is quite likely that there were certain persons of these names who suffered a great deal for the cause which they held dear. The piety of later generations has added several miracles to their stories. We do not know whether these miracles took place. So it is difficult to decide what exactly these *Satyāgrahis* did. But one thing is clear that when the miracles are cut out, the suffering which these persons underwent is not as deep or as great as the suffering of Jesus. In the account of the passion of Jesus, there is no miracle about which we need have any doubt. We have clear historical evidence by contemporary writers that Jesus was crucified.

[51] D. S. Sarma, *The Gāndhi Sūtras*, pp. 115, 116.

Not only was the suffering of Jesus far deeper than the suffering of the Indian heroes mentioned here but the purpose of His suffering was different. Harischandra, for instance, suffered that he might keep his word at all costs. His devotion to Truth was great. All through the ages men in India have listened to the story of Harischandra and have been inspired by it to hold to the Truth at any price. But Harischandra himself was not primarily thinking of others; he was thinking of himself. He wanted to fulfil his promise, whatever suffering it might involve. Nandanar longed to see a vision of God and was prepared to suffer for that purpose. Prahlādha was eager to have the freedom to worship his God and was ready to suffer to the utmost in order to obtain it. Mīra Bāi likewise wanted unfettered opportunities for her devotion to God and was prepared to pay an enormous price for getting them. Prahlādha, Nandanar and Mīra Bāi were great *Bhaktas*. Religion was a tremendous reality to them. The worship of God as they understood Him was an imperative necessity in their lives. For this they were prepared to make whatever sacrifice was involved. To that extent they are worthy of our respect. Their example has been telling. Multitudes of men and women in India through the centuries have got a new vision of God through them. They have been led to follow Him with a deeper devotion because of their lives. But primarily they did not suffer for the sake of others. They were thinking of themselves first and foremost. It was with a view to get the freedom for themselves, to worship God as they thought they should, that they suffered so much. Jesus, on the other hand, was not thinking of Himself at all. He was all along thinking of others. He laid down His life in order that others may have life. His suffering was in order that men may be saved from their sins and brought back into fellowship with God. "For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." [52] This is a most significant difference.

The Resurrection of Jesus

The death of Jesus on the Cross appeared to His disciples to be the end of all their hopes and dreams. They had fervently expected that Jesus would be the promised Messiah and that in Him the noblest dreams of the prophets and seers of the Jewish race would be realized. The growing unpopularity of Jesus

[52] Mark x. 45.

and His own mysterious references to the spiritual character of His mission had begun to perplex the disciples more and more. The enthusiasm with which they had joined His band of followers received many rude shocks. Then finally came the painful and ignominious death on the Cross. The disciples experienced a sense of utter frustration and were wholly in despair. But in a few days an absolutely new courage entered their hearts. Their hopes took on a fresh lease of life and they began proclaiming Christ as the promised Messiah. Thousands of followers accepted their message and the Christian Church grew rapidly.

The important question which every one who has studied the beginnings of the Christian Church has asked is this: How did the disciples, whose hopes and dreams were extinguished by the death of Jesus on the Cross, suddenly prove to be powerful Apostles of the Gospel spreading conviction everywhere and winning multitudes of followers? The answer to this question is given in the Gospels. Jesus rose again from the dead. He appeared to the disciples and convinced them effectively that He was alive. They had no longer any doubt about the real nature of Christ. Their highest hopes about Him revived. They now knew beyond all doubt that He was indeed the long-expected Messiah and began preaching this message far and wide and received the willing response of their hearers in their thousands.

Swami Abhedānanda writes thus about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: "The Hindu belief is that the soul is immortal and indestructible; and by death they mean only a change of body. The whole of Hindu philosophy and religion is based upon the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; but many of the missionaries affirm that the Hindus do not believe in immortality. On the contrary this doctrine is so well known and so largely accepted by the Hindus that it is unnecessary for any one to go to India and to prove it by traditional resurrection of a single person. The Hindus have better arguments than that." [53]

As the Swāmi says, the immortality of the soul is clearly and emphatically taught in the religious literature of India from the earliest times.

In the *Brihad-Āryanyaka-Upanishad* occurs a story of Janaka asking Yājnavalkya, "Yājnavalkya, what light does a person here have?" "He has the light of the sun, O king," he said, "for with the sun, indeed, as his light one sits, moves around,

[53] Swami Abhedānanda, *Jesus Christ*, p. 9.

does his work, and returns." "Quite so, Yājnavalkya. But when the sun has set, Yājnavalkya, what light does a person here have?" "The moon, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with the moon, indeed, as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns." "Quite so, Yājnavalkya. But when the sun has set, and the moon has set, what light does a person here have?" "Fire, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with fire, indeed, as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns." "Quite so, Yājnavalkya. But when the sun has set, Yājnavalkya, and the moon has set, and the fire has gone out, what light does a person here have?" "Speech, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with speech, indeed, as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns. Therefore, verily, O King, where one does not discern even his own hands, when a voice is raised, then one goes straight towards it." "Quite so, Yājnavalkya. But when the sun has set, Yājnavalkya, and the moon has set, and the fire has gone out, and speech is hushed, what light does a person here have?" "The soul *(Ātman)*, indeed, is his light," said he, "for with the soul, indeed, as his light one sits, moves around, does his work, and returns." [54]

The *Bhagavad Gīta*, written about the beginning of the Christian era, says:

"Never the spirit was born; the
spirit shall cease to be never;
Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
Birthless and deathless and changeless the spirit remaineth for ever;
Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems." [55]

This belief in the immortality of the soul is found also in the other sacred books of the Hindus. Any belief of this nature must be tested in various ways. The first and most important test no doubt is regarding its intrinsic value. Does it strike the mind as being profoundly and genuinely true? Then it will be accepted and made a part of the working creed of mankind. Apart from the intrinsic value of the belief, there are other questions which need to be answered. Who are the men who first gave expression to such a belief? Is their character such

[54] *Brihad-Āryanyaka-Upanishad*, iv. iii. 2–6. Translated by R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 133.
[55] *Bhagavad Gīta*, ii. 20, translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial*, p. 9.

that we can accept as really valuable the conclusions to which they arrive? Does this belief fit in with the other beliefs of mankind? Can it be said that there has been any concrete instance or instances in which this belief has been actually illustrated in practical life? It will be seen that we are constantly testing the various beliefs which come before us in all these ways. There are such diverse beliefs floating about and claiming the allegiance of men. Some of them are valuable and others are worthless. It is only by careful sifting and testing that a consistent body of beliefs can be gathered together.

