

**THE
THEOLOGY OF CHAKKARAI**

P. T. THOMAS

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CONFESSING

THE FAITH IN INDIA :: No. 2

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CONFESSING THE FAITH IN INDIA SERIES—No. 2.

THE THEOLOGY OF
CHAKKARAI

with

SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS

BY

P. T. THOMAS

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P R E F A C E

A living theology is much more than a translation of credal and confessional formularies. These traditional formularies are themselves the result of the Church's encounter with its environments in times past, and they are a goodly heritage of the Church, in India as elsewhere. But they are valuable to us here in India precisely in the measure in which the Indian Church seeks to confess Christ in the context of the thought-forms and life-situations of its own setting. As a statement of the East Asia Christian Conference puts it :

A living theology must speak to the actual questions men in Asia are asking in the midst of their dilemmas; their hopes, aspirations and achievements; their doubts, despair and suffering. It must also speak in relation to the answers that are being given by Asian religions and philosophies, both in their classical form and in new forms created by the impact on them of Western thought, secularism and science. Christian theology will fulfil its task in Asia only as the Asian churches, as servants of God's Word and revelation in Jesus Christ, speak to the Asian situation and from involvement in it.

This is the rationale behind our search for an Indian Christian Theology.

A discriminating appropriation of the insights of Christian individuals and movements that have contributed to this search in the past is an integral part of our own search today. These men and movements had entered into serious dialogue with the religious and secular cultures of the land, both in their classical forms and in their renascent phases. Many of them tried to clarify to themselves and to others the truth and meaning of their Christian faith, from within their dialogical situation. We are only beginning today to recognise the relevance of their insights.

In this series of books, to which we have given the general title *Confessing the Faith in India*, we seek to present brief interpretative studies of these pioneers, with selections from their writings.

The first book in the series, *The Theology of Chenchiah* by D. A. Thangasamy, has been well received. We believe it meets a long-felt need—that of coming to grips with the theological framework of a creative Indian Christian thinker. The introductory essay attempts to evaluate the significance of Chenchiah's contribution for our theological task today. Chenchiah wrote a great deal, but they were most of them magazine articles. His theology had to be gleaned out of occasional essays and papers which had appeared in various journals and symposia.

Chakkarai's case is different. He has left behind him two books: *Jesus the Avatar* (1926) and *The Cross and Indian Thought* (1932), both in the *Indian Studies* series. In these books he gives a systematic presentation of his thinking on the Incarnation and the Atonement. In the

present volume, therefore, no attempt is made to include an exhaustive, or even a representative, selection of his writings. There is perhaps room for such a selection. Chakkarai had a lively mind, and his interests were many and varied, but they do not, all of them, fall within the scope of our immediate study. The selections included in this book are mostly from his essays and articles, and they illuminate some of the more significant aspects of his *theological framework*.

We hope that the book will stimulate interest, among Indian Christians and others, in the theology of one of our most important thinkers.

Other books in the series are in different stages of preparation.

M. M. THOMAS,
T. K. THOMAS,
Editors.

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I

INTRODUCTION

LIFE AND WORK

Chakkarai was one of the pioneers of the Trade Union Movement in Madras. When Gandhiji started his movement of civil disobedience in the struggle for national freedom, Chakkarai was working in the Danish Mission. He felt called to participate in the freedom struggle, and he became a follower of Gandhiji.

While Chakkarai was concerned about the nation and society, he was also deeply interested in philosophy and theology. He was one of the prominent members of the *Rethinking Group* which was concerned with redefining the Christian faith in Indian terms and relating it to the cultural heritage of the country.

He was a convert from Hinduism and naturally he was conscious of the relation between the Christian Gospel and his Hindu heritage in the depth of his spirit and mind. His nationalism made him all the more anxious to understand and interpret his faith in Christ, in terms of Indian thought and life.

Chakkarai was not a professional theologian but a layman—a lawyer. But he was a thinker and a man of vast reading. His main theological works are on the two foci of the Gospel, the Incarnation and the Cross. The substance of the first book, *Jesus the Avatar*, had originally appeared as a series of articles on the Person of Christ in the *Christian*

Patriot which he edited. These articles were later gathered together and, after thorough revision, published in book form. The second book soon followed, under the title, *Cross and Indian Thought*. In addition to these main works, Chakkarai has published a number of articles in the *Christian Patriot*, *The Guardian* and other journals. He also contributed articles to *Rethinking Christianity in India*.

Biographical Sketch

Vengal Chakkarai was born on January 17, 1880, in Madras. His father Kesava Chetty, a banker, died when Chakkarai was only six years old. The boy was brought up by his mother, Andal Ammal. Chakkarai's original name was Chakkaravarthy. Since he was born and brought up in a Hindu family, he was intimately familiar with Hindu religion and its spiritual aspirations.

Chakkarai matriculated from the Madras Christian College High School in 1897 with a first class. Afterwards he joined the Madras Christian College and graduated in Philosophy in 1901. From 1901 he worked as a teacher for five years at the Royapuram and Thondamandalam High Schools. While he was working as a teacher he joined the Law College and completed his F. L. in 1905 and B. L. in 1906. After serving his year's apprenticeship he enrolled himself as an advocate in 1908.

While at the Madras Christian College, he had come under the influence of Dr. William Miller. It was under Dr. Miller's guidance that Chakkarai made his initial studies in Christianity. The influence of Dr. Miller on Chakkarai was life-long. His interest in Christianity deepened into commitment, and he accepted baptism at the Madras Christian College Chapel in 1903.

He worked as a lawyer from 1908 to 1913. But law was not his line. In 1913, he joined the Danish Mission in Madras. He shared the charge of the Broadway Reading Room with Mr. Bittman till 1921. From 1921 to 1931 he worked with Miss A. M. Peterson. It was during this period that he became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and also started editing the *Christian Patriot*.

Chakkarai married a sister of the late Mr. P. Chenchiah in 1910. By this marriage he had two daughters and a son. His wife died in 1924, and Chakkarai married again in 1929. His second wife died in 1950.

He contested successfully in the municipal election in 1926. From that time, for about a quarter of a century, he was a councillor of the Madras Corporation and he was Mayor for one term. He became a Member of the Legislative Council in 1954. Chakkarai died in June 1957 in his 78th year.

Struggle of two Cultures

Western education and Western culture had a tremendous influence on the outlook of the people of India. Many developed an indiscriminating appreciation for whatever was western. This was particularly true of the Indian Christians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There was also a negative reaction to this cultural penetration of the West and a deliberate attempt to preserve the elements of Indian culture. A few people attempted to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory attitudes. The late Mr. Chenchiah was right in asserting that during this period 'Men lived in two worlds, divergent and opposed to each other in spirit, form, atmosphere—yet they managed to bring them together, work them into a whole—into a globe of two hemispheres. At this

period one lived in one world or two and this determined one's outlook on life.' Chakkarai was among those who lived in both worlds and attempted to reconcile the divergent attitudes.

Jesus Christ, as Chakkarai experienced him, transcended all cultures, Western or Indian. And Chakkarai's response of faith also had a similar transcendence. But in him, faith was set within the struggle of the two cultures, so that, both in apprehending it and in communicating it, he had to enter into a dialogue with the Hinduism in which he was brought up and the Western Christianity through which he had confronted Jesus Christ. Writing on the Resurrection of our Lord, he said once: 'My Faith is in the earthen vessel of a modern Indian mind coloured very much by my Hindu up-bringing and philosophy. While holding tenaciously to Faith, I try to explain it on the basis of the antique thought of India, mainly with great blocks of stone, wood and iron borrowed, however, from Western theology.' But 'the Fact of Jesus' was always his criterion in judging metaphysics and theology, whatever their source. He said, 'I have given up the scholastic idea of thinking of the Ultimate Reality in terms of abstruse metaphysics—not that it can always be avoided. It should subserve the purpose of explaining the revelation of God and His relation to the world and men that is contained in the Scriptures, especially in the Person of Jesus. . . . Here the Fact of Jesus is dominant and formative to which our metaphysics must relate itself.'

Primary Sources of Indian Christian Theology

In fact, while Chakkarai urged Indian Christians to take their Hindu heritage and traditions seriously in understanding and explaining Christ and Faith, he always

emphasised that the Scriptures and Experience should remain the primary sources of Indian Christian theology.

Regarding the Scriptures Chakkarai writes, 'My view is the downright Indian view which, I think, is also the Protestant view—that the Holy Scriptures are the sole authority for the determination of the Christian faith; it is the supreme *pramaana*—and, to add either traditions, however thrilling they may be, or the creeds, however venerable, or statements of theologians, however eminent, is utterly repugnant to me.' 'The Bible is an open book and whatever conclusions may be reached regarding its relevance will have to be achieved by Indian Christian thought—on its own initiative, without being unduly burdened by the views of the scholars.' He says elsewhere, 'Jesus of the Gospels is dissolved in the acids of modern Theology and nothing is precipitated.'

According to Chakkarai, the New Testament or the Old Testament cannot prove that Jesus is the Christ, unless there is at the back of them the necessary Christian experience. Moreover these books are themselves books of religious experience. The starting point of this experience is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus 'produced certain results on men's lives and minds which amounted to a revolution in their thinking and acting. In Christian experience the most central thing is Christ Himself. . . . He was the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the end of it. That was so in the life of the Apostle Paul, as we know from the letters generally accepted as his, and is so even today.'

THEOLOGICAL CONCERNS

The Person and Work of Christ occupy the central place in the theological thinking of Chakkarai. His books *Jesus the Avatar* and *Cross and Indian Thought* deal respectively with the person and work of Christ; they are on the Incarnation and the Atonement.

Incarnation

Before we go into Chakkarai's conception of the Incarnation, it would be useful to know what, according to him, it is not. He does not think that the Incarnation is only a theophany. In the Old Testament in some places we find God Himself appearing before men and speaking to them directly. In other places He comes into contact with men through His angels. Such encounter is by no means confined to Judaism. In Hinduism, in the Saiva Siddhanta, there were such theophanies, Siva is said to have assumed human form for a particular purpose. In these theophanies God stood outside the consciousness of men and inspired them or rendered them some help. In the Incarnation there was a more intimate union between Godhead and manhood.

Chakkarai thinks that there are essential differences between the Incarnation of Christ and the Hindu *avatars*. According to Hinduism, *avatara* is of a recurring nature. In the oft-quoted passage from the Gita, Krishna tells Arjuna, 'I come again and again, yuga after yuga, for the protection of dharma and the destruction of adharma'. Secondly, *avatars* are temporary phenomena. There is no promise that their spirits would come back and abide with human spirits. But 'the earliest Christian experience and the

available documentary evidence are alike confirmatory of the promise said to have been made by him that he would come again, and be with them even unto the end of the ages.¹

Chakkarai rejects the idea that Jesus Christ was only a deified human being. The Indian mind is used to attributing divinity to a religious genius like Ramakrishna Paramahansa. But this was not true of the Jewish mind. Neither Moses nor Elijah was ever raised beyond the level of humanity. The Jews had a horror of such man-worship. 'It is impossible that such typical Jews as the original Apostles, and St. Paul later on, would have indulged in the un-Jewish custom of building a temple for a man, though he were their beloved master.'² Further, this deification of Jesus by the disciples was not only unlikely; he never became a God to them in the usual sense of the term. He was never considered as a man up to a certain stage and then, after his death and Resurrection, as God. On the contrary, 'It was because of the consciousness that the Lord whom they had accompanied with still remained essentially them an Christ Jesus, one who could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, that he became the mediator between God and man. The risen life of our Lord was in the experience of the early Christians a continuation of that of the days of his flesh.'³ Again, not a single passage in the New Testament will support the thesis of deification. 'The exaltation of Jesus to the right of the Majesty on High' is quite a different spiritual experience. The disciples firmly believed that it was God who exalted him and not man. Lastly, a hero thus deified usually had his

¹ *Jesus the Avatar*, p. 137. ² *Ibid.*, p. 142. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

own worshippers and temples. But in the case of Jesus, right from the beginning, there was no separate temple apart from the temples where God was worshipped.

Chakkarai never subscribed to the theory that Jesus was only one of the prophets. A careful study of the prophets will reveal that there are noticeable differences between Jesus and even the greatest of the prophets. In the prophets God was working as a spiritual and moral force from outside, influencing their individual personalities. They believed that they were only means of conveying God's message to mankind. Even in Jesus we could see this double-consciousness. But in him it was coupled with a unity for which there is no parallel in human history. 'If, on the contrary, we take the self of Jesus as unitary and indivisible, then we can only conceive of him as related in a unique way to God Himself. The metaphysical view that would separate a manifestation of God from God Himself is not tenable in these days, in spite of Bradley and even the *advaitic Vedantins*. For "appearances and reality" are not different in their nature; and the appearance can only be that of reality, and that reality must appeal to consciousness or at least to itself. The conclusion is forced on us that, as Paul put it, "God was in Christ Jesus" and in him we touch the being of God Himself.'⁴

People like Socrates lived, taught and died, and the disciples after their death meditated on the teaching, life and death of their masters. The process stopped there. None of the disciples of Socrates, Buddha or Muhammed experienced the presence of their masters' spirits dwelling in their hearts. But the experience was quite different

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

in the early Christian Community. They experienced the 'apprehension of a present Jesus in their hearts'.

Christ in the Gospels

Chakkarai bases his understanding of the life of Christ on the Synoptic Gospels. In the study of the Synoptic Gospels there are two things to be borne in mind. First, since the Gospels were written after the Epistles, many of the ideas in the Gospels must be explained in the light of the experience of the Church. Second, as there is the possibility of later accretions in the Gospels, they cannot be accepted *in toto* as the authentic record of the life of our Lord.

Chakkarai begins from the Baptism of Jesus, as St. Mark does. From Jordan, after the Baptism, he passed on to the desert where he was subjected to the temptations. This was followed by a Judean ministry according to the Fourth Gospel. Then follow the Galilean period and the preaching of the Kingdom of God, controversies, healing miracles and the break with the religious leaders. From that time onwards he avoided the crowds, withdrew into the region beyond Jordan and taught his disciples. This was followed by the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Then he taught his disciples about his goal of life. He explained to his disciples the cup he had to drink, the Baptism he had to undergo in Jerusalem. After this, he left for Jerusalem with his disciples; he entered the temple as a triumphant King, after which we have the episode of the cleansing of the temple. He ate the last supper with his disciples. In the same night he was arrested, tried and the next day he was crucified. Then came the Resurrection, on the third day as a real rising of the physical body from the grave.

Answering those who deny the divinity of Jesus by saying that there is no evidence for it in the Gospels, Chakkarai argues that if there were such a claim in the Gospels, people would have suspected the genuineness of the record. Since the Gospel was written after the Epistles, one may be sure that the ideas about his divinity were prevalent among the circles of his disciples, and if anybody wanted to include those ideas in the Gospels it could have been done. Therefore, the absence of such a claim is the strongest proof in favour of the genuineness of the Gospel records. Moreover, according to Chakkarai, the methods of teaching that Jesus employed were not dogmatic. He never told his disciples who he was in so many words. 'It is the foolish teacher who does this, just as the painter of the dullest quality writes underneath his painting that it is a mountain scene or twilight glóry.'⁵ 'It was step by step that he led them to see the full blaze of his sovereign personality.'⁶

Humanity of Jesus

'What is involved in the idea of Christ's humanity is not merely that he conforms to our idea of what a man is but that he realises it to the highest level. In other words, he is the true man, the ideal man, or the man in all men, and our manhood is justifiable only to the extent to which it approaches the manhood of the Master.'⁷

Chakkarai finds the secret of Christ's unique manhood in his prayer life and in his sinlessness. In the Synoptic Gospels we see Jesus retiring into the wilderness and spending the whole night in prayer. At the same time, according to one writer, Jesus never prayed with the disciples; except for certain brief statements and short

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

prayers we have nothing that takes us into the inner springs of his religious life. One cannot believe that he was repeating learned and eloquent words all night long. According to Chakkarai, the Mount of Transfiguration is the key to the inner spiritual life of Jesus. 'It is a narrative which leads us into the invisible and profound world in which our Lord moved habitually.'⁸

This prayer-consciousness or yogic mind was present in other religions, especially among the *rishis* of India. But the difference is that the goal of the prayer life of these prophets and saints is clear and obvious, whereas the purpose of the prayer life of Jesus and the method and content of it are all 'wrapped in impenetrable, we will not say darkness but, light'.