With regard to the belief in the immortality of the soul, the question of any practical proof furnished by the resurrection of a person or persons is a very important one. It cannot be said, as the Swami suggests, that the belief is so absolutely certain in India that no demonstration of it is necessary. While the belief is generally accepted as true, thoughtful Hindus are always inquiring about its grounds. Any clear proof of the belief is, therefore, welcome. It is the Christian doctrine that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has furnished such a demonstration. It has given us clear and indubitable evidence for the immortality of the soul. In 1 Corinthians chapter xv. St. Paul builds his great argument on this fact. He says, "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming." [56] All through the ages, following St. Paul, the Christian Church has accepted the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the most convincing proof for the immortality of the soul.

The primary purpose of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is, however, not to establish the immortality of the human soul but to show His Messiahship and Divinity. The death on the Cross by itself would have closed the career of a remarkable spiritual personality with merely a tragic end. To the Jew, especially, the death on the Cross was very much more than a shameful and disgraceful form of punishment. It was the visitation of God's wrath on the person crucified. The Jew of Jesus's day would have no hesitation in believing that for some mysterious reason the anger of God had been visited upon Jesus. Only some stupendous event like the Resurrection could have convinced the Jew that far from being a sinner especially worthy of

[56] 1 Corinthians xv. 20–23.

God's anger, Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. The Resurrection of Jesus achieved this wonderful change in the outlook of the disciples.

St. Peter teaches that by His Resurrection Jesus has been shown to be the saviour of men. "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." [57]

St. Paul believes that Jesus is declared to be the Son of God in virtue of His Resurrection from the dead. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which he promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord." [58]

Some modern students of the Gospels, finding it difficult to believe in the Resurrection, have said that from certain words of His the disciples expected Jesus to rise and that this expectation really became an actual belief that He had risen. In other words, the disciples believed that He had risen because they expected Him to rise. It is impossible to explain the marvellous growth of the Christian Church with this theory. The power and effectiveness with which the Apostles preach the Gospel is entirely different from the sense of despair and frustration which had characterized them immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus. Nothing but the actual Resurrection and the undoubted appearances of Jesus to His disciples would have given them the new courage and conviction they had. The appearances of Jesus to the disciples were fully demonstrative of His being alive.

The Resurrection of Jesus gives a completely new perspective to the life and death of Jesus. In the light of the Resurrection we must believe that Jesus was no mere man but the *Avatār* of God who had come down to the world to redeem us from our sins and to take us into fellowship with God.

[57] Acts iv. 10–12.
[58] Romans i. 1–4.

CHAPTER XIII

JESUS THE INCARNATION

We started out on this inquiry with the question "Who is Jesus?" We have sought to answer it in various ways. He was a devoted *Bhakta* who lived in close, unbroken fellowship with God, both in prayer and in work. He loved God with all His mind and strength and He loved His neighbour as Himself. He was an ideal *Guru* possessing all the qualifications which are expected of a religious teacher. He was the Suffering Servant who died on the Cross that we may be saved. In describing Him as a *Bhakta,* as a *Guru* and as a Suffering Servant we feel that we have not adequately described Him. He was far more than any of these. He was a *Bhakta* but neither among those whom I personally know nor among those about whom I have read in books is there any one else who had such *Bhakti.* I know of no one else who identified himself so completely with God in feeling and will and who worked in the world for God and man in such a spirit of utter renunciation. He taught great and wonderful truths. Some of these truths have also been taught by others in other lands and in other ages. But there has been no one else whose teaching has been on such a consistently high level throughout and whose life has so entirely confirmed his teaching. Other teachers may have set forth such doctrines here and there, but they have not always moved on such a lofty height of thought and experience nor have their lives been as completely in harmony with their teaching as was the life of Jesus. He was a Suffering Servant but He suffered more than any one else and in an absolutely different spirit. We feel that here is someone whom our ordinary descriptions do not at all fit. No man could have taught and worked and suffered like this. We know only too well what men are, even the best among us. The more we study the Gospels, the more we meditate on them, the clearer this becomes to us.

The Claims of Jesus

If we are going to understand Jesus aright, we must consider what He said about Himself. He made certain extraordinary claims; these must now be stated.

From the beginning of His ministry Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. This term meant "the Man." The Prophet Ezekiel was constantly addressed as the "Son of Man" by a Divine voice.[1] The name meant that Ezekiel was a man, chosen for a special work. When Jesus used the title "the Son of Man" He regarded Himself as *the* Man, representing mankind in some special way.

Jesus taught as one having authority. He did not say "This is the word of the Lord" or "Thus saith Scripture." But He said, "I say unto you." He did not support His teaching with the sanction of Scripture but He Himself on His own authority laid down the law.

He spoke of Himself as being the final judge of men in various passages. "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." [2] "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send forth the angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." [3]

Jesus claimed also the right to forgive sins.[4] Constantly He exercised this right and forgave men and women their sins. This was one of the primary reasons which increased the hatred of the religious leaders of the day against Him. They regarded the right to forgive sins as belonging only to God. When Jesus continually claimed and exercised that right, it seemed quite clear to them that He was guilty of the serious crime of blasphemy.

He laid claim to a special knowledge of the Father. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." [5]

He called for men's absolute devotion and complete surrender to Him. He said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are

[1] Ezekiel ii. 1; iii. 1; in other places.
[2] Matthew xxv. 31–33.
[3] Mark xiii. 26, 27.
[4] Mark ii. 1–12.
[5] Matthew xi. 27.

heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." [6] "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." [7] "Follow me; and leave the dead to bury their own dead." [8]

At the Baptism of Jesus a voice was heard which declared that He was the beloved Son in whom God was pleased. Jesus understood from this that He was the Son of God. The account of His temptation shows us that He knew that He was the Son of God.[9] The demoniacs who saw Him called Him the Son of God and He sought to silence them.

About halfway through His ministry in the city called Cæsarea Philippi He asked the disciples the question: "Who do men say that I am?" He followed it up with a more personal and searching question, "Who do ye say that I am?" and Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." [10]

To understand the meaning of Peter's words we must know something of the hopes and expectations of the Jews at the time of Jesus. They are briefly described in the first few pages of Chapter XI.

There were two hopes. One was the hope of a righteous earthly King who would govern Jerusalem with justice and equity, and the other was of the celestial being who would come down from heaven with power, bring to end the present evil age and inaugurate a new heavenly era. There was no hard and fast distinction between these two hopes. Some held one, some held the other and a few held both.