Jesus is the *Sat Purusha*, 'and though we are not *asat*, we are dominated by *maya*', because 'the true humanity in us has been obscured by some taint and its growth is retarded'.⁹

Christ's sinlessness has a charm that attracts people to him. An ordinary man cannot reach an ordinary saint or *rishi* who 'is throned on a moral elevation'. We can only stand at a distance and offer the incense of adoration. But all sorts and conditions of men—the publicans, outcasts, the notorious woman—came very near to Jesus. In this meeting he produced in them 'the feeling of penitence for lost opportunities, of tears for the sins of their lives'.

Miracles of Jesus

Chakkarai agrees with the modernists on two points: 'in not ascribing any value to miracles as evidence of doctrine', and in affirming that the definition of miracles

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

as violations of the laws of nature is 'altogether unscientific and therefore untenable'. But he disagrees with the critics who say that the miracles in the Gospels grew up as myths because of the myth-making tendency of the group-mind, and therefore they may, somehow, have to be explained away. He thinks that there are many positive considerations which would throw light on the nature of his person.

(i) 'The ingenious attempts made by some scholars to eliminate or explain away (miracles) on rationalistic grounds having failed, they are now found to be part and parcel of the evangelical tradition. The construction of a Jesus of history without the miracles, is a sheer moral and literary impossibility.'¹⁰

(ii) 'Jesus performed the miracles recorded in the Gospels not with a view either to impress the imagination of his people or as an aid to his teachings but purely out of love to suffering humanity. "He was moved with compassion."¹¹

(iii) 'In the performance of miracles two forces were found to co-operate, the inner force of his own personality and what he called the faith of the sufferer or of those who pleaded on his behalf. . . . Without such a co-operation of wills, he could do no mighty works.'¹²

(iv) 'It is also noteworthy that the performance of miracles would seem to have demanded from him a great expenditure of physical and mental energy.'¹³ He was tired after a day's work of healing. 'On one occasion when a woman came and touched the hem of his garment, it is said that he perceived that virtue had gone out of him.'¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

(v) 'Unlike the saints, Jesus did not claim that these miracles were sporadic instances of awe-inspiring power. They were manifestations of the operation of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven or God. They were visible tokens of the finger of God, as Jesus said on the occasion when he was charged with the atrocious crime of being in league with the evil powers, because he cast out devils. It was because he knew that they were part of the organic law of the reign of God, as Moffatt calls it, that he proclaimed that faith could do miracles.'

Consciousness of Jesus

(a) *Messianic vocation*: The classical passage which explains this self-consciousness, according to Chakkarai, is found in Mt. 11:27. 'All has been handed over to me by my Father: And no one knows the Son except the Father—nor does any one know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' (Moffatt).¹⁵ From this Chakkarai makes three inferences regarding the nature of this consciousness.

(i) It is clear that the relationship between the Father and the Son is emphasised.

(ii) Our Lord claims that 'He alone knows the Father and the Father alone knows the Son, and that the Son alone can be the organ of revelation of the Father and Himself.'¹⁶

(iii) Our Lord does not say that this revelation is to be mediated by His words or by his deeds; it is to be mediated by himself. 'The plain inference is that in his time the knowledge of God came to men through him, and today, too, the knowledge of God must be mediated

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

through his continued presence and operation, and not by a study of even the Synoptic Gospels.¹⁷

In order to understand the consciousness of Jesus of himself it is necessary to learn the meaning of the title 'Son' which he loved most. Jesus never used the title *Son of God*. It was given to him by the Father. In the voice from heaven he got the confirmation of it. But that was not the occasion on which it first dawned on him. 'It cannot but be that so far as the memory of Jesus went, he never thought of himself as other than the Son, and of God as other than the Father.'¹⁸ Even at the age of twelve he speaks of God as 'My Father'.

This filial consciousness of Jesus was manifested in various activities, supremely by his vocation as Messiah. But how can he identify himself with such a nationalistic conception as Messiahship? There were three views which prevailed among the Jews regarding the establishment of the Messianic reign. The Zealots wanted the Romans to be driven out by violent 'non-cooperation'. There was also 'the non-violent non-cooperation party', who relied on God to send the Messiah to rid Israel of her oppressors. Thirdly, the people as a whole, except the Herodians, legalistic Pharisees and the Sadducees, 'palpitated with excitement and became uncontrollable when the Messianic hope became kindled and anyone came out claiming to be the expected deliverer'.¹⁹ When one examines the attitude of Christ towards these hopes one discovers that Jesus sympathised most heartily with the national aspirations of his people, but he was opposed to violent methods.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 51

As the term Messiah had political associations and as he wanted to conceal his messianic consciousness and function, he used the title 'Son of Man' which was found in the Books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Enoch. Though the title *Son of Man* was not a political term, it was blasphemous to use it. To make oneself the 'Son of Man' was the greatest crime in the penal code of the Jews (Mk. 14 : 61-64). By the term Jesus claims to be the Founder of the Kingdom of God. According to Chakkarai, this Kingdom 'was not a mere moral and spiritual reform that led to what is called conversion. It was the emergence into the world of time and space of the eternal world of God.'²⁰ As the Founder of the Kingdom Jesus claimed the power to forgive sins.

Jesus never used any of the Old Testament terms without transforming them. The term *Son of Man* also acquires new meanings in his use.

'(i) The Son of Man was to suffer death. (ii) His death constitutes the foundation of the Kingdom of God and is the organic structure of the new level of consciousness that he has realised for man. (iii) He becomes the Lord of human history and the final Judge, after the sufferings and shame of the cross, and is clad in supernatural power and glory.'²¹

(b) *His Attitude to Law* : From the very beginning he made a clear stand with regard to Mosaic law. He came to fulfil it, but that fulfilment entailed its extinction. According to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, even Moses was a servant in the Household of God, but Jesus was the Son. Jesus spoke in his own name. He said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54

laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.' 'The world has learnt *dharma* from books, but Christians learn it from the Lord and by submission to his yoke.'²² The basis of this claim was his unique relationship with the Father.

(c) *Consciousness of His Death*: To Chakkarai the death of Jesus was the central factor in the life of Christ. It was the mystery of his suffering and death that attracted Chakkarai most before he became his humble *bhakta*. Chakkarai has certain reasons to consider it to be so very significant :

The thought of his own death must have been present in his mind as something essential to his life from the very inception of his conscious religious life.

Our Lord's death was not the inevitable end of his life.

His death was not imposed upon him by his enemies. It was a voluntary act.

Death was the subject matter of his direct, secret instructions to his disciples and these became open after the confession of Peter at Cæsarea Philippi. It was inner compulsion that drove him to it. Jesus said, 'I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how I am straitened till it be accomplished.'

His death was in some way connected with the establishment of the Kingdom.

Chakkarai thinks that there are three passages from the Old Testament 'that Jesus must have brooded over and combined into one grand conception in his own personality'. These are Isaiah 42, Psalm 2, and Isaiah 53.

'Ps. 2 is a Messianic Psalm in which royal dignity and power are conferred on the Messiah. "Thou art my

²² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

beloved son." These words are identical with the utterance of the heavenly voice at the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus.²³

'In Is. 42 we have, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." Here the "in whom I am well pleased" of the baptismal voice becomes "in whom my soul delighteth". It was by combining the Son prophecy in Psalm 2 and the Servant prophecy in Is. 42 that Jesus found the meaning of his baptism.'²⁴

'But it is when we come to Isaiah 53 that we reach the very limit of the Messianic consciousnesses of Jesus regarding his death. . . . Our *santi* is ascribed to the great *yajna* that he performed by giving his own life.'²⁵

Passion and death of Christ

The agony of the *Bhagavan* in the Garden of Gethsemane, and his heart-breaking cry on the cross 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' are, according to Chakkarai, impenetrable mysteries. This cry of desertion is the very negation of the martyr spirit. It is hard to believe that Jesus wanted to shrink from mere physical sufferings. This agony must have been at the level of his *atman*. Instead of lingering on the cross, he died sooner than others because his heart had already been broken. The ingratitude of men and their malice must have deeply touched him. 'It would appear as if he had entered a region where the light of God did not shine and his Father's face that he always beheld in the fulness of reality was not to be seen.'²⁵ It may be said that as he

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁶ *Cross and Indian Thought*, p. 117.

approached his death he discovered the elements of horror and desolation and struggle in it, that were not evident to him in the beginning. 'To him at first it was a "ransom", the price to be paid for redemption or *moksha*.'²⁷ At the last supper he conceived his death as a *yajna* which ushered in a new solemn league and covenant, the *sakti* of which was to emerge from eating his body and drinking his blood through the symbolism of bread and wine.²⁸

The Spirit of Jesus

Chakkarai wrote, 'In the Synoptic Gospels with their ever-moving historical evolution, Jesus lives and moves largely on the plane of *vivahara* or phenomenal manifestation; but in the Fourth Gospel we have the same figure moving with equal freedom on the central axis of the *atman*.'²⁹ 'The Indian mind sees in the Johannine theology and meditation the quintessence of the religious spirit and the goal of yogic aspirations and communings with the *antaryamin*.'³⁰ To Chakkarai the Holy Spirit is none other than the spirit of Jesus. 'Jesus Christ is the Incarnation or Avatar of God; the Holy Spirit in human experience is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.'³¹ In the historical Jesus one finds 'the specialised consciousness conditioned by time and space'³², but in the Christian life this has become universalised. In other words, Christ has become deepest consciousness or *antaryamin* to those who have received Him.

When we compare the condition of the disciples of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²⁹ *Jesus the Avatar*, p. 108.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 115.

Jesus with that of the followers of Buddha and Muhammad, we find a remarkable difference. Before the death of Buddha his religion had been practically established. Muhammad became the sovereign of Arabia by infusing the spirit of conquest into his followers. But that was not the case with the disciples of Jesus. They had no power and no prestige. But they were able to overcome the greatest military power of their time. This was due to the continued presence of their Master. 'The Lord had not left them, but by some mysterious process had come to live in their hearts.'³³

This is not only the spirit that inspires every individual but also the spirit which animates the Church. 'The co-ordination and mutual influence of these two kinds of experience in the *Bhakta* and the *Sangha* have been the pregnant causes of movement within the historical consciousness that radiated from the historical Jesus.'³⁴

According to Chakkarai, it is impossible to reduce the reign of the Spirit to a mere enthusiasm. On the contrary it marks the emergence of a new age, a new level in the development of the religious consciousness.

In the Synoptic Gospels there are only very few sayings regarding the coming of the Spirit. There is no mention of it in St. Mark. In St. Matthew we find the promise of His perpetual presence among the disciples. The writer of the Third Gospel records the saying that He would send the promise of His Father upon His *Bhaktas* and ordered them to wait in Jerusalem till they got that Spirit. It is in the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles of St. Paul that we find

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

that 'the mystery and purpose of the Spirit are displayed in fulness'. The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel is represented as Paraclete, the Consoler, the great Guru and the Revealer. In the Acts of the Apostles, unlike in the Johannine conception of a personal consciousness, the Spirit is regarded as a kind of influence or force. Nevertheless they are not two different things but two aspects of the same Spirit—personal and impersonal.

On the evidence of the Acts and the Epistles of Paul, Chakkarai thinks that no one who had not received the Spirit could be considered a *Bhakta*. 'From our standpoint it could not have been otherwise, for to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to possess or to be possessed by His Spirit. Though the reality of the Spirit remained in the Church and retained its place in the creeds, the tendency soon manifested itself to substitute less satisfactory but more tangible methods of realizing the objects of the Incarnation. The Spirit was banished or, rather, its operation was limited to the circle of Church officials like bishops, and the *Bhaktas* were asked to regard them as channels of grace, and the sacraments that only they had the right and privilege of administering were deprived of the background of the experience of the Spirit.'³⁵

The main function of the Spirit is to reveal the things of the Lord. Chakkarai describes this function thus: 'Behind the *buddhi* and *manas* He is the witness, the *saksin* the *Jiva-saksin*. In His *jyotis* or light the *bhaktas* see light. He moves within the *cidakasa*, the realm of inner thought; He meditates and prays, as St. Paul says in an obscure passage in the Romans, with groanings that cannot be uttered. The feeble voice of our *buddhi* and

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

manas is reinforced by the witness of the Spirit, who, according to Paul, witnesseth with our Spirit that we are the children of God.'³⁶

Pentecost, according to Chakkarai, was the third stage in the history of the Incarnation, the Manger being the first and the Resurrection the second. With the coming of the Spirit, 'the great drama of Christian inner experience began—the profound revolution effected in the inner psychology of our race'.³⁷ All sorts and conditions of men were swept into the great stream. 'Great transformations of moral character were effected; extraordinary phenomena accompanied the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.... A new spiritual atmosphere came into the ancient Church. Those who were moulded by this dynamic force became new creatures.'³⁸

Chakkarai thinks that 'the orientation of Indian thought in respect of the Incarnation would be set on the Holy Spirit and the significance of His indwelling in human lives.... While the historical is the primary element in the Western interpretation, the spiritual is or will be the primary element in the Indian conception.'³⁹

Sin and Redemption

This topic, according to Chakkarai, falls under three heads: (1) What are we redeemed from? (2) By what process is such a redemption brought about? (3) Into what state are we redeemed, or what are its immediate and ultimate effects on human life? Chakkarai has no doubt that we are redeemed FROM *karma* and sin BY the Passion, Death and Resurrection and the establishment of the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164 f.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Kingdom of God associated with it, INTO the state of *moksha*.

1. *Karma and Sin* : Chakkarai, with other Christian theologians, would admit that though sin exists, it has no right to exist. 'It is an usurper, sitting in the temple of God, and claiming the allegiance of man.'⁴⁰ He thinks that it is a fact created by the religious consciousness of men or, in other words, it is brought into existence by religions, and its remedy also is offered by religions. This remedy is the application of Christ's personality and the *sakti* (power) going out of Him.

Jesus never tried to explain away sin. 'He conceived and dealt with sin in its protean forms as a disease. He is the *Parama Vaidya* of the soul.'⁴¹ He conceived of sin as the wandering away of the sheep from the fold and of the prodigal from his father's home. In Hinduism *Samsara* is the word used to explain this wandering. This wandering or *samsara* is the beginning of religious life.

Chakkarai infers from the story of the prodigal (a) that 'Our Lord held the view that humanity, rather than the human soul, started on this wandering, after having been in the society of the *Paramatman*, the Great Soul;⁴² (b) The assertion of the self or *ahamkara*, permitted by God, is the beginning of the long wandering or *samsara* of sin; and (c) the riotous living in the far country takes various forms, from the brutal pleasure of the senses to those abominations and mysteries of iniquity that live in the underworld of society.'⁴³

Thus sin is conceived of as bondage. This is the *pasa*

⁴⁰ *Cross and Indian Thought*, p. 22.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

that prevents the *pasu* (individual soul) from reaching the *pati* or the Lord. According to Saiva Siddhanta this *pasa* is an eternal principle like the Lord (*pati*) and the Soul (*pasu*), and not a moral bondage. 'Owing to some aboriginal or ante-natal sin as the Indian believer in *Karma* argues, man has fallen into bondage.'⁴⁴ Jesus never tried to discuss the origin of sin. He recognised it as a fact and attacked the source of the *pasa* or *bandha* on the cross.

Even though Chakkarai does not take the creation story in Genesis literally, he recognises here certain valuable points: (a) As through one man's fall sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death passed unto all men for that all have sinned (Rom. 5 : 13). It is not easy to explain this transmission of sin to Adam's posterity. But in man, Paul saw 'the presence and pressure of an original disturbance.'⁴⁵ (b) The mystic serpent in this story, according to Chakkarai, is the mysterious bearer of the suggestion to disobey the command of God. (c) The suggestion made by the serpent is that God did not want Adam and Eve to acquire the knowledge of good and evil. The punishment inflicted upon them was not for disobeying God's command, but for having attained to a knowledge that God wished to keep back from them. 'Man's sins, besides being self-indulgence, proceeds in very many cases, if not in all, from a curiosity to look into forbidden mysteries.'⁴⁶

According to St. Paul, the Law, instead of being a guide, became a revelation of man's sin, and the active *agent provocateur* of it, and became the *badge of bondage*. Chak-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

karai finds similarities between *karma* and the Pauline conception of Law. '*Karma* is a comprehensive term, denoting not merely action as a concrete outward fact, but the very activity of the individual ego. Besides, it includes the Law or rules governing and directing action and the motive. In short, the doer of *Karma* is the complex individual ego in the midst of the social and moral order.'⁴⁷

Sin and Suffering : From the Christian experience, two conclusions can be drawn regarding sin and suffering. God cannot be the author of these, and man is solely responsible for them. Chakkarai does not agree with the view that it is because man misunderstood his freedom to choose between good and evil that evil entered into man and consequently suffering. He says : ' If there is any truth at all in the doctrine of the struggle for existence, as propounded by Darwin and the neo-Darwinians, great suffering must have been caused among them and is still the rule of nature.'⁴⁸ ' This law is suffering, of sacrifice by one another, is a radical *karma* of the evolving cosmic power and in our ultimate consideration of what the universe is, it cannot be eliminated by the sophisms of our logic. However, this law of suffering, the primeval principle of organic evolution, may be explained as part of God's plan of goodness in an ultimate teleology ; in the world of human action at least it has been contended that suffering of various kinds receives its proper treatment and fits in with our conceptions of a moral order in the universe. If this claim can be vindicated to any appreciable extent on the basis of experience and authority of *Sruti*, the scriptures of the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52,

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Christian faith, a Christian theology would be achieved wherein the cross would naturally assume its place.'⁴⁹

In this connection it would be useful to examine the arguments for a moral government of the world by a system of reward and punishments and the Indian conception of *karma* and *punarjanma*. According to the doctrine of *karma* and transmigration, the individual is punished in this birth for his sins in the past, and for his sins in the present life he will be punished in the future. In this assumption lies the fundamental difference between the two systems. The Christian view is opposed to any such doctrine of transmigration. But for Chakkarai 'The arguments in favour of a future state of existence may be metaphysically extended to the proof of past and future existences.'⁵⁰ He does not think that the Christian view necessarily precludes a belief in metempsychosis. According to him the idea of *punarjanma* is not contrary to Christian teachings 'though not logically derivable from it'. 'That is to say, in any case whether we are restricted to this life or a chain of future lives is possible, it is by what the Lord did and does and shall do, that *moksha* is realized by the *jivatman*. This is the central *siddhantha* of Christian *anubhava* and *sruiti*; and on that and that alone the *bhakta* takes his firm footing.'⁵¹

The Cross: Chakkarai has no doubt that the Cross is the pivot of Christian experience. It is one of the most remarkable facts of Christian history and of the New Testament.

According to Chakkarai, there is no doubt that under the shadow of the Cross, sin becomes darker and more sinful.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69 f.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

The contemplation of the Cross produces the most poignant feelings of remorse and repentance in the sinner.

From the Cross has descended on men's hearts and minds the healing energy or moral and spiritual restoration.

Chakkarai very emphatically rejects the view that the Indian has no consciousness of sin. With the Indian 'It plays perhaps a different role in the development of the religious life towards the ultimate goal. The psychology, perhaps, of the Indian, differs in one respect from that of the Protestant revivalist who begins his exposition of Christ's life and character by drawing pointed, and too often painful, attention to sins of the most disgusting character—thereby sometimes disturbing the imagination of some innocent people. His appeal is to evoke feelings of repentance in the sinner and then to lead him on to throw himself on the grace of the Lord and His voluntary sacrifice of Himself as the only effective remedy and rescue of his shattered moral constitution. . . . But in India, the Indian does not respond so easily to such appeals; or rather the same effects are not forthcoming. The Indian is emotional but his emotionalism cannot be roused from this side. To strike a personal note which our readers may pardon, the writer never felt the awfulness of sin and probably does not feel it even now as some of the European Christian *bhaktas*. It was fuller acquaintance with Jesus in the beauty of His holiness and matchless and moving character that has made him realize the Protestant feeling of sin and its enormities. In one word, it is the positive character of Jesus that has brought out the negative character of sin as the very opposite of all that He stood for.'⁵²

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 153 f.

After a thorough examination of the various theories of atonement, Chakkarai comes to the conclusion that these theories are inadequate to explain the fact of atonement. Nevertheless he recognizes the valuable points in these theories. Some of them are :

Salvation cannot be a simple affair. It involves the heavy and costly sacrifice of the Son of God.

Human sin in its turn carries terrible results, 'penetrating even the indivisible being and harmony of the Divine heart, releasing therefrom the energy that has grappled with sin on the cross'.

Salvation, in the first instance at least, is the *outgoing* of Divine effort and endeavour on the cross, and responded to by man.

These theories, however, have certain serious defects according to Chakkarai :

(1) The conception of God in His dual capacity as Ruler and Father is untenable.

(2) It is not to placate God or to rectify His sense of offended justice that Jesus died on the cross. It is the heart of God rather than His majesty that is broken by our wilful folly and sin.

The Cross and Christian Mysticism

Mysticism was not very much appreciated in the West. But that was not the case in India. 'In Hinduism the mystical consciousness has always held the highest place whereas in historic Christianity mysticism has been more or less looked upon as an alien, as antagonistic to the sacramentalism and institutionalism of Church politics, and as peculiar to sects, monastic orders and gifted saints.'⁵³ In the West logic was always preferred to

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 228 f.

the mystical intuitions. But in India reason was submitted to the insight of the saints. 'Hence', Chakkarai says, 'Christian mysticism should discover in the Indian soul many an organ through which its living music can find richer, ampler harmony, and sweeter strains of melody.'⁵⁴

According to Chakkarai, 'Christian mysticism springs from the knowledge of God in Christ, and it can never soar beyond this region.'⁵⁵ He thinks that some of the mystics like Dean Inge have been tempted to substitute 'dazzling ideas for the rugged edges of the cross'. 'It may happen that in certain moments of rapt communion, the Cross, the remedy for the ills of life, may be forgotten, and the Christian mystic may imagine that the palace of the soul in which he dwells for the time being, has been built up like the palace in the Arabian Nights or the Temple of Solomon without sound of hammer on stone. In Christian experience no such magical illusion is possible—the habitation of the soul has its foundation in Jesus Christ and his Death. Even in the vision of the City of God that the apostolic seer saw, he noticed a Lamb standing in the midst of the throne . . . it seemed to have been slain (Rev. 5 : 6).'⁵⁶ According to St. Paul, 'Our baptism in his death made us share his burial so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live and move in the new sphere of life' (Rom. 6 : 4).'⁵⁷

There is a difference between the experience of an Indian mystic and a Christian mystic. 'To the man who

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

has reached this stage, the *jivan-mukta*, the world becomes a dark point, even if it be in the midst of an indescribable glory. The joys and sorrows of life are the mere echoes of an aimless battle; parents, wife and children meet as in a fair, never to meet again; human life must sink, like a bubble, into the sea from which it rises.⁵⁸ A Christian mystic also would recognise the existence of such a strange experience. But, in the view of Chakkarai, Jesus Christ stands in striking contrast to the mystics of other religions. He speaks very little of the 'rewards and prizes prepared for His *bhaktas*'. 'Rather the austerity of His words, "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath no place where to rest His head" has been the strange inspiration of His servants in all ages, filling them with the mystic ardour of sacrifice profound and entire.'⁵⁹ 'Instead of the delicious rapture of a self-absorbed mysticism, His servants have so identified themselves with the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief that they have thought it a glory to suffer like Him and thus by the strange way, not of a *via negative—neti neti*—of our *Advaitism* but of the cross, have entered into the inheritance.'⁶⁰ It is to this type of mysticism that the Cross calls us.

Chakkarai thinks that mysticism has reached its limit of devotion to the *Bhagavan* in the lover and loved relation. 'Rising by successive steps from the stage of the master and servant, the *dasa marga*, of the Father and Son, the *pitha-puthra marga*, of friend and friend, *mitra marga*, the highest is attained in the consciousness of the Lord as the lover.'⁶¹ No doubt, its strange

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233 f.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

extravagances have roused protests' from the Indian reformers and saints.

The conception of the Lord as lover is not alien to the New Testament. Jesus called Himself the bridegroom. Even in the Old Testament the prophets reminded Israel that their Lord God was their true husband. 'In Hindu mysticism it is the marriage relation and even the relation of illicit love with its clandestine intimacy (*madhurya*) and its attendant thrills that are used for the expression of the attitude of *bhakti*. . . . In Christian *bhakti*, it is the very reverse of this as can be inferred from the great passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians' (Ch. 5: 1-33)⁶².

Chakkarai thinks that this mystical consciousness or devotion of the *bhakta* to the Lord can satisfy some of the needs of human nature.

1. The mystical experience is an attempt to forget for the time being our individuality and rise to an ampler and freer region.

2. While working towards redemption the mystical consciousness 'evokes a joy, a bliss and an intoxication—the nearest parallel to which can only be found in love!'

3. 'Lovers are said to be selfish in their love, forgetting the world and by the world forgot, and similarly lovers of God have revelled in this new world of theirs'.⁶³

But according to Chakkarai, 'Selfishness or self-centredness even in religious emotionalism, is abhorrent to the devotee who lives in the light and leading of the cross. The life of Christian mysticism is a romance of not one world, or even of two worlds, but of three. First the natural, then the psychical, and last the spiritual—

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-46.

not indeed, that the mystic is first an animal, second an intelligence, and then an angel. All these three kinds of experience are fused into a living glow. Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it unto the Lord. The consciousness that the soul has been bought with a price, redeemed and betrothed to the Lord, diffuses its aroma and fragrance through all human affairs, adding solemnity to the responsibilities of our ordinary life'.⁶⁴

The Cross and Evolution

There is no doubt that a Christian is not bound by any theory of the scientists. Evolutionism itself is evolving 'so much that Darwinism, acclaimed in the last century as the modern gospel, is regarded by some biologists as either dead or dying'. But according to Chakkarai there are certain facts that have received general recognition: (1) The history of the world has lengthened out in millions. (2) 'Whatever may have been the exact forces that have led to the many forms of life, natural selection, mutations and even new creations, with the development of the nervous system went on a process of destruction of many life-forms, and pain that cannot be explained by the most buoyant optimism of natural theology.' (3) 'With man we enter on a new stage. In coming to that stage, man must have had a great struggle in primitive ages with the unknown and terrific agencies of physical nature'. It is true that to many scientists evolution is only something guided by a mechanical process without any design. But Chakkarai agrees with J. S. Mill in recognising the fact that 'the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

adaptation in nature affords a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence'.

Chakkarai thinks that just as in man there is the vision of a higher life, 'in nature's strivings there is an analogous upward urge for a new heaven and a new earth, the appropriate environment for the steady movements of the spirit of *dharma* in its three-fold forms of beauty, truth and goodness'.⁶⁵

According to Chakkarai, there are four possible ways in which God's relation to nature may be conceived: (1) God is the Author, Creator and Sustainer of the world. (2) He is the Creator of the beneficent processes. But the dark and destructive operations and their agents are the work of another power, the evil one. (3) He is totally without any vital relation to nature. (4) The world process is independent of the creative energy and He is Himself the final emergent fact. He does not think that any of these ways adequately explains God's relation to nature. He agrees with Prof. Whitehead when he says that 'Christianity has introduced a tremendous view of the world or better still, a tremendous fact, even "the Fact of Christ"'. It is in the light of this Fact as the very "central hearth" of the universe that the circle of Christian theology must be drawn.'⁶⁶

In Chakkarai's view

1. 'There is no inherent incompatibility between Christ's view of God as the Father and that of Science, an evolving world in which the great "values" emerge.'⁶⁷

2. 'God is perpetually active—"the Father worketh hitherto"—and therefore stands not only as the very

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

ground but the unity in diversity of the manifold universe.'⁶⁸

3. 'The immanence and transcendence of God cannot be erected into two Gods out of all relation to each other. They are but aspects of the reality of God. . . . If one may say so, the immanent God is God in the totality and unity of the world, as it is at any moment. . . . The world is perpetually passing beyond itself not in mere internal relations of existing facts, but into a fuller and richer being. This is its relation to God as transcendent.'⁶⁹

4. 'That entirely new forms of being endowed with new "values" are bursting on the world cannot be gainsaid by modern science. All attempts to explain them by mere mechanical laws have proved abortive and fruitless. . . . They can only be conceived as capable of this creativeness, because they are under the governance of a transcendent power, besides their present status. They are, as it were, the vehicles of a new influx of creative energy'.⁷⁰

5. 'The world, as it has evolved, is by no means a perfect world. . . . The world, as it exists with all its imperfections, cruelties, suffering and pain is a fact. But it is an equally telling fact that the ameliorative and redemptive processes are at work. Both equally belong to the life and will and purpose of God. . . . His goodness pitted against suffering, disease, sin and weakness and evolving the better order yet to be—this is the very kernel of the Christian gospel of the cross'.⁷¹

6. Biological science has made us familiar with the organism and its environment—the organism with its

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

capacity to adapt itself to an independent environment. Today we are beginning to see more clearly that the environment itself is subject to the action of the organism and is altered accordingly. St. Paul adumbrated this principle in relation to the world and the spirit of man, when he spoke of the whole creation travailing and groaning and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). That is to say, a two-fold inter-dependent process of redemption is in evidence. Man without nature cannot be redeemed, nor nature without man.⁷²

7. Chakkarai shares the view of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews that 'man in the immensity of the cosmic order appeared as a god, made by the great God, destined to exercise universal sway over all.'⁷³

With the same author and St. Paul, Chakkarai thinks that 'the greatest contradiction presented by man's affiliation with the Divine and his tireless quest of the *atman* is the last enemy, death',⁷⁴ which is to be conquered.

Chakkarai has no doubt that the world process is teleological; it is moving to a definite end. It is in this process that great values of immense importance emerge. He would admit that the present world 'does not answer to our ideals of rationality and moral and spiritual worth'. 'But the very presence of this superior realm of ends compels us to regard them as of the very *sat* or essence of *prakrti* or nature. And God must be conceived as present in it and struggling through it to evolve finer and purer forms in an ascending scale.'⁷⁵

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 278 f.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 279 f.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279 f.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 283 f.

According to Chakkarai the dream of the theologian and the scientist 'is to reduce the chaos in which things appear into coherence and rationality.' 'The Cross stretches into the eternities of the past and present; it gathers up into itself and focuses the myriad rays of pain and joy, of man's sins and God's grace and flashes them across the dark waters of the future. Its foot reaches into the realm of Hades and its height is lost in the immensity of Heaven. When we stand under it, we become one with the heart of things, and we all are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us", as His great *bhakta* triumphantly exclaimed.'⁷⁶

EVALUATION

Chakkarai's view of an Indian Theology

Chakkarai was concerned about the need for Indian Christianity to develop its own theology or theologies to express its understanding of Christ and Christian experience. For him this was not a matter of speculative luxury but a real need.

Chakkarai refused to accept that 'the Christian Faith and Indian thought are diametrically opposed to each other; further, that Christianity as it has been interpreted to us is a ready-made and finished commodity; and still further, that any departure from the traditional views is contrary to the genius of Christianity and to the Christian scriptures.'⁷⁷ He believed that 'God has spoken in diverse manners and at different seasons through His prophets and *rishis* to men, revealing to mankind His

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 284 f. .

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

holy will and mind, line upon line, here a little and there a little. . . . God has never left Himself without a witness at any time to interpret His mind to men. Thus as we gaze at India's religious past, we discern the long stream of prophetic consciousness from the days of the *Rig Veda* down to Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya and Keshab Chandra Sen. These were sent by God as witnesses of the light.⁷⁸ In Chakkarai's opinion it was impossible in India to write Christian thought on a clean slate because the Indian religious consciousness was not a clean slate. The situation in India demands not a mere apology but a reconstruction of thought, or a radical restatement of faith.

Chakkarai said, 'The Christian Faith—its meaning and contents—has yet to be grasped by Indians in an original way, under the guidance of the Master's spirit. In doing so, we shall be helped by our Indian mentality, not only conscious but the sub-conscious. . . . This, of course, cannot and does not mean that everything Hindu we could accept in an uncritical way, any more than we can accept everything called Christianity from the West. The test is the New Testament, and *from* Indian Christian religious consciousness.'⁷⁹ What is needed is not a translation of western theological textbooks nor an interpretation of the same in the idiom and concepts of other religions. It must answer the spiritual longing of the age, and the questions which the Christian asks about Christ at the instigation of some deep inner spiritual urge. The Indian Christian has two great urges: first for a direct contact with Jesus and second an aspiration for rebirth—to be

⁷⁸ *Jesus the Avatar*, p. 1f.