Jesus altered these hopes completely. He said that He was the long-expected Christ, but that His path was not the path of glory but the path of the Cross. He was the Suffering Servant of the Lord. He was going to establish a spiritual Kingdom by His Death and Resurrection. This was not what the Jews expected. They expected either a glorious worldly Kingdom or a glorious spiritual Kingdom. In either case Christ would be ruler and judge, not a Suffering Servant.

These then are the claims of Jesus as we find them recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. These claims are even stronger in the Gospel of St. John. In addition to the claims already mentioned, Jesus makes in the Fourth Gospel two further claims. He claims

[6] Matthew xi. 28, 29.
[7] Matthew x. 37.
[8] Matthew viii. 22.
[9] Matthew iv. 1–11.
[10] Matthew xvi. 13–20.

to have existed long before His life on this earth. He says: "Before Abraham was, I am." [11] In other words He claims to be an Eternal Being. He also says: "I and the Father are one." [12] This again is a remarkable claim. He asserts that there is complete identity between Himself and God in feeling, will and thought.[13]

We must seriously consider these claims of Jesus. We have seen that His was an extraordinarily pure and noble life. He Himself laid the utmost emphasis on the need for speaking truth, and His whole life was an evidence of the purity of His character. When He made these claims He spoke the truth and was quite sincere in what He said. He had no intention of misleading His contemporaries. Such an idea would have been entirely repellent to His pure and truthful nature. We must therefore pay due weight to these claims. If a person as unique and as lofty as Jesus made such claims on his own behalf, they cannot be ignored or easily laid aside. It is not likely that Jesus, who led such a noble life and who possessed such extraordinary spiritual powers, would have made these claims if there was no support for them. So we must conclude that Jesus had a unique relation to God. He was not like other men. He had come into the world to reveal God as men did not know Him but only He knew God.

The Experience of the Church

But it may be said that Jesus might not have wanted to mislead people, but He might have been misled Himself. Sincere and devoted as He was, He might have thought that He was the Son of God, that men should come to Him and accept Him and that He would reveal the Father to them. These claims are entirely confirmed by the experience of the Christian Church through the centuries. Millions of men have taken Him at His word and have found Him to be the Incarnation of God.

The greatest of these was St. Paul. He was a spiritual giant. He had been a university student at Tarsus and had received a full training in Jewish Theology. He hated Jesus and all those who followed Him. But on the road to Damascus, where he went to persecute the Christians, he had a vision of Jesus, the first of his mystical experiences as far as we know. Much to the surprise of all those who knew him, the whole course of his life was suddenly changed. He who had hated Christians now

[11] John viii. 58.
[12] John x. 30.
[13] See Chapter II for a discussion of "I and the Father are one."

became a zealous Christian himself. He spent considerable time in Arabia probably in solitary meditation and prayer and came out of his retirement with a rich and new understanding of Christ. This understanding grew with the years as we know from the Epistles which he wrote during the different periods of his life. He combined in himself the varied gifts of a theologian, mystic and practical worker. His motto was, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." [14] His whole life was centred in Christ.

Countless other people, simple and learned, poor and rich, young and old, men and women from all the nations of the world, through the ages have accepted Christ as the Incarnation of God. They have accepted His revelation of the Father as final and full. They have taken His ideals as the standard of their conduct. They have claimed God's forgiveness in the name of Christ and they have experienced a sense of complete release from the burden of their guilt. They have come close to God because of Jesus. They have enjoyed His Presence and tried to impress upon others something of the enduring joys of such fellowship. And in every case they have found the claims of Jesus true. They have found that He is what He declared Himself to be, the Son of Man, with a unique relation to the Father and with a unique knowledge of the Father, and that He has come to the world to save men from their sins and to take them back to the feet of God.

Thousands of out-caste Christians in India, for instance, are now saying in the words of Ravi Dās, a leather worker at Benares in the fifteenth century who had experienced the love of God:

> "Who but my precious Lord so low would stoop,
> Merciful towards the poorest?
> Yet Lord of all the Earth,
> Over my head his shelter spreading;
> Even on him a blessing shedding
> Whose hand still pollutes whate'er he touches.
> He exalteth on high the meek and the lowly,
> He feareth no man: My Lord! My Lord!" [15]

The claims of Jesus then cannot be easily ignored.

The Hindu Doctrine of "Avatāra"

For a long time in India many of the Hindu sects have

[14] Galatians ii. 20.
[15] R. T. Gribble, *Mystic Lyrics from the Indian Middle Ages*, p. 67.

believed in *Avatāras*. The earliest statement we have about *Avatāras* is found in the *Bhagavad Gīta* which is nearly as old as the Christian era. Various developments of the doctrine have taken place. The main lines of these developments may be set down here.

1. An *Avatāra* is God Himself who has come down to the earth; he is not merely a holy man who has raised himself up spiritually. There have been many men in the world who have shown extraordinary devotion and piety but none of them is an Incarnation. A devout man can never rise to be an Incarnation, but God comes down into a human being and thereby makes him an Incarnation. Once Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa was asked: "What is the difference between a holy sage and an incarnation of God who is called the Saviour of mankind?" He answered: "A holy sage is one who has realized God through great pain, long prayers and severe penances and after much trouble has saved himself from the attractions of the world, but he has not the power to save others; while a Saviour is one who can easily save hundreds without losing his own spirituality. A holy sage may be compared to a reed floating in the ocean of life, which cannot bear the weight of even a crow, but when a Saviour descends He easily carries thousands across the ocean like a large, powerful steamer which moves swiftly over the waters." [16]

2. God is invisible. He is a Spirit, and cannot be easily understood by us. He is so far above our thought and feeling that we cannot adequately comprehend Him. His love, goodness, power and majesty are beyond our grasp. We are small creatures used to the things of this world which we see and hear and feel and touch and taste. Whatever comes before our senses we understand, but anything beyond we do not seem to know clearly. We have striven for God through the ages in different countries. We have worshipped Him as earnestly as we could. We have read diligently the books which devout and spiritual men have written, but we are not satisfied. Our minds are puzzled by the innumerable doctrines which have been taught and our hearts remain cold and hungry. We seem to be groping in the dark. The clearness of understanding which is necessary for genuine prayer is lacking. We do not seem really to know who God is and what He does. Therefore to satisfy these deep longings of human souls, God takes birth as a man. He lives in this world as one of us so that we can see His face and hear His teaching.

[16] Swami Abhedānanda, *Divine Heritage of Man*, p. 161.

He passes through the same experiences as we do. If He teaches anything we are sure that He understands our difficulties, for He has lived the same life as we have.