⁷⁹ *The Guardian*, April 5, 1951.

born a Son of God in the image of Jesus. Indian theology must be able to satisfy these urges.

Chakkarai could not think of having one uniform theology throughout India. That would be like having one system of religious metaphysics for the millions of Hindus from Mount Kailas to Kanyakumari. 'Indian theological business is two-fold: one for the non-Christian people of India and the other for the Christian brethren who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus.'

He never claimed that he was competent to produce such a theology. He wrote: 'I am only writing a prologuemene, as it were, to the kind of theological system that can be started even now in India by Indian Christians who are being urged by the inner voice to venture forth from the Ur of the Chaldees.'⁸⁰ It is in this light that Chakkarai's theological writings should be evaluated.

Several criticisms have been levelled against Chakkarai's theology. It may be worthwhile to examine some of these.

Place of the Old Testament

Chakkarai's position with regard to the Old Testament has been misunderstood by many people. They thought that Chakkarai's idea was to replace the Old Testament with some of the Hindu Scriptures. It is true, while discussing the future of Christianity in India, Chakkarai wrote that something like an Old Testament may be formed through a study of the Bible against the background of the East. But it should be borne in mind that he did not conceive of it as a substitute for the present books of the Old Testament. On the contrary he expressed

⁸⁰ *The Guardian*, May 1, 1947.

his firm faith in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, in his 'Credo' and in the articles published in *The Guardian*. He wrote: 'The Old Testament is a much greater book (or books) than even the Church conceived it to be, or even the original apostles like Peter and later on Paul. The Christian Church was led by a true instinct to include it in the Christian canon'.⁸¹ In some of his later writings he expressed an even more positive view with regard to the authority of the scriptures.

Use of Hindu Terms

Some readers have raised serious doubts regarding his use of terms borrowed from Hinduism to explain the Christian faith. It may be that when Hindu terms, especially common ones like *avatara*, are adopted, there is a danger of the Gospel being misunderstood.

Dr. R. M. Clark has said, 'When we adopt terminology that has been used before by Hindus to express their religious faith, are we betraying the Gospel to their understanding of God, man, and the world? This is by no means a necessary consequence. For one thing, most Hindus today live in a kind of penumbra of religious and philosophical thinking rather than in any clear stream of thought. Further, when we use such terminology we can make clear the sense in which we are using it. This may often be brought out by the context rather than by giving formal definitions. Often in our writing we shall wish to use the Bible as a constant basis of reference. This also helps to make clear the sense in which we use terms.'

Here we can note at least three suggestions: Make clear the sense in which we use the terms; make it clear through

⁸¹ *The Guardian*, August 5, 1943.

the context; make it clear by constant use of biblical references. If we examine the writings of Chakkarai in the light of these suggestions, we can see that there is very little justification for the fear that the Gospel may be misunderstood by his use of Hindu terms. For example, in his use of the term *avatara* he made it sufficiently clear that there are significant differences between the Christian conception of Incarnation and the Hindu doctrine of Avatara. This was true about his use of many other terms. In some other cases, even though he has not attempted to define the terms, the context clarifies the meaning. He also uses Bible references wherever they are necessary.

It has been argued that some of the terms borrowed from Hinduism like *maya* and *sat-asat* are too philosophical and that they are apt to lead us away from the biblical understanding of sin. Chakkarai uses these terms while discussing the sinlessness of Jesus. He says, 'He is the *Sat Purusha*; and though we are not *asat*, we are dominated by *maya*'. Then he defines the term *maya*: 'We use the term *maya* in connection with our personality, not in the sense that it is unreal but in the sense that the true humanity in us has been obscured by some taint, and that its growth is retarded'⁸².

Chakkarai conceived of sin as the wandering away of humanity from the *Paramatman* or the Great Soul. He uses the term *samsara* to explain this wandering. For him the assertion of the self or *ahamkara* marks the beginning of *samsara*. In some sense this may be compared to the biblical idea of estrangement or alienation which was a consequence of the assertion of self, as we find in the story of the Fall in the Book of Genesis.

⁸² *Jesus the Avatar*, p. 74.

Chakkarai again uses the categories of *Saiva Siddhanta* like *pati*, *pasu* and *pasa* to explain the term sin. In *Saiva Siddhanta*, *pasa* is more a metaphysical principle than a moral bondage. No doubt Chakkarai comes very near to this position. According to him Law is the badge of bondage. He finds similarities between *Karma* and the Pauline conception of Law.

In all these cases Chakkarai uses metaphysical terms to explain the concept of sin. The use of metaphysical terms is unavoidable in understanding and interpreting concepts like sin. No doubt this method has its own limitations. The real question is whether he has used these terms in the general framework of the biblical understanding of sin or not, and here one may safely assert that Chakkarai's position is in keeping with the biblical concept of sin.

Can Hinduism satisfy its votaries ?

Chakkarai discusses this question in his article, 'The Relation between Christianity and Non-Christian Faiths', published in the book *Rethinking Christianity in India*. The fact that man is caught up in a particular predicament raises certain questions and these questions are answered by different traditions. A set of questions and their answers forms a complete circle; man's needs and their answers form a complete whole. In this sense one can say that a religion like Hinduism satisfies the needs of its votaries. To the Hindu whose spiritual longings have been shaped by it, Hinduism fulfils these longings and appears to be adequate, just as their traditions did for St. Paul and to Cornelius. It was the confrontation with Jesus Christ that brought about their conversion; it was there that they found their past religions inadequate. Jesus Christ raises the longing which He Himself fulfils. Even the presence of

the longing is recognised only in the light of Christ. Therefore, Chakkarai argues, in our approach to the votaries of other religions, comparisons have no value.-

The problem of Indianization

Some people are rather sceptical about the value of the process of Indianization of theology which Chakkarai and others advocated. They argue that the Christian Gospel is universal and any attempt to accommodate it to individual situations should be condemned. If what they mean by the term Gospel is Jesus Christ, Chakkarai would agree with them. According to him Christ is the Gospel, but he definitely makes a distinction between Christ and Christianity.

How to understand Christ for himself and how to make Him intelligible to his people were Chakkarai's main concerns. It was in this connection that Chakkarai felt that a radical restatement of the Faith would be necessary. In this restatement Indian scriptures should form the background, simply because religious consciousness in India is not a clean slate.

But how far has Chakkarai contributed towards a radical restatement? Evidently his theological thinking was centred round the Person and Work of Christ; in other words, the content of his faith was Christ Himself. He has attempted to explain the Person and Work of Christ against the Indian background, using Indian terminology and thought patterns. In this 'central point' even a relatively conservative group like the Gurukul Theological Research Group, Madras, feels that they are 'in complete agreement with the author', though, of course, they have their 'doubts about a number of other, secondary, points', some of which they think 'lie very near the centre'.

No doubt the method of interpretation was radical while it was strictly within the broad biblical framework.

His theology was also radical in the sense that he was indifferent to the doctrines and dogmas of the Church, and even to the sacraments. Even though Chakkarai would admit that sacraments like Baptism and the Eucharist were valuable and should be retained, he was not in a mood to concede their 'absolute indispensableness'. It is through the sacraments that the supreme *yajna* or sacrifice of Christ touches the lives of the *bhaktas*, and therefore this appears to be one of the weak points in the thinking of Chakkarai. It should however be borne in mind that he was not attempting a balanced, orthodox theology. He hoped that several people would attempt, from different angles, to work towards this, and he realised that these interpretations would differ one from another. Chakkarai was only writing a prologuemene. He believed that it was the duty of Indian Christians to undertake the task of theological restatement which he had initiated.

II

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF CHAKKARAI

MY CREDO

. I have been meditating on what I really hold to be the truths of my spiritual life ; truths and aspirations that really have dynamic values, and not merely intellectual concepts. Let it be remembered, however, that I am not one of those who decry the value of intellect in Christianity. Unfortunately, St. Paul's antithesis of wisdom or *sophia* and the Cross has been misunderstood by a section of simple Christians, as they call themselves, who, strange to say, want us to believe in a whole system of theology that they have extracted from the Holy Scriptures. And so, when I use the word 'believe' I mean and imply that I trust Him, and depend on what He said, and that He is still working in men, as He promised. Let me now state my credo as follows :

I believe God as revealed by Jesus Christ in His words and life and death and resurrection and His present mediatorial office. I believe that this revelation is that God is all-wise and all-merciful and His power is such that no man can fathom its mystery. This is put in this way to avoid saying that God is all-powerful or omnipotent, viz. that He can do anything that man wants or imagines to be better for the world or the whole moral and spiritual realm of values.

I believe that what Jesus has revealed as to God's will and His dealings with men is the safest guide ; a lamp unto our feet and a light on our path.

I believe that Jesus is the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His Personality. And as such to worship Him is to worship the Father, as Jesus called Him. I believe that He is our Saviour, Redeemer, the Pioneer of the Kingdom of God to be established. I believe that through union with Him I am led into, and become a citizen of, the Kingdom of God. I believe that the Kingdom is yet to come and will come when Jesus comes again. I believe that this Kingdom transcends history, and history as such will cease, and over the nothingness of the historical process will the Kingdom of God be established. (This is the reason why I believe that not all the cunning statesmen of the world can bring peace into the world. They may make attempts from various motives, but the thoughts of man are vanity, as Holy Writ plainly says.)

I believe that Christian doctrine is more than metaphysics ; it is social action for doing away with all inequalities and establishing the perfect equality ; mind you, not identity of all men (that is why I hold that all political organisations and systems, be they empires, dictatorships or democracies, that would keep them subject on any pretext are anti-Christian and, therefore, to be opposed in the name and power of the Lord.)

I believe in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. (I do not want to discuss questions regarding inspiration, modern criticism, etc., here. But I may say that I have much more in common with the fundamentalist position than with the modernist.) I believe in the Old Testament as without it I cannot understand the New.

Without Jesus the Old Testament would have great value but not the same value as it now has.

I believe that God who revealed Himself in His Son, has spoken through the great *rishis*, *bhaktas* and humble souls of my own land. My spiritual descent, as well as my historical circumstances, is to be traced to the great history and heritage of my motherland.

I believe that Jesus has revealed to me great truths in Hinduism which in turn have led me, under His grace, into some of the forgotten and practically ignored truths concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

I believe the Church, as the Body of our Lord in a sense and with an intensity, such as is called for by the New Testament. I believe the Church is constituted not by mere cultus but by communion with the living Lord for social action of the kind that I described above. Therefore I believe that the Church should be supra-national and that the members of His Body should consider themselves and act as such, refusing allegiance to earthly states when they do things contrary to the objects mentioned above. I believe (alas, I am one among the few, probably) that the members of the Body should regard one another as more closely related than to their own nationals. That is, an Indian Christian *bhakta* will regard an English Christian as more akin to him than an Indian, and vice versa. The German, the Englishman and the Jap would do likewise. What will happen then? Can anyone predict? (And when will this happen?)

I believe that baptism and the eucharist, though not instituted by our Lord, in the official sense, are great sacraments and should be retained, though I do not want to insist on their absolute indispensableness.

I believe that the form and nature of the future Church

in India will be very different, though not hostile to western ecclesiasticism.

Finally, I believe that I should tell my countrymen of Jesus and His Cross and glory and leave them to face Him without proposing that they should enter our present church organisation.

I believe in our becoming Christians rather than becoming churchmen.

This is a very loose summary and synopsis of my present credo and practically of my past also. I hope that this will be strongly criticised and others will be led to make similar statements.

JESUS AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The most outstanding feature of Christian experience, to put it in non-technical language, is that we can no more think of God without Jesus Christ than we can think of Jesus Christ without God. In the Christian consciousness revealed in the Gospels and the Acts, the two are declared to be inseparable. To separate what God Himself has joined in such indissoluble union is to do injustice to both. That Jesus has contributed some vital elements to our experience is admitted by those who would regard Him as the final and full revelation of God. Our knowledge of God has been constituted in essential particulars by Him; and after having got the benefit of all this, some who cannot understand the inner meaning of Christian experience would dispense with Him. We contend that after having put Jesus into God, we cannot by any process of logic eliminate Him. This is what was meant to be

conveyed by the apostolic faith in the words, 'God through Jesus Christ'. The fallacy of the argument of those who would, for the sake of some alleged zeal for God, reduce Jesus to an ordinary man, or the greatest of men, consists in thinking that they know all about God without Jesus and that they can, with this previous knowledge, judge the nature of the person of Jesus. This is to put the cart before the horse. Jesus can only be judged by Himself, and His person explained from the standpoint of His own consciousness. This can only be said of God who, as is universally acknowledged, has neither an equal nor a superior. God is God in His innermost being.

There are two ways, in short, of regarding this problem from the standpoint of Christian experience: (1) When Jesus appeared in the world's history, there existed a certain amount of knowledge of God. In relation to this knowledge what is Jesus? (2) After Jesus came into the world, there is our present knowledge into which He has entered most vitally. What is His relation to God in this system? Looked at from both points of view, the relation of Jesus to God passes beyond the ordinary relations of man. After having profoundly altered our knowledge of God and even our relations to Him morally and spiritually, He has become the warp of our Christian experience and through it, of large portions of humanity.

This same thought can be put in another way. How do we get our knowledge of God? It is through human experience that we know God and any God or elements in God that lie beyond this cognition, are to us non-existent, as the *Upanishads* rightly point out. The existential aspects of God are embodied in the experience of humanity, i.e., of men as individuals and groups, acting

and re-acting on one another. What we mean by an *avatar* can be interpreted from this view-point as the embodiment in the human plane of the eternal elements in the divine nature. All religion and every advance in the religious field is the emergence of these existential elements, through individuals above all, into the human consciousness. It is to the extent to which individual spirits in human history have manifested the external and spiritual purpose, will and mind of *Isvara* behind our human *budhi* and *manas*, that God becomes incarnate. Viewed in this light, the consciousness of Jesus is the supreme incarnation ; it sums up not only the pre-existing elements of the being of God in humanity (that is, before the historic advent of Jesus) but takes it on to higher levels. The process of summation and advance is peculiar to Jesus, and entitles Him to a pre-eminent place in the becoming of God. We can no more think of God without Jesus than we can conceive the world without the sun.

In this connection it should be noted that this supreme knowledge of God, *paravidya*, is not knowledge that can become our possession except through Him. He is not the scaffolding that is useful for the construction of a building and is then discarded. He is, as the scriptures say in language of lofty symbolism, the corner stone of the building that none can reject with impunity. The *parajñāna* has not been reduced to writing so as to be read by all ; for as the Hindu books say, God transcends even the *Vedas* that toil after Him with painful steps. The New Testament, and especially the Gospels, does not profess to give us the light of the knowledge in the face of Jesus Christ, as Paul put it, except as we stand before that august figure, who transforms us from glory to glory,

that is from one stage of *anubhava* to another. Not even can the Church become a substitute for the Lord Jesus. For the Church can only provide the spiritual environment in which the *jivatman* can follow on to know the Lord. In the final resort everyone has to face Him. Therefore, it is only by organic and mystical union with Jesus that the *jivatman* attains the revelation and redemption that He wrought and not otherwise. He is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

In examining the place of Jesus in our *atmajnāna* we ought to give some consideration to a crude argument that has been advanced by some who would see in Him what they call an ordinary man. (By the by, has anyone ever seen an ordinary man, the fiction that is to supersede particular men?) It is urged with some possibility that Jesus is the full and final revelation of God, but He is an ordinary man whom *Isvara* made use of for this purpose. This appears to be a most barren platitude and has neither logic nor poetry nor mysticism in it and should be carefully examined:

1. This idea would recall to our minds the time-honoured philosophical distinction between the manifested and the unmanifested, between phenomenon and noumenon, between appearance (*maya*) and reality (*sat*). Whatever value it may have had in ancient or modern philosophy or in some extreme forms of Indian speculation (the *mayavada*), its meaning is *nil* in the realm of religion and the system of values. Let us illustrate this by means of a picture. Suppose we sit before a curtain and see figures moving on it, cast on it from behind by some agency. The curtain with the moving figures stands for appearance and what we regard as the cause behind the curtain is the reality. Similarly, the universe that we see

and Jesus through whom this full and final revelation of God has come are all manifestation and appearance, thrown on the curtain by the supreme actor, God. Could anyone confound the appearance with the reality? Apart from the metaphysical difficulties involved in giving a right answer to the problems raised by the existence of the curtain, there is the moral and spiritual dilemma that you leave to Jesus no functions. You ought, then, to conclude that His humanity is unreal, and is a mere curtain from behind which God moved Him like a puppet, so that Jesus is not reduced to the position of man but becomes practically God. The curtain is nothing but a submissive medium for conveying the movements of God.

2. Even supposing that this extreme logical deduction is not to be entertained, you are driven to the other horn of the dilemma, an external God. In some of the contributions to the elucidation of the ultimate meaning and value of Jesus, this old-fashioned deistic conception of a watch and watch-maker is trotted out. It is, to say the least, not a conception that can regulate our valuation of Jesus and is entirely contrary not only to some of the fundamental ideas of Indian thought but to modern philosophy. We come to know God through nature and its operations; we perceive the presence of powers wide and majestic in their working. We make then a clear-cut distinction between what we can call nature as a watch, and the Lord as the watch-maker. Into this being called God we throw all our conceptions of nature, our ideas of movements in human affairs, our longings and their satisfactions. But no man has seen this external God, as we see the watch-maker. What we know is nature and man; and to us they are not only the handiwork of God but God is immanent in them. Therefore,

when we examine the life of Jesus and what He is in human experience, we get new ideas of God and we transfer them to this external reservoir of all our experience, called God. However much we may regard this as a convenient precis of our experience, it is simply unphilosophical. Our knowledge of God cannot in this sense be separated from Jesus, as if He were a curtain on which God had thrown His final and full revelation. If this is what is meant by religious experience, God might as well send down on the world morocco-bound Bibles at stated intervals, instead of going through the tedious process of nature and the troubled history of men. To us Jesus is the very image of God, and God Himself. The idea of separating His qualities and transferring them to an external God is not only a redundant process, but robs history of all its novelty, tension, pathos, and the tragedy that purifies, as Aristotle defined it. If you ask the ordinary Christian what he knows of God, he can only describe the *kalyanaguna* of the person of Jesus. This God is a framework and what is the use of even a golden framework without the face of the beloved? Jesus, says the Christian *bhakta*, I know; but who is God? He is the predicate of God; or if you prefer it for the sake of a nominal adherence to the demands of monotheism, God is the predicate of Jesus. But our preference is to define the unknown God by the somewhat-known Jesus.

3. After a consideration of the full and final manifestation of God made by Jesus in its relation to *Ívara*, let us ask ourselves what attributes of God this manifestation is designed to reveal. *Ívara* it is alleged, endowed the Prophet of Nazareth with these divine rights and prerogatives, and therefore Jesus has not any inherent right to claim Divinity but only an

external and derivative right. What, then, are these rights and prerogatives? They are (1) the right to forgive sins, that is authority over the conscience of men, (2) the right to die for the world, (3) the right to judge humanity now and at the last trial, before Himself, sitting in the judgement-seat of the universe, (4) the right to wind up the history of this world and its affairs, (5) the right to place the moral ideal before men and command them with a majestic gesture to follow Him, (6) the right to invite men to Himself as the fountain of *śānti*, (7) the right to bestow on men the supreme love of God and hence to display this love as the deepest nature of God and as the regulative principle of God in relation to men. Even granting that the first five of these prerogatives could be exercised by Jesus as a man, because of a legal grant from God Himself, and as His vice-regent, it cannot be contended that even the display of love by Jesus as the final and full manifestation of God was only an external and legal transfer of the divine love for man to an ordinary man.

Two points ought to be borne in mind in our estimate of the meaning of this love in relation to God :

(a) In the Christian consciousness and in the minds of the Apostles and the Church founded by them, nothing was more firmly rooted than this wonderful and abiding love of Jesus for them and for men at large. It was to them an increasing source of inspiration, mystery and joy that Jesus should have given His love to them, loving, as someone said, His own till the end. Looking at the life of Jesus and our inner experience we know something of its nature and intensity. His compassion and love for the sinner, the outcaste and the broken-hearted grows on us with thrilling power and our hearts, even those

of the stoniest among us, are melted within us as we see Jesus, the author and completer of our salvation. Amidst the desolation of life, as the early *bhaktas* of Jesus found after His tragic crucifixion and its heart-piercing cries of sorrow, His love keeps coming as the morning dew, as the latter and former rain. The mystery of life, its gloom and almost never-ending terror are irradiated by one brilliant star, that is, the love of Jesus. It has broken for the *bhakta* the horrors of death; the pains and penalties of life, and all sufferings borne for His sake are only partaking, as Paul learned, in his mystical life, in His sufferings, and fulfilling what still remains to be completed. In an outburst of joy, Paul who more than any other *bhakta* experienced this love, cried out, 'Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord?' (Rom. 8 : 39.)

(b) Such love as this was in the Christian consciousness of Jesus not an external thing bestowed on Him, but it was, as it were, the very life-blood of His being. In it *bhaktas* hear the very beats of God's heart. Just as in listening to the sound in the conch-shell, we seem to hear the murmur of the everlasting sea, even so in the love of Jesus we catch the very sounds of *Ívara* whose tenderness and love for men are the full and final display of His *kalyanaguna*. In one of the *upanishads* a sage says, 'The father is dear to us not because of himself but because of the self (*Brahman*) in him; the wife is dear to the husband not because she is a wife but because of the self in her; husband dear to the wife not because he is the husband, but because of the self in him; and the children are dear to the father not because they are the children but because of the self in them.' Even so the love of Jesus is the indication that the love of God

has come into the world not in the dreams of sages, but really in the consciousness of humanity. There are two formulas that we could adopt, God with Jesus, or God in Jesus. The Christian consciousness has chosen the *in* rather than the *with*, moved by a profound intuition.

4. Strange to say, some critics have forgotten that even in the trinitarian formula, the Son is subordinate to the Father in rank and grade as Dr. Shed says in his *The History of Christian Doctrine*. At this stage we shall not enter on any discussion of the Nicene formula, of the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, beyond the remark that as the rights and prerogatives of the Son are regarded as coming from the Father, the orthodox theologians did avoid making the Son a mere creature, as they said. This subordination of the Son to the Father was granted by all Christian thinkers. Tertullian, arguing with the Monarchians who held that the Father alone was of the divine essence and that the equality of the Son would destroy the divine monarchy, said, 'I who derive the Son not from a foreign source, but from the substance of the Father—a Son who does nothing without the will of the Father—how is it possible that I destroy the divine monarchy? On the contrary, I preserve it in the Son, delivered to him from the Father. . . . In this way, also, One is All, in that All are One. . . .'

No man hath seen the ineffable God nor can see Him. We see God in the face of Jesus. To the ordinary and unsophisticated consciousness there is a black veil which God would seem to have cast over His face. But now that Jesus has removed the veil, we behold the face of God Himself. That is what the greatest Christian experience says, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The

face of Jesus—what is it like? As we study the Gospel narratives, we catch the lineaments, His power and graciousness, His profound love and the perfection of His character, His mystery and humanity. It is this living expressive face that appears in our communion with God. We see the face crowned with thorns and the blood trickling down. We see the face looking with tragic grandeur as He sits at the table giving the bread and wine. We see the face blazing with indignation as He rebukes the supercilious Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees. We see the face beaming with love as He bends over the children. We see the face shrinking in shame and infinite pity as He stoops down and writes on the ground, while the woman stands alone before Him. We see the face weary and sinking into sleep on the boat. It is this face that dominates, haunts and irradiates our moments of prayer and *dhyana*. It encompasses us like the aroma and fragrance of a new-blown flower. The soul is lost in its glory and perfume. In one word, *what is vivid and real to us is the face of Jesus with a shadowy background* of unknown and infinite potencies into which we strive to penetrate but catch only stray gleams. Whom we call God stands behind Jesus, and it is Jesus who gives, as it were, colour, light and *rupa* to God. Out of the infinite nebulousness emerges the face of Jesus. God is the unmanifested and Jesus is the manifested. God is the *sat*, or being, and Jesus is the *cit* or intelligence, wisdom, and love which indicates the nature of the being of God.

In scholastic theory we have the attributes of God, His *gunas*, divided into two categories, the primary and the secondary, the metaphysical and the moral. Omni-

potence, omniscience, and omnipresence, the former of these *gunas*, are the least understood part of God's nature, and evidently, therefore, the most insisted upon in theological disputations. His mercy, compassion, justice, and love, the latter of His qualities, are most in evidence in His relation to human beings, and they are the *gunas* in which we are most interested. In the *Saiva Siddhanta*, the functions of God are five: creation, preservation, destruction, obscuration and grace. It is in the outflowing of His grace that men come most into contact with Him. It is this aspect of God's being that receives the clearest expression in Jesus Christ. Not merely is God love, but the methods by and in which He reconciles men to himself are to be found in Jesus. If we may say so, Jesus has to us not only the moral values that we attach to God, but He is the very life of God. He is the projection on the plane of *samsara*, of the flux of life, the very heart of God. Without this realization, God recedes into the inaccessible region of His own nature and beyond our human efforts.

THE MEETING OF BHAKTI AND SAKTI

If we study the history of the Hindu religion, we shall discover an interesting parallel which would throw light on the significance of the Spirit of Jesus. In the age of the *Rig-veda* and the more ritualistic period following, when the Sun and the many *devas* in nature like *Agni*, *Varuna* and *Indra* were adored, the Divine Being, who was in some dim way conceived as the synthesis of all the *devas* and as the one *Brahman* to whom the sages gave

various names, was conceived as the outer God, especially as light. The propitiation of these deities was sought by the meticulous performance of ceremonies which necessitated the Brahmanical priesthood. But soon wise men, especially among the laity, like Janaka the king, perceived that the ultimate secret could not be reached by these ceremonies which could bestow only some external blessings. Then began the great speculations of the *Upanishads*. In the bewildering diversity of these meditations the central thought is that God, the *Brahman*, is to be found in the deepest nature of man himself. The spiritual energy that manifests itself in the functions and processes of human individuality is the *Brahman*. That was the lesson taught to Naciketa by the lord of the other world, Yama : ' Seek Him not on the heights of mountains, nor in the depths of the ocean, for He is in man, seated serene on the lotus of the human heart.' By a wonderful process of intuition, of which we seem to have lost the key in the more theological ages, the God within was identified with the God without. He who speaks in the still small voice, the Eternal Witness, the Eye of our eye, the Soul of our soul, is the same as He who rules the wind and the waves, and has created the stellar spaces.

Just as the prophets in the Old Testament proclaimed man to have been made in the image of God, even so the Hindu sages declared the same truth, though in different language. Not inclined to speak of the creation of the *atman* in the sense of making, they held that the *Brahman* is seated in the inmost heart of man. In after ages when the mystic vision faded away, as in the times following the prophets of Israel, the more prosaic souls devised various methods, psychological and even physical, to obtain the same *atmajnana*, but with indifferent success.

Other *margas* than that of spiritual intuition became necessary for the evolution of the religious consciousness. The doctrine of *bhakti* became the popular truth. By the love of God, the soul attained to satisfaction rather than by deep meditation or yogic process. The question, which is yet to be solved and which has received tremendous emphasis in modern times, is this: How are we justified in identifying the *atman* in his deepest nature with the *Brahman* Himself?

Two attitudes can be maintained in respect of this Vedic declaration:

(1) The spirit of man cannot be regarded as of the same nature and containing the very *Brahman* who has evolved the physical universe. It is too absurd and inconceivable that man should claim that the great and inscrutable energy of *sakti* manifested outside of himself is found in himself also. This is urged by agnostics with a force and wealth of eloquence that would shake the very foundations of the ancient doctrine. A wide chasm yawns between man and nature. And his place in nature has been conceived to be that of an evanescent bubble bursting on the wild ocean of cosmic existence and sinking into its turmoil; or as a phosphorescent light gleaming on the waters, diversifying a majestic and terrible scene but in no way adding to its significance. The *atman* is the flotsam and jetsam of the turbulent cosmic life—a fatherless and motherless child left crying on the shores of time to an unpitying universe in which it might be deceived by the echo of its own distress into believing that there is an all-knowing Father.

(2) Then again there is a more ancient attitude taken by some Gnostic thinkers like Marcion, within and without the Christian Church, that the *atman* and Jesus and our

and His God and Father are different from and opposed to the God who made the terrible external world with all its horrors, thus positing two gods—God and the God in Jesus Christ. This led naturally to the rejection of the Old Testament and its God ; and it was asserted that it was He who brought our Lord's death. Both these attitudes were unknown to the serene thinkers of the *Upanishads*—at least they would not *mar* the unity of existence by these material and moral divisions.

The divisions into nature and man, the physical and the ethical, that are of such prominence in scientific and even theistic speculations in modern times, were not intelligible to the Hindu seers. Nature and man form one series ; and man is the microcosm or the illuminating principle. Hindu thinkers were not thrown into abject terror by the phenomena of nature as were some savage tribes, nor were they forced to regard man as of no importance in the history of the cosmic process. Some of them, on the contrary, declared with superb audacity that not only in the *atman* is the *Brahman*, but that the *atman* is the *Brahman*. This view has been strenuously held during all the ages of our religious history in some fashion or other.

When we turn to Christian experience, of the creative age of the New Testament specially, the same process is at work, silently but none the less potently. The Christian *bhaktas* and *rishis* had the experience after Christ's visible departure, of the energising of the Spirit of Jesus in their own souls. They felt the gladness and joy of the *vasanta parva*. Renan remarks in his life of the Apostle Paul that in the Acts and Epistles one feels like floating on the blue waves of the Mediterranean and under the brilliant skies near the isles of Greece. Amidst the tense expectation of

the coming Christ, the life of Jesus coursed in the heart of the infant Church. It pulsed in the very air—and has done so all down the ages. It is on this enormous experience and presupposition that our argument is conducted. Two of the most powerful movements of the religious spirit in human history to which we have just referred ought to be considered a little more deeply.

The Supreme Reality that is called God has been viewed from two different angles by two different schools of prophecy or religion, corresponding roughly to physical nature and the nature of man. Nature is the arena of law, order, and above all of gigantic, mysterious and terrific forces; and in the early ages it was regarded as the theatre of a conflict of divine powers, of *devas*, good and bad, that later on became merged into the great God, the source of all energy and life. Some religions never rose above polytheism, or rose even in so-called monotheism only one or two steps higher. In all these cases the characteristic of power, the great cosmic energy of life and death, the storm and the lightning, the deep ocean and the terrible monster, became the dominant note. In another stream of consciousness, often running parallel to the former in the same country and at the same time, the beneficent powers of nature and the mind of man, his kindly feeling, his sense of right and wrong, and, above all, his power of love and sacrifice, became crystallised into the conception of God. The idea was uppermost in the minds of this humanistic school of religion that God is a Ruler, a Father, and a Friend and His ultimate purpose is one of condescension. In the language of the Old Testament, God reigned fundamentally among the higher spirits of Israel, the prophets, as stern righteousness, as pitying love which yearns over the waywardness of His

children-like Hosea's for his erring wife and culminating in even nobler flashes of prophetic vision, as a God prepared to suffer for His people and with them. The divergence between mysterious energy and righteous love and their conflict have always been present as a problem of religion. The reconciliation between the two is even now not complete, for the so-called conflict between science and religion is the recrudescence in modern times of the struggle for supremacy between the champions of mechanical energy and those of beneficence in the world.

In India, as we have remarked, the division was not so prominent, or rather did not take shape at all in the calm and daring mind of the *rishis* of the *Upanishads*, with any great strength. But later on arose the two great religious forces represented by the *sakti* and *bhakti* schools. The former developed the philosophy of the northern *sakti tantras*, and the latter became the most powerful instrument for the popularisation of the doctrine of *avatars*, of a merciful *saguna* God, and of the demands of the moral law. The two never effected anything like complete reconciliation either on the religious or the philosophical level.