This belief that nothing less than a Divine Incarnation can satisfy real human needs is often found set forth in the *Rāmāyana of Tulsidās.* A devotee approaches a saint and asks him for instruction about the worship of an incarnate God. The devotee speaks: "Being himself a philosopher devoted to the mystery of the transcendental, and thinking that I had fully mastered the subject, he began a sermon on *Brāhm,* the unbegotten, the indivisible, the immaterial, the sovereign of the heart; unchangeable, unwishful, nameless, formless; approachable only by analogy, indestructible, incomparable; beyond the reach of thought or sense, spotless, immortal, emotionless, illimitable, blessed for ever; identical with yourself, you and he being as absolutely one as a wave and its water; so the *Vedas* declare. The saint gave me the fullest possible instruction, but the worship of the impersonal laid no hold on my heart. Again I cried, bowing my head at his feet: 'Tell me, holy father, how to worship the Incarnate. Devotion to Rāma, oh wisest of sages, is like the element of water, and my soul—which is, as it were, a fish—how can it exist without it? Of your mercy so instruct me that I may see Rāma with my own eyes. When I have seen my fill of the Lord of Avadh, then I will listen to your sermon on the unembodied.' Again the saint discoursed of the incomparable Hari, and demolishing the dogma of the Incarnation, expounded him as altogether passionless. But I rejected the theory of the abstract, and with much obstinacy insisted upon his concrete manifestation." [17]

The doctrine of Incarnation in India seems to have arisen as a protest against the theory that God is impersonal *(Nirguna),* having no qualities or attributes. The impersonal nature of *Brahman* is expounded in most of the *Upanishads.* The *Bhagavad Gīta* voices a protest against it with its doctrine of Incarnation and *Bhakti.* The doctrine of an Incarnation is necessary for those who believe in a personal *(Saguna)* God as well. Without an Incarnation, even His nature does not become clear to men. It is only when He becomes incarnate and lives in the world as a man that we can really come to know Him.

3. God becomes incarnate because of the love He has for men. I once heard Walker of Tinnevelly give an effective

[17] F. H. Growse, *The Rāmāyana of Tulisdās,* p. 94.

evangelistic address in Tamil. His subject was "The Divine Incarnation" and as his text he took a couplet from Tāyumānavar, the Tamil poet:

"Thou hast multiplied thy love and come to protect my precious life!
Thou ocean of joy! Thou King! Thou who art highly exalted!" [18]

This immediately held the attention of the audience. Many of the Hindus present knew this beautiful stanza and understood its finely-expressed meaning. They all knew the name of Tāyumānavar and had a great respect for him as a genuine devotee. He lived in the eighteenth century. We do not know whether he was influenced by Christian ideas; there are no traces of distinctively Christian doctrines in his poetry. This insight had apparently come to him independently or from earlier *Bhakti* poets whose writings he had read. Many saints in India, besides Tāyumānavar, have recognized that God is Love and comes down to the world as an Incarnation to help men. We read in the *Rāmāyana of Tulsidās:* "There is one God, passionless, formless, uncreated, the universal soul, the supreme spirit, the all-pervading, whose shadow is the world; who has become incarnate and does many things, only for the love he bears to his faithful people." [19] Another verse says: "From the love that he bore his followers, Rāma took the form of a man, and by himself enduring misery secured their happiness." [20]

4. God becomes incarnate from His own free-will. There is nothing to compel Him to come down to the earth and to live the life of a man. He is not bound by outside circumstances as we are. He is a self-existing and independent Reality. There is no force that could control Him, no person that could order Him about, no external fact that could determine His movements. Such is His perfect independence. He of His own free will becomes incarnate. This thought is frequently found in the *Rāmāyana of Tulsidās.*

"This Rāma, omnipresent *Brāhm,* Lord of the Universe, and of *Māya,* the gem of the house of Rāghu, has become incarnate of his own free-will, for the sake of his worshippers.

Voluntarily assuming human guise, I will manifest myself in

[18] Tāyumānavar, "*Anbai Peruki.*"
[19] F. S. Growse, *The Rāmāyana of Tulsidās,* p. 21.
[20] *Ibid.,* p. 12.

your house, father, and with the elements of my divinity incarnate, will do good deeds for the consolation of my people.

He who is beyond all form, or quality or perception of the senses, took birth as a man in a body formed at his own will." [21]

5. The purpose of an Incarnation is to help men. The classic statement is found in the *Bhagavad Gīta*. Krishna says:

"Whenever there is a decline of Law, O Arjuna, and an outbreak of lawlessness I incarnate myself.

For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the Law I am born from age to age." [22]

Rāmānuja makes a fine comment on this verse: "The good 'set out to attain me and as my name, work and form are beyond speech and thought, fail to see me and can scarcely live or eat. A moment so spent is like millions of years to them. And their whole body becomes thoroughly enfeebled. To save them, I, therefore, grant them a vision of my form and work, hold converse with them and destroy those who are in opposition to them.'" [23]

Kālidāsa says:

"Yourself immeasurable, you have measured the world; seeking nothing yourself, you grant all requests; yourself unvanquished, you are ever victorious; yourself imperceptible, you are the cause of the perceptible world.

Omniscient, you are unknown by any; self-born, you are the origin of everything; Lord of everything, you have no master; single, you are of the form of everything.

To those souls, rid of all passion, whose minds are possessed of you and who have dedicated all their acts to you, you are the means to that salvation from which there is no return.

Like the gems of the Ocean, and the splendours of the sun, your glories exceed all praise.

There is nothing unobtained which you have to obtain; the welfare of the world is the sole reason for your incarnations and acts.

If after praising your greatness we become silent, it is because of fatigue or incapacity (to praise you), not because your glories have been exhausted." [24]

[21] *Divine Incarnation as found in the Rāmāyana of Tulsidās* (C.L.S.), pp. 10, 11.

[22] *Bhagavad Gīta*, iv. 7, 8, translated by D. S. Sarma, *The Bhagavad Gīta*, p. 91.

[23] *Gīta Bhashya*, iv. 8.

[24] Kālidāsa, *Raghuvamsa*, x., translated by V. Rāghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, pp. 195–197.

The *Bhāgavata Purāna* says:

"That Lord without any bound, who is bereft of name as well as form, but still assumes by His births and acts names and forms for blessing those who seek His feet—may that Supreme Being become gracious unto me." [25]

We need not take seriously the idea that of the Incarnations commonly attributed to Vishnu, the first three are of animal shape—the fish, the tortoise and the boar—that the fourth has an intermediate form with a man's body and a lion's head and that the fifth is that of a dwarf and stands for deformed humanity. Modern Hindu writers have seen a gradual progress of thought here. To believe that God took an animal shape or a semi-animal shape belongs to the early forms of religion and all scholars are agreed in thinking that men's beliefs are at first crude and primitive and then only gradually become more spiritual and elevated. In all religions there are traces of such primitive beliefs lingering on. The idea that God appeared in the world in the form of certain animals is an ancient belief of this type and should be simply left behind as people advance spiritually. It must be said that while the Hindu books always mention these animal and semi-animal Incarnations, no modern Hindu really believes them to-day. The belief in Divine Incarnation in animal and semi-animal forms cannot be considered as a part of the working faith of any educated Hindu at present.