What is the application of this to the understanding of the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus? To the *bhaktas* it was apparent in the experiences of the Spirit of Jesus and in the historical career of the same person that they were in touch with the secret of ultimate Being, viz., God as love and God as light and God as manifested in Jesus as all this. He loved humanity so that He gave His life, and He still offers Himself as a perpetual oblation to men, bearing their sins and regenerating them with His love and exalted purity. Granted all this, how dare we say that this Lord of *bhakti* and love is the Lord of the

incessant and infinite energy that rolls in the ocean, shines in the sidereal spaces, and raises its crests on Mont Blanc and Kanchinjinga? By what concatenation of proofs, by what arguments of natural theology can this identification be effected? For we cannot believe like some ancient Gnostic thinkers (wonderful thinkers they were in spite of the condemnation of the orthodox Church), in two Gods, the God of energy and the God of love. The two must be fused in the crucible of human experience, and come out a perfect complex. Love hopes and suffers and is the greatest thing in the world, the *parama sattva*, but how weak is it on what Professor Huxley called the gladiatorial arena of cosmic forces, rolling on relentlessly, regardless of the good and the bad alike, producing the terrors of day and the horrors of night! How can we bring together night and day, the infinite energy of God and the supreme love of Jesus? The tremendous equation was effected by the Christian consciousness, but how? As the present writer scans the luminous and dark pages of the New Testament and looks into the light of *bhakti* growing like a furnace, rising ever higher into the very mysteries of God, he can find the formula and fact of the equation in the resurrection of our Lord. *This is the most ancient dharma of the Christian Sangha.* It rings in our ears from the earliest utterances in Acts, down through the centuries of the Christian faith. Says the Apostle Paul, *Jesus Christ was declared as the Son of God with power (or sakti), according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead—the sakti that could raise the dead, that could create the oceans and the clouds, the Himalayas and the Alps, and roll the endless constellations through space, was the spirit of holiness and love and purity of Jesus which accomplishes the regenera-*

tion of men in the realm of God. It is in order to escape from this conviction that the resurrection of the Lord is denied by some critics or explained away in vain as a spiritual appearance. It is the spirit of holiness, the *atman* of Jesus, that re-animated the bruised and dead body lying in the grave of the Arimathæan Joseph. *The first Easter joined together energy and love, laying the foundations of the Christian view of the Avatar of God in Jesus Christ.*

When the resurrection, the really physical resurrection of our Lord, is pointed to as the connecting link between the cosmic and the human, between the outer and inner, it is by no means our intention to ignore the difficulties and problems that cluster round it. The present writer, however, is firmly convinced on purely legal and psychological grounds that there was a physical resurrection of the very body that was consigned to the tomb and that the various hypotheses ranging from obvious imposture to subjective hallucinations and ghost appearances of Jesus (including telepathic communications) are utterly unsatisfactory. The greatest obstacle to the recognition of any of these theories is the empty tomb of Jesus, which, in our opinion, it is simply impossible to explain away as an illusion on any subjective speculations. We shall not dwell any further on this subject than to say that to the elaboration of the views here put forward, the physical resurrection is a logical and psychological necessity *in the process of the Incarnation*. Without the resurrection there would be a hiatus in the continued life of the Incarnate Lord that would be fatal. One further observation should be made without which our position is likely to be misunderstood. It is our contention based on the nature of the several appearances of the risen Lord and on the

authority and experience of St. Paul that the body of the Lord, after the resurrection, was the same and yet not the same. Like the body of the historical Jesus, it was not of the nature of a ghostly body or materialisation of the spirit; but it was the physical body marvellously transformed so as to be capable of physical touch and speech and vision and other physical attributes. And yet it was not localized within a definite compass. He appeared whenever He liked and disappeared in the same mysterious fashion through closed doors. The explanation of this should be sought for in the spiritual body of the Pauline theology and the *sukshma* or subtle body of Indian philosophy. This speculation is abstruse and we lack to-day the knowledge of the elements of such a body. We should limit ourselves to the remark that our Lord assumed the earthly body and sublimated it so that it manifested the properties that are associated with His risen body.

Before the Spirit of Jesus took possession of His followers on earth with their mission of unknown possibilities and dangers, there took place what is called the ascension. It is well-known that some of our modern critics under the influence of a limited knowledge of soul and matter are unable to contemplate the fact of the ascension without a certain amount of disdain. They would have us treat it as a legend, a superstition, a myth or what not, to account for the final cessation of the appearances of the risen Jesus. Further, they maintain that such an ascension was part of the Messianic belief that Jesus would remain in heaven till He should come back to judge the world. Peter in Acts 3: 21, spoke of Jesus as the Messiah '*who must be kept in heaven till the period of the great restoration*'. The argument proceeds

on the assumption that Jesus and certainly His disciples expected such a supernatural appearance during His earthly ministry. That was what was meant by Jesus when, in sending out the twelve, He said that they would not have gone to the village of Israel 'till the Son of Man be come'. Jesus finished His ministry and died, and the expectations of the disciples were doomed to disappointment. Then instead of giving them up as the unreasonable dreams of a nationalistic apocalypse, they cherished them with even firmer faith; and the primitive Church expected the second advent on the clouds of heaven before many years were over. To-day, it is asserted, not even the most orthodox of the churches lays any emphasis on it beyond merely repeating it as a clause in the creed. It is not our design to discuss the eschatological theories that have been propounded concerning Jesus and the early Church; but on purely historical grounds it is not possible for the ordinary man to eliminate the resurrection and ascension. Instead of ascribing the ascension to the belief in the Messianic second coming of Jesus, it would be more in consonance with reason and the probabilities of the case to ascribe the Messianic belief, or rather its continuance in the early Church after the Lord's historical career, to the stupendous phenomena of the resurrection and ascension. The cheap sneer is indulged in by some scholars that the ascension of Jesus into the heavens depends for its validity on the heliocentric hypothesis, and they ask why the heavens should be regarded as being above. Would these critics have Him descend into the earth by a downward process? As we know so little, among other things, of the laws of such phenomena as levitation, their dogmatism does not count for much. The evidence of the ascension, such as it is in the New Testa-

ment, is clear and all the explanations that have been offered against accepting it as a fact are more difficult to believe than the fact itself. We, therefore, ground ourselves on the fact of the ascension as a stage in the development of the incarnation.

One of the greatest problems of historical science is how to account for the transition of the historical Jesus to the Christ of primitive Christianity. What makes the difference between the mysterious, ineffable and almost inexplicable Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels and the Christ of the Apostolic Church? That the historical being who lived in Palestine and died is in some sense the origin and nucleus around which the earliest Christian thought crystallized is common ground among all schools of critical research, except the few irreconcilables who would construct Christianity without Jesus. But by what influence this historical Jesus radiated the light and heat that fused the scattered, and incongruous materials of Jewish eschatology, Hellenistic thought, and Oriental philosophy, must ever remain beyond the region of pure history, if by history is meant what can be seen, heard, and thought of by ordinary human knowledge. The writer is fully aware of the magnitude and complexity of this problem. The mystery of the transitional cause is the resurrection and the ascension, and above all the coming of the Spirit of Jesus into the hearts of *bhaktas* and the *Sangha*. Without this mystery the life of the Christian disciples hangs in the air, and has no adequate cause even in the fertile and original genius of the apostle Paul, much less of modern rationalistic scholars. If the historical Jesus were not a mystery beyond human explanation, and if His exit from the visible sphere were not supernatural, Christianity would have died long ago.

Confused and dim memories and a strong attachment to the person of the Lord—these were all the materials, according to some critics, out of which Christianity was built up. The disciples would have been foolish, indeed, beyond the dreams of even those critics who imagine that they are endowed with keener intellects, if they had ventured to build on such inadequate and frail foundations. In his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Dr Schweitzer, one of the greatest theologians of modern Germany, passes in review German theological and historical science in regard to the historical Jesus, and then says in the concluding chapter: 'Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery. It is the solid foundation of Christianity.'

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

It is simply impossible to defend the fact of the Resurrection of our Lord in a short essay like this; but let me say that the belief in the physical Resurrection of our Lord is a cardinal truth with me: rather it is the radiating and radiant centre round which the great truth revolves. When I speak of the physical Resurrection, I mean the empty tomb of Joseph in the lonely garden on Easter morning, the appearances of the Blessed One to His despairing *bhaktas*—the quality of these appearances is indicative of the body of the Risen Lord. Perhaps it may be best expressed by saying that the tangible body was in some mysterious manner transformed into that sublime

body of His which is now conjoined with the divine essence or *sat*. To this I shall return soon. In view of *this my conviction, not belief as an intellectual possibility*, I cannot agree with even the superfine theories that are being constantly woven on the looms of some scholars like those in 'The Doctrine in the Church of England,' who, though in a minority, did not accept the historic faith of the Church but propounded His spiritual resurrection. Rather a hazy notion like telepathy than the personal contacts that the Lord established. I hold that the Resurrection is the supreme Reality; it is the turning-point in the history of, at least, this world of ours. It is to me somewhat of an amusing paradox that some of those who insist on the importance of creeds and tradition, should explain away the physical Resurrection and yet they are the champions of the integrity of the Christian Faith. In India there are those among us who have imbibed this perversion of Christian truth and yet pose as the true custodians of the Orthodoxy of the Universal Church. The creeds are no safeguards, if you can drive a coach and four through them; it reminds me of what Newman is supposed to have said—that he held the articles of the Church of England in a non-natural sense—not the same as supernatural sense.

Stripped of all the Platonism for which the dissentents in *Doctrine in the Church of England* are famous, the position is that *the accounts in the gospels and the one in St. Paul in the famous 15th Chapter of First Corinthians* are mere myths, or at least contain elements or atoms of truth regarding the hallucination of Peter on the Galilean shore. I do not wish to discuss the historical and metaphysical arguments, but it is somewhat unintelligible to me why men who want to emphasise the

Incarnation (as a human fleshy reality—the Word became Flesh) should be so squeamish about the continuance of the same in a dimension of a different kind but capable of acting on ours. I do not—mind you—say that there are no difficulties in coming to this conclusion, but they are not different—very much—from those that surround the doctrine of the Incarnation. How can the Absolute, Timeless and Spaceless become a Babe, in the arms of a human mother; truly and really and not as a mere phantasm? To say the truth, if I am asked to choose between fundamentalism and modernism, I will say that I am much more of a fundamentalist than a modernist—though my faith is in this earthen vessel of a modern Indian mind, coloured very much by my Hindu upbringing and philosophy. While holding tenaciously the Faith, I try to explain it on the basis of the antique thought of India mainly, with great blocks of stone, wood and iron borrowed, however, from western theology. I shall now proceed to say a few things about the ways in which the Resurrection is viewed by me:

1. That the Resurrection of the Lord is not a disembodied ghost but the *sukshma sarira*—the inner and subtler body—or sheath beyond and behind the *sthula sarira*. This means that the mortal was swallowed up in immortality; now it must be thought that the use of these two terms in Sanskrit is more than illustrative. St. Paul speaks of a natural body and a spiritual body. Dr. Moffatt calls the former an animaté body. The first term is intelligible, for we know this earthly house of our tabernacle only too well—perhaps, not too well. It is still a mystery in spite of anatomists and physiologists and what not. The Hindu idea is not analogous to the Pauline anthropology; the former asserts a *sukshma*

sarira behind or beyond every *sthula sarira* in every man ; it is a natural endowment, that is, a ghost or wraith with certain forms. When a man ceases to live, it is this subtle body that goes with him. Now in the Pauline view—it is only he that discusses this somewhat mysterious body—the body of the spirit—or body given by the spirit—is a new creation, or gift conferred on the believer when he will be raised from the dead, every man in his own order. It is a supernatural, not an existing, reality—but a reality yet to be. That is why Jesus died and rose again, it is through him that such a body is to be given—He is the first fruits. This change is the supreme manifestation, even the redemption of the body—of the transformation of this lowly body (not vile as the Authorised Version has it) changed into His glorious body.

2. Here I would say that in our Church teaching, even more in our preaching, the Gospel of the Resurrection is not emphasised ; we begin and end with the Gospel of the Cross and Death of the Lord. There are other gospels—the gospel of His Life, the gospel of the Resurrection, the gospel of His Ascension and the gospel of His heavenly Priesthood, and the gospel of the Parousia (His Second Coming). Now here I shall say what Karl Barth had said so powerfully in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. I agree with him on this subject, though it is not always clear what he wants to say. The Resurrection is revelation ; it is the breaking in of the absolute God into the human. It is the vertical on the horizontal ; it is a tangent touching the circle of life at one point—and yet not touching it. Tremendous conception, is it not ? Yes, let us on Easter day meditate on what Paul says in Romans 1:4, ‘ And declared *to be* the Son of

God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.'

3. The Resurrection is not a historical event, says Barth. Surely it is, the commonplace theologian would exclaim in puzzled indignation. It is a super-historical fact. Let me explain. On the first Easter morning no one saw our Lord coming out of the tomb of Arimathæan Joseph—I would say there is no meaning in saying He came out. Rising from the dead—not, mark you, rising from the tomb—does not mean that he got out of it as Lazarus did; the opening of the tomb by an angel or an earthquake was not to let Jesus out: it was to display the empty tomb to the women and others. The distinctions of space of our 'in' and 'out' do not hold true in this realm. But that He appeared to His disciples is historical—it took place, rather the appearances, in certain places and at certain times. The act of the Resurrection is God's, but the appearances are our Lord's for the sake of men. And so Jesus is the Victor, the Paradox, and the Beyond moving into this mortal world, but not identified with it or fused with it.

4. There is an aspect of the New Testament theology concerning our Lord's redemptive glory that has not arrested men's attention, even of those who insist on the Cross of Calvary no doubt easily visualised and giving room for sentimental grief. I refer, as readers might guess, to His being exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High, above all principalities and powers, and making intercession for us. What does this mystery mean? It means that the moral and spiritual task of the Lord is continued there in the very Personality of the Supreme. In order to reconcile men and things in heaven and earth, He took flesh and blood—was incarnated, and His presence

there at God's right hand is the entrance of the human element into the Divine Nature. With Barth I do not agree—he thinks that God in Jesus Christ—in the Resurrection—remains God : of course He is so—but the Scriptures indicate the first stages in the process of summing all in Christ. All theology—including monistic *adwaita*, would shut the human from the inner *sat* or essence of God—but I maintain that the unchanging and unchangeable Divinity has received relation to us in the Person of Jesus—not mainly as the *divine hypostatis*, but as the Crucified and Risen Lord.* To express it in more concrete terms, through more risky language, God who by nature cannot really suffer the vicissitudes of human nature, though He can imagine them with the utmost infinite sympathy, is now able to enter into human life, and human life is enabled, to enter into the Divine life, in a manner that was not open before the sufferings of Jesus, and His glory. That is what is meant in the Epistle to the Hebrews where we read : ' We have a new and living way through the veil that is to say, His flesh.' The veil of His being within which God dwells in the Holy of Holies was rent asunder by the Death and we enter into it because Jesus has entered into it with the blood of the eternal covenant—with His own sacrifice that has opened the inner shrine.

This is even true from a comparison of the ultimate things in religion. No one is supposed to know what the ultimate *Brahman* is—He is the unknown God whom we all worship with the full knowledge that His mystery is beyond our ken. The deities like Siva and Krishna and the incarnations are illusory or mere plays, *Leela* (சிருஷ்டி விளையாட்டம்), that reveal and yet hide the Divine nature. This final act of God—manifestation—is not a metaphysical

* From *The Guardian*, 1943, pp. 184, 185.

unfolding, *sat karyavada*, of what is potential into the actual. It is the moral and spiritual act of God involving the surrender of the solitary dignity and glory of God to the sharp sting of human experience—while human experience in all its moving phases from the cradle of the manger to the Cross of Calvary are now integral to the nature of God—not foreign to Him. If I may say so, though I may be accused of some heresy, God the *Para Brahman*, has entered on a new phase of His being, just as man in Christ is a new creation—belonging to a new race—the ancient enemies of the Church called Christians, the ‘third race’, neither civilised nor barbarian—but unutterably mean; but we know what it is, a new creation raised by the Resurrection into the glory of the Father.