The Christian Doctrine of "Avatāra"

It will be seen that fundamentally the Hindu doctrine of *Avatāra* is akin to the Christian doctrine of Incarnation. As a matter of fact in the different languages of India the only word that can possibly be used to translate the term "Incarnation" is *Avatāra*. Every Christian book in the vernacular uses the word "*Avatāra*" to describe the Incarnation of Jesus. When speaking of Jesus as *Avatāra*, however, several important points should be borne in mind.

It is sometimes held in India that an Incarnation is a human embodiment of an *Amsa* or part of God. In the *Rāmāyana* we read that the king Dasaratha, who had no children, made a sacrifice to obtain issue. The God Vishnu answered his prayer and handed over to him a pot of nectar with the instruction that Dasaratha's three wives should drink of this nectar. Half the contents of the pot was given to Kausalya and she gave birth

[25] *Bhāgavata Purāna*, vi, iv. 33, translated by V. Rāghavan, *Prayers, Praises and Psalms*, p. 127.

to Rāma and in him half of the divine essence became incarnate. Kaikeyi was given a quarter and her son Bharata became an embodiment of a fourth part of the divine essence. Sumitra was given the remaining portion and twins were born of her, Lakshmana and Satrughna. In each of these twins one eighth of the divine essence resided. Generally only one Incarnation, that of Vishnu as Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gīta,* is regarded as full and complete *(Pūrna)*. But even He is sometimes spoken of in the *Bhāgavata Purāna* as a partial and imperfect Incarnation.

This idea that the Divine Being can be divided off into fractions or portions is certainly a crude one. It is entirely opposed to the idea of God as Spirit. Only what is physical can be broken up into parts; Spirit cannot be thus split. That God is a Spirit and cannot be divided *(Akhanda)* is accepted in Hindu Philosophy. The doctrine that God cannot be partitioned off is a cardinal tenet of the *Advaita Vedanta.* We read in the Gospel of St. John that God is Spirit; He is all-pervasive; there is nothing physical about Him; He cannot be broken up into parts. When we speak of Jesus as an *Avatāra* of God we do not mean that He is an Incarnation of only an *Amsa* or part of God. We mean that He is an Incarnation of the whole Being of God. As a New Testament writer says: " the fulness of God had dwelt in him bodily." [26]

The purpose of an Incarnation is variously stated in the Hindu books. Many of the occasions on which God is supposed to have become manifest are trivial and some are even unethical. An Incarnation is believed to have taken place to destroy a demon, to overthrow a persecuting king, to protect the Brahman caste, to deliver a devotee from a small trouble or to give a boon. These need not be taken seriously. They belong to the mythological side of Hinduism. The *Puranic* stories which describe such Incarnations embody the beliefs and ideas of Hindus on a primitive level of development.

The noblest statement of the purpose of an Incarnation is found in the *Gīta* in the passage already quoted.

" For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the Law I am born from age to age." [27]

It should be noted that even this highest and noblest declaration of the purpose of an Incarnation falls short of the object

[26] Colossians ii. 9.

[27] *Bhagavad Gīta,* iv. 8, translated by D. S. Sarma, *The Bhagavad Gīta,* p. 91.

for which Jesus declared that He came to the world. He was born on this earth in order to redeem sinners and not to destroy them. He clearly said that His purpose was not to call the righteous for they needed no help, but to call sinners to repentance. It was characteristic of Jesus that He should have sought to establish righteousness *(Dharma)* in the world, not by helping those who were already good and by eliminating the wicked but by giving new life to the wicked and directing their energy into better channels. His idea was that the worse people were, the more they needed His help. That is why He went out of His way to win sinners.

There is a further important point in which the Hindu doctrine of Incarnation falls short of the Christian idea. As this passage declared, God is believed to come to birth age after age. This belief has really been most popular in India. The Hindus believe that God comes again and again into this world to help men. There is a tendency to regard every holy man as a likely Incarnation of God. In our own generation Rāmakrishna Paramahamsa has been regarded as an Incarnation of God. Swami Abhedānanda, a leading *Sannyāsi* of the Rāmakrishna mission, says: "The latest divine incarnation was one who appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. He lived near Calcutta and his name was Rāmakrishna. He is to-day worshipped by thousands of educated Hindus just in the same way as Jesus the Christ is adored and worshipped in Christendom. From his childhood he showed his divine power and set an example of absolute purity and divine spirituality, like an embodiment of those blessed qualities which adorned the characters of previous incarnations, such as Krishna, Buddha, or Jesus the Christ. Those who had the good fortune to see and be with him even for a short time, had their eyes opened to the truth that he was absolutely superhuman. Although he had received no school education, his wisdom was vast. He was the storehouse, as it were, of unlimited knowledge, and he showed at every moment of his life that he was the absolute master of his mind, body and senses, that he was entirely free from all the conditions that make an ordinary mortal a slave to passions and desires. He was like the personification of the Sermon on the Mount. No one could ever find the slightest flaw in his noble and divine character." [28]

Responsible Hindu leaders like Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar,

[28] Swami Abhedānanda, *Divine Heritage of Man,* p. 160.

sometime Premier of Madras, speak of Mahātma Gandhi as akin to the gods and as not being a mere man.[29]

Here is a prayer addressed to Sri Aurobindo, the modern Hindu leader: "Sri Aurobindo, your name is our *Mantra;* your word is our scripture; your presence is our only hope; you are our saviour; you alone have the power to restore humanity to divinity, to bring peace and harmony here. To serve thee is our salvation. Give us that lofty faith and pure surrender by which alone we can deserve to be thy humble servants. Your victory is India's victory, Earth's victory, Spirit's victory. Thy Presence reveals to us the truth of the *Vedic* utterance: 'Hear ye, children of immortality, and ye who reside in higher planes! I have known this Mighty *Purusha* effulgent as the sun, beyond all darkness. By knowing him alone thou shalt transcend death. For this spiritual Freedom in immortality no other path exists.'" [30]

The doctrine of many *Avatāras* constantly tends to the deification of every holy man in India. That is one reason why we find such a multitude of gods and shrines in this country.