5. There is one more thought with which I shall close these Easter musings, partaking of the higher mysticism of Christian Vedanta. The other day, a Hindu friend gave me a pamphlet in Tamil, describing the philosophy of his *guru*—a *yogi* who died recently in Kumbakonam. He wanted to reverse the time-honoured yogic process. I am not referring to what is called the *Hata Yoga*, consisting of breathings and postures—pure gymnastics—which, according to the *Daily Mirror*, would keep the waist of English girls and matrons slim—God bless them. By Yoga, it was primarily intended that the spirit, concealed beyond the human organism of senses, *manas* and *buddhi*, etc., should travel backwards to the incomprehensible purity and simplicity and undifferentiated *Brahman*. But he points out how this is to reverse the cosmic process—you cannot do it. The process of entropy, to use the language of science, cannot be reversed; it must run down unless a new influx of energy, creative and cosmic, is released from somewhere. The creative process culminating in man is not

to be turned back to its source—which is what non-Christian mysticism wants to do—but carried forward to a new height, that is, what is seen in Jesus Christ by His Resurrection according to the spirit of holiness. Otherwise, man will perish at least out of sheer exhaustion—or degradation of energy, as we see in the war—cannibalism taking the place of civilisation.

The Resurrection is not a vindication of the doctrine of the natural immortality of man—as the *Geeta* so eloquently puts it, as Plato expounded it in the *Phædo*. The New Testament knows no such doctrine of immortality. Here we are at the very antipodes of Hindu philosophy and this we hope will satisfy all those who would do away with anything savouring of Hinduism. But this would do away with much Christian western theology too, with, for instance, the kind of arguments put forward by Bishop Butler in his chapter on ‘the Future Life’ in his famous *Analogy of Religion*, which nobody seems to study even among theologians and students in our theological colleges. They are engaged in copying rather light literature by Drs. Weatherhead and Fosdick and others on the motion pictures of Christianity—no doubt very exciting to the faded imagination of the cinema goer. Therefore the Resurrection is an addition to life, not elimination or extinction of the essential humanity that is now embodied into the Divine Nature by the ascended Lord.

O, THOU THAT CHANGEST NOT

A fair reader of *The Guardian* wrote, asking me to elucidate one of the things I said in my musings on the Resurrection of our Lord. To this point I shall address myself, though I cannot promise satisfaction; rather perhaps failure in the attempt. What, then, is the matter—that is to be explained, if any explanation is possible of a mystery that in my view is part of the Revelation of God in Jesus? Readers would remember that I referred to the return of Jesus after the Resurrection to God as the entrance of humanity into divinity—ever after God is not God in the absolute way of one who inhabits eternity and separated from our nature by an impassable gulf. Karl Barth would say that God is God, and man is man, and as in Kipling's partially quoted lines, the twain can never meet. But what then is the purport and significance of the Incarnation? It is to him the touching by the tangent of the circle of humanity at one point; of course a tangent can touch a circle only at one point, according to old Euclid who is now too old for modern mathematicians. This is to me somewhat of a puzzle—not Euclid—but Karl Barth: for it reduces the Incarnation to a mere phantasm; at best it could be only a temporary accommodation. The Son of God dwelt in the human body like the patriarchs dwelling in tents and moving from holy shrine to holy shrine, Shechem to Bethel, across the promised land to Egypt. If the gulf between God and man be impassable, does it remain so even after the Word became flesh and dwelt among us? Has it not been bridged by the Incarnation? If not, then no living way into the Holy of Holies has been blazed by our High Priest, and every time a soul

desires to go to God, a fresh Incarnation, a new miracle must be performed—that is probably the hidden idea behind the miracle of Transubstantiation.

It is to me becoming evident now that Barth does not believe in the utter reality of the Incarnation; why this word does not occur in his theology. For does he not delight in quoting the Pauline language? Even though we have known Christ *after the flesh*, yet now we know him no more. Barth would not deny the *Christ in the flesh*. I suppose Barth's meaning is better brought out by Moffatt's rendering: Even though I once estimated Christ by what is external, I no longer estimate him thus. This is, no doubt, palliative of Paulinism, if he meant to discard in Christian consciousness the externalities of Jesus not of the Christ. Here Paulinism lends itself to the mischief of so much misinterpretation that extreme critics have not hesitated to make clever misuse of it. At present my desire is to point out that one cannot make short work of the gospel narratives of the entire humanity of Jesus in all his lowliness and insignificance to the eye of the world. Yes, it was true that there was no beauty in him that we should desire him—according to ancient prophecy of the suffering Servant of God. I am prepared to admit that the Incarnation touched the deepest degradation, despair and dirt of men and women. He descended into the lowest parts, circumnavigated the whole compass of human misery, wretchedness, and anguish. Aye, the realism of the Incarnation was terrible, for he went into sheol even on earth and heard the despair and cry of the lost. Of Dante, the people in Verona said, pointing to him, 'There goes a man who has been in hell.' Even so, our Lord was veritably in hell, and sometimes I am tempted to think that the Cross came to him as a relief from the

burden of the mad, bad world that environed him as by an unbreakable charm.

Now, the point is this: this unique experience—unique because of his moral loveliness and spiritual penetration—was this to be lost by the resumption of the mighty spirit or *atman* of Jesus alone? For lost it would have been without the full complement of the personality including the body which is not a mechanical sheath round the *atman* but of the very being of it. Instead of holding that the spirit or soul gains in grandeur in proportion to its isolation from the body, we must think the contrary—that the soul's true greatness is in direct ratio to its association with the body—that is, soul and body are in unison.

All this is for stressing the indissoluble union of the body and the spirit of Jesus in the Resurrection. If this Risen Lord was taken into the life and being of God, does not this introduce an element of ganglion, if I may use such a physiological term, of activity, foreign to the very nature of God? The Supreme *Brahman*, or God Almighty, is conceived as the unchanging behind the changing, the eternal behind the temporal. Decay and change around we see, as the hymn has it, but 'O Thou that Changest not, abide with me.' Thus there can be no room in the Divine Nature or Essence or *Sat* for the introduction and perpetual presence of the Incarnate Lord who was touched at all points of his human career by the sharp teeth of time and man's malignity—as well as by woman's magnanimity. How true it is that no woman hated him, but some loved him, and others admired him, including Pilate's wife, according to one gospel! Thus you are taking into the perfect bliss of God—into His *anandam*—one of the traits of His threefold nature: the passion, sorrow and the tragedy of death. How can we dare do this sacrilege in

the temple of God thus by robbing God of His impassible character? After all, it may be said that even Christian theism cannot abolish the infinity and absoluteness of God, however much it may invest them with the attributes of human nature at its best. He does not suffer, is incapable of suffering, any of the maddening mutations of man really and truly. Thus the Incarnation must be regarded as a mere *leela* or play, serious as it was when it was acted, or as a real human life which was left behind in the tomb of the lonely garden. The body returned to the dust, but the spirit returned to Him who gave it. But of what avail is such a spirit to us on this bank and shoal of time, except as a fading memory? He played the Gospel tragedy—for it flow our tears of sorrow and for it is reserved our admiration and adoration, but the Cross and the bleeding feet and hands have been thrust aside to the limbo of history. It is, indeed, necessary to stress the antimony with all the vigour of scholasticism that regards God as incapable of, rather as beyond the flux of time—not merely as an abstraction but as concrete duration as in the Bergsonian metaphysics. The New Testament speaks of the glorification of Jesus; I think John speaks of His death as being glorified with the glory that he had with the Father. I wonder if commentators would agree with this interpretation but in other places his glorification is His return to the right hand of the Majesty on high. This does not mean an etherialised Jesus, our Leader and Pioneer of Life, is there in the very nature of God—but the Incarnate Lord in his very humanity. How can this be, and does it not mean that God should be conceived quite differently from the old metaphysical terms of unchangeableness? With a view to explain this, I shall make mention of the following thoughts:

1. I have given up the scholastic idea of thinking of the ultimate Reality in terms of abstruse metaphysics—not that it can always be avoided. It should subserve the purpose of explaining the revelation of God and His relations to the world and men that is contained in the Scriptures, especially in the Person of Jesus. If metaphysics cannot be squared with it, as in the instance now under consideration, the latter must stand in its naked simplicity and break with the former. If the metaphysical idea of God is incapable of admitting such an entrance as that of the Risen Lord into the Godhead, I have no use for mere *a priori* reasoning. Here I may say that my position, as that of Kant, is that all metaphysical arguments for God are merely secondary to the moral arguments, though I do not want them to be dismissed as invalid. Here the Fact of Jesus is dominant and formative to which our metaphysics must relate itself.

2. I am more inclined to the view of the Greek theologians of the Church that the Incarnation was part of God's plan even before sin entered the world. It was necessitated not exclusively by the facts of the Fall as the Latin Western theologians thought, as Anselm did, but was the underlying purpose of Creation. Hence the Incarnation as well as the resumption of the Risen Incarnate Lord are in accord with God's mind and will. These terms I use advisedly as I have none else and the Lord himself, our Guru, authorised them and if he was wrong in thinking of God as he did I threw up my hands in despair. In his Ethics, Spinoza said that God is too great for our human terminology and thought, though in patent contradiction he would bring Him within the incapacity of his own conception of greatness. But behold, here is one greater than Spinoza.

3. The Incarnation, not to use mere abstractions, is real entrance of God into the human personality. This union is in Jesus Christ. I do not pretend, no Christian thinker has ever pretended, that a completely rational explanation can be given of it any more than the union of body and mind can be accounted for. In the ultimate analysis, if we begin with two such desperate things as matter and mind as the Cartesian philosophy would have it, you can't end by uniting them. Body and mind are one personality; and even so is the human and divine in Jesus Christ. I believe this explanation is in accord with ancient credal orthodoxy. Therefore I do not say, as regards the life of the Incarnate Lord, that his humanity began and ended here, and then his divinity began. Or, that his humanity and divinity are alternating egos in one person as in some phenomena studied by modern psychological analysis. This is no doubt a very interesting problem, but like other romantic stories about Jesus, they have no warrant in the gospel records. He is one and the same throughout, though I do not altogether rule out the theory of his development as regards his Messianic functions, I will not digress into this branch of enquiry.

4. As the divine and human had already been united in the Incarnate Lord, and as this continued even after the Resurrection, it follows that He could be admitted into the being of God. I am not perturbed that we are here deifying human nature, bridging the gulf between man and God. But it is not we, the *bhaktas* of Jesus, that are guilty of it, but the Incarnation itself has presupposed it. Perhaps Barth would not accept the Incarnation idea in its entirety, for he does not use it but speaks of the Revelation of God in Jesus. There is a perceptible differ-

ence in that the Incarnation is more comprehensive and includes Revelation. Even Barth cannot do away with the life of Jesus, the life not of the intellectual illumination regarding God but His activity of manifestation which is God's. God was in Jesus Christ, reconciling the world into Himself, even as Paul phrased it.

5. The trouble with the half-hearted believers in the Incarnation is that they want to eat the cake and have it, too. They want the Incarnation, but would deny the full implications of it as a continuing and active reality in God. The New Testament says, though I do not know how it is, that the Lord is still continuing his work of reconciliation, of gathering all things unto himself and when the end comes, he shall be subject to the Father, having delivered the Kingdom, and after the conquest of the last enemy, death. Then God will be all in all the true *adwaita* not at present a reality but one to be achieved by the life and death, Resurrection, and the present and future work of Jesus in glory. For one thing it is forgotten—it is to me a very strange lapse of thought—that Christianity is not a finished product; it is a continuous process that will be consummated after the Parousia—when God will be all in all.

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE CHRIST OF EXPERIENCE

Now I proceed to describe a view that would give some insight into what is exercising the minds of some of us. In this connection it is necessary to say that I do not cite authorities, as I do not want to parade my learning.

But let it, however, be borne in mind that I am not speaking without sufficient support in modern philosophy as well as ancient—especially from the philosophies of our own land. But this much must be conceded to our critics—we cannot repeat like parrots what has been dinned into our ears or learnt by us. We select, appreciate and assimilate. That is the small claim made by us. There are some difficult problems connected with our faith that have baffled western theology; rather they have been gently passed over. To some, everything in Christianity would seem to be so simple and plain that we can swallow all without any murmur. As I do not belong to this fortunate class, I crave their pardon for raising fundamental issues. We have to deal with the Jesus of History and with the Christ of Experience.

First of all, there is the difficult question of answering who and what Jesus was in the days of His flesh—this is the grand question that modern scholarship has to answer, with what success it is not easy to ascertain. To say that Jesus claimed to be the Christ or Messiah—the Son of Man or the Son of God—does not take us to the faith in the Incarnation. I hold, and my friend Mr. Chenchiah has been trying to express the same in his own way, that Jesus transcends any known description: even to say he was the Incarnation or Avatar—falls far below or is beside the mark. St. John and St. Paul expressed it as the doctrine of the Logos made Flesh and the pre-existent Son descending into the valley of humanity. These are no doubt basic ideas for the philosophy of the Christian faith, but we have to explicate them so as to suit our modern needs and mind, in addition to making it intelligible to ourselves as Indians. Be this as it may, we proceed further in the history of Jesus

beyond history proper. That is, the Jesus of history is a parenthesis between the pre-history and post-history. We deal in our experience with a Jesus, alive for evermore; and what is the logical, if not theological, nexus between the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience? This is stated to have been solved by His Resurrection and Ascension and session at the right hand of the Majesty on High. Apart from regarding them as miracles we do not obtain any idea that would throw light on what has happened to Jesus—the figure of history. Within the Church where both are recognised as important—one or other has assumed primacy. To the very orthodox, Jesus in the gospels has simply passed on to the skies, and then he will come again—the Parousia. Such is the spectacular view—true in its innermost essence and a fact but not satisfactory to the speculative intellect. This has led to *historicism*—the view that Christianity must be sought in the records of the past—and Christianity signifies simply the facts of history *plus* an envelope of pious imaginings. Christianity, therefore, becomes the plaything of historical manipulation and manoeuvres and of our philosophy—be it that of Neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism or even of the modern evolutionary Hegelianism or with the Indian, of the monism of Sankara. Against such a phenomenalisation, St. John made Jesus protest; it is said that Jesus did not convert himself to man, for he knew what is in man. I will not linger further on this, but leave my readers to study the great book of Emil Brunner, *The Mediator* . . .

Among modern theologians, Karl Barth has voiced the revolt against historicism, and spiritualisation, and philosophism, with tremendous vigour which he is tempted, I am afraid, to soften to the siren voice or the orthodox

creed. He says, or said, that he was not concerned with the Jesus after the flesh—though he could not deny the Jesus in the flesh, and he cited the Pauline paradox; ‘Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more’ (II Cor. 5: 10). He, not Paul but Barth, who is interpreting him, gives the go-bye to the Jesus of history—of Glover and even of Schweitzer—and his faith is in the supernatural Christ—who in Jesus of history made God bridge the gulf between the Infinite and the Finite. But the Infinite remains and remained the Infinite. The Resurrection is the one miracle—not even the Virgin Birth in his computation. The historical is the evanescent and the ephemeral—the body of Jesus to be laid aside as the outer man in order that the inner may be revealed.

I shall not linger to examine why Paul was so forgetful of the historical Jesus except as regards His death on the Cross. The Resurrection, Paul emphasises—not as a fact of history but as superhistory viz., as pure spirit, not subject to the canons of history. I dare say that Barth would not care if all the historical evidence for the Resurrection were reduced to nothing. The Resurrection is the impossible made possible by the spirit and to the spirit—not to the evidence of the senses. I cannot thus dismiss the Jesus of History, unless I am prepared to deny reality, at least, some reality to historical processes.

The conception of history has led to the identification of Christianity with the history of the Christian Church, and the spirit of Jesus or the Christ has been made a prisoner of historical authority and succession—this is history with a vengeance. The Church has made Christ and can exist without Him, but He cannot exist without:

the Church—the *ne plus ultra* of Churchianity. No wonder that Catholic modernists, Loisy and Tyrrel, desired to remain within the church without really holding to the spiritual independence of Christ—apart from the Church. While the historical Christ is a prime necessity as the medium of divine action, it is at the same time necessary to understand the Jesus Christ of our experience.

Jesus Christ is a more comprehensive Being than Jesus. The objection to the worship of a human being in whom the Word dwelt or who was the Word made flesh, cannot be met, unless we know that for a certainty the historical Jesus became the Christ of experience not merely by the putting off of His human body. Jesus Christ is worshipped as God; and we cannot meet the difficulty that we are worshipping the creature instead of the Creator, unless the Christ is not a human individuality any longer. The historical Jesus was a man with an ego, and all the limitations and accidents belonging to an individual born in the world. When Jesus rose from the dead and entered the inner essence of God, then he ceased to be a human being, but became the universal spirit, though with the experience of His human history. Unique is such a state—to have the experience of human without the possession of an ego—which alone can give to us the Christ who while in the Being of God, the ineffable and absolute, is also an indweller—*antaratman*—of those who are united with him.