This is an important point on which we differ from Hindus. We believe that Jesus was the *Avatāra.* God lived on the earth as a man only once and that was as Jesus. We do not regard that there were several Incarnations in the world and that Jesus was one among them. We firmly hold that Jesus was the one and only *Avatāra.* But it may be asked, "Why should Jesus alone be considered as the *Avatāra?*" In these chapters we have been studying Jesus, His noble teaching, His matchless life, His unparalleled suffering and His wonderful Resurrection. And we have come to the conclusion that He was an Incarnation of God. There is no inherent improbability in God becoming incarnate more than once. If God becomes incarnate once He might become incarnate on other occasions as well. But has He actually done so? It is our firm Christian belief that among all the great religious figures in the world there is no one except Jesus who could be regarded as an Incarnation of God. With the Christian the question of calling other religious leaders Incarnations does not seriously arise, for, however sympathetically he may study their teaching and revere their lives, he is not drawn to them as he is to Jesus.

In this matter finally each one has to decide for himself. I have honestly, sincerely and prayerfully tried to understand what

[29] *The Sunday Observer,* Madras, May 2, 1939.
[30] *The Sunday Times,* Madras, November 26, 1939.

the great religious leaders have done. As a result of such devout study and genuine experience I have come to the conclusion that there is no one in the world like Jesus who could bring me close to God. I hope I have not been merely prejudiced. I hope I have examined most carefully and most earnestly the foundations of my belief. I hope I have not wilfully misunderstood the life and work of the other great religious leaders of the world such as Buddha, Krishna, Rāma, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Confucius. I can only speak for myself. I can also urge others to study sincerely the life and work of the great religious leaders of mankind and come to an independent conclusion as to who may be regarded as the *Avatāra* and to worship Him as such.

Dr. R. E. Hume of Union Theological Seminary, New York city, has made, to use his own words, " an intensive study of the sacred Scriptures of the various religions." He says: " I would testify that the study of the various religions has produced a greater confidence in the unequalled religious value of the Christian Bible and especially in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. . . . There are three points in which I cannot induce any parallel from the history of the other religions, namely, the character of Jesus Christ Himself, the character of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit as assured by Jesus Christ." [31]

If Jesus is the Incarnation of God He must be our guide in all religious matters. On all doubtful points we must turn to Him and seek His direction. He does not say that there will be other Incarnations after Him, but He says that the Spirit of Truth will guide men into all truth. " But now I go unto him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgement, because the prince of this world hath been judged. 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 soever he shall hear,

[31] *Dnyānōdaya,* November 23, 1939.

these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you. A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me." [32]

In brief, the teaching of Jesus is that the human need for an Incarnation has been met by Himself. In other ages people would still need divine guidance. They would be perplexed and troubled; they would struggle with sins and temptations; they would realize the barriers to fellowship with God. To such God will give the help they need by His Indwelling Spirit. He will not leave them alone, to struggle and strive as best as they may. But He will make their heart His dwelling place and from there strengthen their weak and limited powers. The Indwelling Spirit of God will teach men their duty and will also enable them to perform it.

Hindu Criticism of the Doctrine of Incarnation

Once when a lecture was given to educated Hindus on "The Incarnation," a *Saiva Siddhanta* scholar gave a lecture after two or three days in the same town on "Theophany." He maintained that the Christian belief in the Incarnation was wrong. God never becomes incarnate. Whenever His devotees are in need He appears to them and helps them and then vanishes out of sight. A well-known story of such a Divine Appearance is connected with Mānikkavācakar. He was a Prime Minister in an important kingdom in South India. He was worldly-minded and lived without any thought of God or religion. The king asked him to buy some horses and gave him money for the purpose. Mānikkavācakar left on this errand and as he was journeying along he saw under the shade of a large tree a venerable looking *Guru* seated in the midst of a large group of disciples. From curiosity he joined the group and listened to the *Guru's* teaching. Immediately a wonderful change took place in his heart. He was no longer a worldly man interested in making money and in enjoying life. A passion for God awoke in him and he became a true *Bhakta*. He gave up his appointment as Prime Minister, and devoted the rest of his life to the spiritual quest. He wandered from shrine to shrine singing the praises of the God Siva. His lyrics, which are all in Tamil, have been gathered together under

[32] John xvi. 5–16.

the title of *Tiruvācakam*. This book is most popular in the Tamil country and the excellent English translation made by Dr. G. U. Pope has made it known all over the world. Mānikkavācakar believed that it was the god Siva who appeared to him as a *Guru* and utterly changed his life. Again and again Mānikkavācakar praised the love of Siva which made him call himself, when he was absorbed in the world, to leave it and to follow him fully.

The *Saiva Siddhanta* idea is that God only appears in the world to help men. He is not born as a child; He does not grow gradually through the various experiences of boyhood into manhood. He does not possess a physical body for a period of years and use it as an instrument for the achievement of His purposes. To suppose that He does all this would not be in keeping with His dignity as God.

In the Christian Church too there were some thinkers known as the Docetists who held that the body of Jesus was not real. He was not born like other men and He did not grow like them. He had only a phantom body.

When the First Epistle of St. John was written about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century after Christ, these thinkers had already arisen. St. John therefore refuted their doctrines and described Jesus as " 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)." [33]

It is surprising that the *Saiva Siddhanta* takes up such a position. It believes fully in a God of Love. It also believes that this God of Love, out of His boundless compassion, comes to the world to help His devotees. But it does not go further. The Christian belief is that love goes further. God identified Himself entirely with men. He was born as a child. He experienced the joys and sorrows of youth. He grew in wisdom and in knowledge. He was obedient to His parents. He worked at the trade of a carpenter like His father. He was thirsty. He was tired and needed rest like others. In brief, He was a real human being. He lived in the world as we do and He knew from inside all the difficulties and struggles of men. His complete identification with men has brought Him very close to us. We feel that He is one of us. We know that what He speaks comes from His own experience in this world as it is. He moved

[33] 1 John i. 1, 2.

among all sorts and conditions of men—religious leaders, government officials, fishermen and prostitutes. His contacts with people were wide and His knowledge of life real.

The *Advaita Vedanta* also criticizes the doctrine of Incarnation. According to this philosophy God alone is real and everything else is unreal. The world is unreal; history is unreal; men are unreal; God is the Eternal Spirit. He is everywhere and at all times. We cannot say that He was born as a man in a particular country or at a certain time. That would be to limit Him. God the Infinite Spirit cannot be thus limited.

Echoing a common *Advaita* sentiment, Swami Asheshānanda says: "To the Hindus the historicity of Christ is not of much concern. For they always care more for the principle than for the personality. The eternal message matters more than the events of a life. Many of the *Upanishadic* seers died unknown and are a voice without a form. No record has been left to posterity to trace the heritage of the brilliant authors and composers of the *Vedic* hymns which have come down to us across scores of shining centuries. Complete self-effacement was the motto of their life. They did never seek for honours or applause from the crowd, as their minds were saturated with loftier ideals relating to the eternal verities. . . . Knowledge of historical veracity is not the last word and acme of true spirituality. A Buddha or a Mohammed may or may not have lived, but that does not deter an earnest votary from conforming to the ideal and assimilating the principles, the realization of which would alone confer lasting fellowship and supreme beatitude. In this respect a suggestion given by Rāmakrishna is highly significant: 'Whether,' he says, 'Christ or Krishna lived or not is immaterial; the people from whose brain the Christ ideal, or Krishna ideal, has emanated did actually live as Christ or Krishna for the time being.' It requires a Christ to forge a Christ. Krishna may be a mythical figure, but the thinkers who contemplated such an idea and conjured up such an image were as great and noble as the Krishna they conceived." [34]

This doctrine is quite contrary to Christian belief which holds that the world is real. God has created the world and all that is in it. He has given us a body so that we may live and move in the world. The Spirit can only progress with the help of the body. It learns to think, to feel, to aspire and to do, using the body as its instrument.

[34] *The International Review of Missions*, April 1939, p. 259.

The *Advaitin* must remember that whatever his philosophy may be, he lives in the world and moves with other people. He knows that he has a history behind him. He has gradually grown. Slowly and in course of time his character has been formed. Various influences have been at work through a period of several years moulding his character. What he is to-day is the result of what he has experienced and felt and thought during the years. The past does count and must bear the responsibility for having made him what he is.

In the same way other individuals have grown better or worse. Their characters have become finer or have deteriorated; their mental powers have become richer or poorer; their capacity for enjoyment has become wider or narrower. And all this has happened by the influences which have played upon them through the years, the growth or deterioration of the body, the new sights which they have seen or not seen, the people they have met or failed to meet, the experiences they have undergone or not undergone. In other words, all individuals are becoming better or worse in course of time. The same with nations. Gradually nations grow, passing through many changes. They explore new territories, meet new peoples and see new ideals.

That is why we study history. We are anxious to know how individuals and nations develop gradually through the years. If the world has no meaning, if life has no purpose, if the passage of time has no significance, we need not bother with the study of history. We need not dig up ancient cities and study the remains of old civilizations. We need not take the trouble to understand forgotten languages in order to read old books and see what men thought and felt in those days. The world has a meaning and the events which take place in it have a purpose. So when God enters the world as a man and works in it at a particular time, He is doing something which is purposeful, not something which is meaningless.

APPENDIX

OUR SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT JESUS

THE main sources of our information about Jesus are the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John. For over a hundred years Christian scholars have been studying carefully these four Gospels as well as the other books of the Bible and they have come to some important conclusions about them. We should know what their conclusions are. Most of these scholars have been earnest Christians who have really sought to understand the Bible; they have spent days and nights in studying the Bible verse by verse. If there are different accounts of the same event, as there often are in the Gospels, they have compared them carefully, found out where they agree and where they differ and why. They have checked the information given in the Gospels by the facts which have come to light through archaeology. They have tried to understand how the manuscripts were originally written, where they are found now, and when they were first put into print. If several manuscripts of the same book exist, they have examined them all to find out whether the wording in all the manuscripts is exactly the same and if there are differences they have given various explanations. As a result of all this minute and careful study we are now in a position to understand the Bible much better.

Christ left this earth about A.D. 30. At the time there was not a single book either by Him or about Him. But His disciples, afterwards known as the Apostles, treasured in their hearts the sayings which they had heard from His lips. They also remembered with pious devotion all the wonderful things which He had done while alive. They used His sayings and the accounts of His deeds constantly in their preaching. As there were twelve disciples and a great many others who had followed Him during His life, there was a large body of His sayings and of stories about Him which His disciples and friends told others either in personal conversation or in the course of their preaching. Some of these sayings and stories were later written out and probably circulated as a manuscript. This was never printed, and we have no copy of the manuscript now; but the writers of the Gospels quoted from it; it is called "Q" from the German word, *quelle,*

which means source. We think that it existed because there are several sayings of Christ which are reported exactly in the same words in the different Gospels; such sayings with the same words could only have come from a common source.

St. Paul was an orthodox Jew. He was not one of the immediate disciples of Jesus. He hated the followers of Christ and persecuted them. But he saw a vision of Christ and immediately became His disciple. With great zeal he began to preach Christ and when hundreds of people became the followers of Christ he formed them into churches. He wrote letters to these churches telling them what he considered to be the essential Christian Faith. These letters, known as the Epistles of St. Paul, were written between A.D. 48 and 59. These were the first books which were written and circulated about the Christian Faith. They were mainly explanations of Christian experience and doctrine and were not the biographies of Jesus. Though they were not biographies of Jesus they frequently referred to Jesus and spoke about Him. Even if no other books about Jesus were available we would know from the Epistles of St. Paul that Jesus lived, taught some wonderful truths, died on the Cross and rose again from the dead.

The first actual biography of Jesus was written by St. Mark, probably about A.D. 65. St. Mark got his information from St. Peter. Though quite short, St. Mark's Gospel is vivid in its style of writing. The Gospels of St. Luke and St. Matthew, which were written after St. Mark, used his narrative at different points. They all quoted some sayings from the document "Q." St. Luke wrote his Gospel about A.D. 80 and St. Matthew wrote his about A.D. 81 to 85. St. Luke, a well-trained doctor, was a close companion of St. Paul and must have had access to a great many of the reliable and authentic sources of information about Jesus. St. Matthew, a former publican and one of the twelve disciples, had himself come in contact with Jesus and probably furnished some of the material in the Gospel bearing his name.

Biblical scholars have pointed out that in every land if a saint dies, stories about him soon begin to gather. Books written about him during his lifetime or immediately after his death are fairly accurate; they tell about him as he actually lived and taught. But in course of time stories begin to be told about the miracles he worked, the wonderful things he did as a child, his rare saintliness and so on. Holy men are regarded by their followers as being far holier than they actually were and as having powers

(such as the capacity to work miracles) which people do not ordinarily have. In course of time these stories of exceptional gifts increase. New interpretations of their life and work are also put forth. In every religion there are innumerable stories of the miraculous deeds of holy men and steadily growing beliefs about them. If we want to understand what a saint actually was and did we must study the books written about him during his lifetime or soon after it. The Gospel of St. Mark was written, as I have said, about A.D. 65. This was thirty-five years after the lifetime of Jesus. It is not likely that during these thirty-five years a great many stories could have been invented about Jesus. Such stories are generally made up sometime after the death of the hero. The Gospel of St. Mark was written when many of those who knew Jesus personally were still alive; they could have criticized it if it was not correct.

The Gospels according to St. Luke and St. Matthew were written about fifteen or twenty years after the Gospel according to St. Mark. During this time new stories could have grown up about Jesus. They might not have been actual facts but the pious beliefs of earnest Christians of what Jesus was likely to have taught and done. Therefore St. Luke and St. Matthew are not as reliable as St. Mark. But at the same time seeing that they were also written within about fifty-five years of the lifetime of Jesus and that some of His contemporaries were probably living even then, we must regard them also as historically reliable and authoritative. Of these three Gospels, known as the Synoptic Gospels, because they give a synoptic or unified view of their subject, the Gospel of St. Mark is the most reliable as it was the one written nearest the lifetime of Jesus.

St. Mark, St. Matthew and St. Luke were not primarily theologians. Their task was to record some of the sayings and doings of Jesus which were in circulation among the first Christians. They were masters in the art of writing a biography; with great skill they selected the outstanding events in the life of our Lord and described them accurately and vividly. They sought with much care to portray Jesus exactly as He lived and taught. This is not to say that there are no minor inconsistencies in the first three Gospels. No three witnesses who see a thing happening tell exactly alike unless they are tutored by lawyers to do so. The very fact that there are numerous variations in detail indicates that these writers had independent sources of information and had also their own characteristic way of dealing with them. If the three Gospels had read exactly alike, we might have had our

suspicions about their authenticity. But now we find that while in the fundamental matters they are agreed, they differ in details. This fact enables us to attach considerable weight to their more or less independent accounts.

The Gospel of St. John stands apart from the other Gospels. There is much dispute about its authorship and the date of its writing. Some scholars think that it was written by St. John, one of the twelve disciples of our Lord. Other scholars think that it was the work of a priest at Ephesus called John the Elder who probably wrote the book about A.D. 120. In the uncertainty of our knowledge all we can say is that it was written by someone called John who lived about the end of the first century or the beginning of the second.

There are many differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel. In the Synoptic Gospels only gradually the divine character of Jesus is revealed; little by little the disciples realize that Jesus is not man but God. But in the Fourth Gospel even in the introduction the divine character of Jesus is made clear; He is not man; He is the Word of God become flesh. In other words, in the Gospel according to St. John, the meaning of the life and death of Jesus is worked out more fully than in the other Gospels. There is far more philosophy and theology in St. John's Gospel than in the first three Gospels. St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Matthew wrote biographies of Jesus telling briefly what He did and what He taught; St. John explains the meaning of His life and death.

Scholars are not at all agreed about the historical value of the Gospel according to St. John. Some think that as it was written so late it cannot be considered an accurate life of Jesus. We cannot accept this conclusion, though it is quite likely that the first three Evangelists give more accurately the sayings of Jesus. While many of the discourses in the Fourth Gospel contain thoughts and words which are not found in the other Gospels, some of the sayings in the other Gospels are exactly like those in the Fourth Gospel. For instance, the verse "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: And no one knoweth the *Son,* save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" occurs in the Gospel of St. Matthew and a very similar verse is found in the Gospel of St. Luke.[1] It will be noted that this verse sets forth a thought which is developed at great length in the

[1] Matthew xi. 27 and Luke x. 22.

discourses of the Fourth Gospel. As this verse is found in St. Matthew and St. Luke, we can say that it was actually spoken by Jesus. Probably the author of the Fourth Gospel took some sayings like this and developed them into the discourses in St. John.

St. John had a far deeper mind than the other Evangelists. He was by nature able to understand the teaching of Jesus a great deal better than the others. He had, moreover, a well-trained intellect and was familiar with the philosophy of the Greeks and of the Hebrews. He had a rare capacity for meditation and had thought much over the sayings of Jesus. When he began to write a life of Jesus, he not merely put down what Jesus actually said but his own understanding of it. The sayings of Jesus and the comments of the Evangelist are both closely woven together and it is often difficult to separate the one from the other; we do not know where the teaching of Jesus ends, and where the commentary of the Evangelist begins.

I have used in this book a great deal of material from the Gospel of St. John. I realize that as an historical writer St. John is not as reliable as the other three Evangelists. But I am convinced that he is a deeply spiritual writer. He understands thoroughly the mind of Jesus. We may safely follow his guidance, quite sure that he is giving us a correct understanding of our Lord's teaching and life.

I may note here in passing that the Gospel of St. John has been the favourite of many Indian readers of the Bible. They have been more attracted by this book than by any other in the Old Testament or in the New. This Gospel gives guidance on a great many problems on which Hindu thinkers and saints have sought light; its teaching meets exactly the deepest needs of India. In it are set forth some of the greatest truths which those who desire communion with God would do well to grasp.

We find that though there is an essential unity in the Gospels, the question " Who is Jesus? " is answered by the different writers from entirely different backgrounds. The four Evangelists who wrote the Gospels were drawn from various social and intellectual classes. They had their individual peculiarities; they made their own characteristic response to the challenge of Christ. Their records were as diverse as their character. They were all devoted to Jesus; to all of them He was the Supreme Lord of Life. They did not waver or hesitate even a little in their loyalty to Him. And yet each had his own distinctive way of describing Him, His gifts and His demands.

One fundamental merit of the New Testament is that it contains a collection of writings by men with such different types of mind. We owe this discovery largely to modern scholarship. A generation or two ago, even keen students of the Bible were apt to ignore these differences and to seek a consistency where there was none. The idea which was current then was that the whole Bible was a compact and well-knit book; each verse was coherent with all the others; there were no inconsistencies; there were no differences of theological opinion; all the writers were equally inspired in all their utterances and all that they said was wholly true. But, thanks to the patient researches of Biblical scholars during the last few decades, we now realize that the writers of the New Testament were individual men who understood and interpreted Christ each in his own way. They were not all alike. Spiritually and intellectually there were striking differences among them. The unity of the answers which they give to this significant question "Who is Jesus?" impresses us therefore all the more deeply. For we, the men and women of to-day, who seek to answer this question are very different in many ways; we come from many countries. The histories which lie behind us are different. Our ideals and traditions are varied; each man's temperament is peculiar to himself. We read the Gospels with a fresh interest when we find from what utterly different backgrounds this question is dealt with and yet how a fundamental unity characterizes the different answers.

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