Before passing on to consider what this means as regards our conception of Christ, I wish to state that the process is a psychological one, which can be dimly seen in terms of Hegelian dialectic. In the Christ of experience, we pass to a stage in God-man relations transcending the absoluteness of God, or His transcendence,

and from the indwelling in Jesus of Nazareth to the Christ who is in us *the hope of glory*. In this region, I do not rely on any such Hegelian dialectic as the authority, for our Christian experience must be the basis that He dwells in us and not a mere idea of the historical Jesus. Starting from the thesis of the Word, we see the Word made flesh. It is necessary that this step, the anti-thesis, should be taken and though I do not mean that it is a mere dialectical necessity, it is a necessity of the very nature of the Word. After having done so, the two, the thesis and the anti-thesis rose to a higher synthesis, to the Christ of Experience. It is this that I want to describe in fuller detail.

The historical Jesus excites the reverence of even hostile critics who do not admit any of his claims to messiahship. Renan, the most poetic of the romancers about the life of Jesus, paid the most glowing eulogy, and exhausted the resources of his language while regarding him as the victim of a delusion. I am not one of those who think that Jesus stands in need of certificates of character from men, however eminent. It is only such as submit to Him in love and obedience that He admits to His companionship. While not altogether depreciating the fine descriptions of the transcendent character of the prophet of Nazareth, as Keim calls him, it must, at least be asserted that he, such as he was, could not have become the indwelling Christ, without undergoing changes in His historical character. It is not an easy process—any change in the character and constitution of human nature: nay, it is far easier to work a physical miracle than a psychological transformation. Here it may not be out of place to mention an analogy from the Hindu doctrine of *avatar*.

The incarnations, *par excellence*, Rama and Krishna expired and the divine portion—*amsam*—was resumed in the Divine nature (*Vishnu*). The incarnations, after having discharged their respective functions, practically disappeared for they were temporary and their significance only remained, while the medium evaporated. How then do Hindus believe that they are in communion with Rama and Krishna? I suppose that the devout Hindu, any more than his Christian brother, never worries his mind by such a riddle, for he thinks that the Lord can appear to his *bhaktas* in any of these forms. For has not even the Gita said to the comfort of faith that the Lord manifests himself in any form that is desired by the worshipper? Such is the spirit of accommodation of the Hindu genius—so conspicuous by its absence in Hebrew and Christian thought. If one may say so, the visible manifestation of Hindu gods and their consorts is a welcome and familiar feature in the lives of Hindu saints and saintesses (is there such a feminine form?) and visions of such are taken as realities by Hindu *bhakti*, and why not? It will be asked, Is it impossible for the Lord to come to the rescue of his servants in forms to which they are accustomed? Why should such be put down as mere subjective hallucinations and not as realities, unless you logically also conclude that all forms of God are of such a delusive nature and belong to the realm of the phantasms. This is in substance the commonsense of Hindu *bhaktas* and I have seen how Hindu audiences are moved when they witness on the screen representations of Rama and Krishna showing themselves to Mira Bai, Andal and Ram Das and many other simple devotees.

Such an interpretation is denied to the Christian whom, with his rigid conception of God, cannot conjure up visions of the Lord Jesus and it is remarkable that in Christian history there are no authentic stories of appearances of the Risen Lord except those mentioned in the evangelical narratives to the early *bhaktas*. Even the appearing of the Lord to St. Paul on the way to Damascus was not a visible one to him; he only heard a voice, and after this his knowledge of Him was through his mind and spirit. This severe economy pervades the entire scheme of revelation and even in the Old Testament, the visible appearances of God become rarer and rarer till they cease and messages are sent from the heavenly sphere through angelic beings as to Zachariah, and Ezekiel, and later on to Zacharia and the Blessed Virgin. In all such narratives no definite forms are described, thus maintaining the rigid aloofness from humanisation.

The problem, however, in Christian thought is more difficult. It can be stated as follows: The manifestation in Jesus of God was not a mere temporary one for a temporary purpose. Nor was it a phantasmal one, such as the many varieties of gnostics put forward in order to save God himself from pollution—touch of the flesh, which was to them the seat of all that is evil in man. But the gospel records are an emphatic repudiation of such a dualistic degeneration. Jesus was one and indivisible; his humanity and divinity, if we are intending to make a clear-cut separation of the two, were inextricably combined, so that one cannot say where one ends and the other begins. I cannot think of Jesus in the way that orthodox theology conceives—in such and such events in His life He was

purely human, and in such and such He was divine. This is the phenomenon made familiar to modern psychology by alternating personality, such as Martin Prince describes as evident to him in his psychological clinics. In one word, I find it difficult to adopt the old realism of two substances or natures—man and God—separated by some invisible wall and the incarnation as the mixture mechanical of two incompatibles and incommensurables. Man and God belong to the realm of inter-communicable beings, and they are joined together, however they be in separation on account of certain spiritual causes, called *maya* in Hindu thought and sin in Christian parlance; the difference is as between the metaphysical and the moral, both betoken a certain darkness whose origin cannot be accounted for except as coming from a super-historical place of which man has in his nature faint recollections well described by Wordsworth who spoke of men coming from God who is our home. To me it seems that the Indian theology, if it becomes conscious of itself, cannot submit to the purely scholastic conception of realism, nor even to the nominalism of Abelard. We have emerged into the purer but more rarefied atmosphere of fields of force and energy, divorced from materiality; if it is true that the old fashioned materialism is dead. We cannot speak of attributes of God as essential and accidental.

Now the real question is, How does the historical Jesus become the universal indwelling spirit in man the *bhakta*? We have to find the answer in the Cross—the Passion and Death and the Resurrection and what is called his going unto the Father or Ascension. All these processes or movements of the *atman* of Jesus are construed as merely phenomenal, viz. not involving anything in the reality of

the historical Jesus. This is obviously not the case. The historical Jesus subject to conditions of time and space, of race and language and of the gigantic momentum of history, has been subsumed under a higher being ; in one word, it must be said that the Incarnation as we call the historical Jesus, is not confined to those years of His earthly pilgrimage but is enacted and extended, and its consummation is still waiting when God will be all-in-all, when all things will be reconciled in Jesus, forming the One God apart from whom there will exist nothing. All things have come from God and all things will return to Him but this *advaitam* is not a metaphysical explication or logical evolution and involution but a living series of God's action, involving real strength, transformation, historical and spiritual dialectic.

Now the Christ of experience is to the *bhakta* a reality—I cannot argue the whole question without this basis. No Indian Christian theology is possible apart from our first-hand contact with the Lord in the manifold ways in which He acts on us and in us. Therefore I ask people not to approach this temple without such an experience. Else what I say will be mere sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It is in the agony and confusion of our lives, in the shattering of hopes and in the disillusionments, that the Christ of experience comes into the inner life of man. That is a reality that I urge as the indispensable second world. How does this take place? I shall face the problem in a way that would be familiar to students of New Testament criticism. It is said that there is a world of difference between the Jesus of what are called the Synoptic Gospels and the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel; that there is such a separation of contrast I admit, as pointed out by modern scholars. It is obvious

to the most careless of intelligent readers. St. John, to use the traditional name of the author, is a mediation between the purely historical Jesus and the spiritual Christ—the Christ that liveth in me. Without the spiritual the historical would be a mere playground of past occurrences, however romantic and lovely; and without the historical, the Christ of St. Paul would be a nebular and nebulous evaporation, or *advaitic* philosophy. St. John combines the two, but I do not see how, that is, the process is achieved. We are not in our experience in contact with the historical Jesus—laid in the tomb, and in the Synoptic Gospels we have no experience of the Christ, the hope of glory—and our life hidden in God with Christ. There must be a connection not merely logical but spiritual that has combined the two. St. John describes the combination but not the process.

The transition from the historical Jesus to the Christ of experience, as has been pointed out already, had not been explained; nay, the only explanation is the popular one, that the former was transported to heaven. This is, to say the least, so unsatisfactory and even absurd, that I have no hesitation in saying that it offends my sense of the living Christ. Even in Hinduism, the human manifestations Rama and Krishna, are left behind in the world, and the divine essence alone returns to the Eternal. The crux of the whole problem goes to this, viz., what do we mean by the incarnation? It means, as can be inferred even from theological writings that God the Son came as a man, born of a woman and manifested certain divine qualities and then went back to the heavenly world. There was no movement in His personality, no achievement, no development; everything was pre-arranged and fixed. The divine character belongs

to the order of eternal realities, and the incarnation an outward showing in time and space. The magnificent phrase, *sub species eternitatis*, is in the mouths of platonising theologians, like Dean Inge, and others, who want to perpetuate the platonic tradition of Christianity. Here I might point to the view that Dean Inge and the school to which he belongs, hold that in this platonising, or neo-platonising (not Plotinus) western Christianity, and western civilization stand or fall together. This threat leaves me cold; I can do without platonising and the other two; only let readers remember how this Christianity is combined with a pagan philosophy, and if it is right, why not with the philosophy of our land more Christian than Alexandria?

The manifestation is static and not dynamic; and God is saved from all changes, because, forsooth, he is the unchangeable and unchanging. The incarnation is made compatible with this by the metaphysics that it was part of the nature of God to manifest himself to rational beings and that for his self-realisation. If such be the case, why should it be maintained that nothing happened in and to the historical Jesus, and that the time-elements of His life were simple mechanical processes?

I now pass on to the most crucial event in the life of the Lord, the Passion and Death on the Cross, and ask what this means. Here I may not discuss the theories of the atonement, current among Christians, which all amount to His accepting all the sufferings and the agony and shame, the offence of the Cross, for the salvation of man. As Jesus was really God in human guise, they are of eternal value, unlike ours that are of passing significance to ourselves. Their effects last through the ages, both past, present and future, and

for the benefit of all, probably of even extra earthly beings. This is, no doubt, a good way of stating it, but for the purpose of solving our problem, it is insufficient. After all, it is by our faith in and life with the Living and Risen Lord that men are saved and not merely by a dead Jesus. We are regarded as dying with Him and rising with Him in newness of life. And this experience is only possible to one who has entered into a universal and spiritual being of a very different order from God and man, as we ordinarily conceive them.

I want to press a point here that is well-known in Indian thought—that the human ego is a limitation—it is called by various terms, *anavam* (ஆணவம்) in *Saiva Siddhanta*; *aham*,—the I—in other systems of philosophy; and in modern thought, especially in theistic thought, it is presumed that this individuality is the supreme excellence of man and it must be retained to all eternity. Christian thinkers who are enamoured of this self—the why of it, I do not understand—prefer to use personality without individuality. Hence the incessant polemic of Christian theism in western theology against the impersonality of God, the *nirguna brahman*. I have never been able to see the necessity of it; for the personality of God can never be what it is in man, for in man it is centralised round an ego, be it metaphysical or psychological as psycho-analysts say, and that cannot be transferred to God. This ego is the first and last enemy of man, and probably his devout friend, being No. 1. In *Saiva Siddhanta*, souls are classified into three groups, according to their being dominated by one, two or three *malams* (impurities). The most elevated of them is *Vijnanakalars* who are dominated by *anavam*, and by the existence of

the ego, the I in man; and it is only when this is destroyed by the grace of God (*saktinipada*) that the soul attains the blessed state, entering into rest under the lotus feet of Siva. If we are to refer to this way of thinking, it must be borne in mind that such a principle of men as the ego was not found in the historical Jesus—this is made evident in the gospels. He claims nothing for Himself, is not even a citizen of the Roman Empire, no individual claims to urge as against others. There is no *anavam* in Him. In law a person is defined as an entry owning certain rights and subject to certain duties recognised by the law. Jesus, strange to say, was never conscious of this legal ego, nor of the social and religious ego of His community—and He moved with a freedom and spontaneity that astonish us, rather do not astonish us, because we do not think of it, except in orthodox terms. His life as a man, or the Man, was supremely not merely unselfish but egoless. How did he achieve this? Of course, it may be said that He was born so and continued so—in which case the Pauline description of the self-emptying is meaningless (Philippians), or merely rhetorical. He emptied Himself—the *Kenosis* went even deeper than is ordinarily meant—not the mere suffering and degradation, consequent on human nature—but the death of the Cross. Here I pause to ponder on this mystery.

The physical and even mental sufferings of the Lord are the themes of meditation, especially now, in this season of Holy Week; but they furnish a marked state of mind in ourselves. The *scandalum* of the Cross was to the ancient world as well as to the modern, the shattering idea that the Supreme could suffer the pains and agonies and shame described in the gospels.

It is said that the Fourth Evangelist calls all these the glorification of Jesus, as they were self-determined, and a step necessary to Christ's achievement of 'glory.' There is such a difference of attitude between Mark and John (I am using the traditional name of the Evangelist): for the Markan is the external gospel and the Johannine is the internal. To the outer eye, it was an unrelieved tragedy, to the inner it was a step in the process of the manifestation.

How was this brought about? Jesus was the most egoless person known in history, and therefore the most universal of all. That is why imperialists and war-boasters do not find Him comfortable, and that is why He is not quoted when war, the most colossal of all egoisms, is defended. Such is the *dharma* of the Sermon on the Mount a description of His character. He achieved it by a real process and as the writer of the Hebrews puts it, He learnt obedience by the things He suffered—not to be understood in a trivial sense. His sufferings and obedience transcended ours, not only in depth but in quality. I shall put it in a way that should rivet attention. After all, even the most forlorn of human beings, the most selfless of men, the most mystical and saintly, have one or other thing on which to rely, real or imaginary. As Wordsworth put it, some support is necessary. In His case His last support on which He relied when the most selfless self of His rested, what was it?

It was necessary to indicate that what is called ego was not, I will not say, entirely absent in the historical Jesus, but it became so thin that only a different kind of experience was required to reduce it to nothing. Some of our theologians are so fond of insisting on the retention of the ego in Him that I have begun to think

that the 'I' in them is the dearest possession of them all. But here in India it is otherwise. The elimination of the 'I' is the ultimate step in the freedom of men. Even in ordinary men, do we not see the beauty of an unconscious, rather the un-self-conscious life? I have a feeling that it is the original sin of man that our living in Christ and Christ's living in us is designed to destroy. It may be that in modern civilization, as it has developed, we see the contortions of human egoism, the personal self, and to many it is even inconceivable how anything like human life is possible without self-consciousness. On this matter there will always be a divergence of view between us and the dominant school of Roman Catholic theology. I do not begin with the idea of divine personality as insisted upon in idealistic treatises on theology, as even in Clement Webb's book, *God and Personality*. While I agree that there is the reality of communion with God, I cannot interpret it as signifying that there is an ego in God. As has been well pointed out in the old Catholic theology, God in Himself is not described as a Person, and it is the Trinity (The Revelation of God to men as Father, Son and Spirit) that is described as hypostatic distinctions in the Godhead. I cannot take up this question in this place but suffice it for me to say that my statement is in accord with the ancient Greek theology to a large extent, and not with the Latin nor with modern Protestant theology. No doubt, there has been much well-meaning remonstrance against it from metaphysicians like Bradley and Bosanquet but with little avail. There is something in the distinction of Lotze who admitted personality in God but not individuality which is admitted by Bosanquet.

In the last phase of His life Jesus was stripped of everything that would distinguish a man—He was friendless, property-less, and He even denied the legal jurisdiction of imperial and arrogant Rome. What then remained to Him, the despised and rejected of men, on the Cross? It was His supreme belief in God as His Father, and Himself as the Beloved—the Son—a relation of which we can only envisage the meaning by our faltering humanism. His consciousness or self-consciousness sailed on the dark waves of the Cross (not the physical sufferings alone) with this plank the last refuge of the sufferer. And then came the mysterious cry: ‘My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ preserved in Mark and admitted by all hostile critics as a genuine utterance—because they regard it as the cry of disillusionment of Jesus regarding His messianic claims. Here I want to say that this cry of dereliction it was that made me think of Jesus as a mysterious being and led me ultimately to accept Him as my Lord and Redeemer. What is the explanation of this tremendous agony of mind and heart? Just think of the great Son of God feeling like this? Have we any the least glimpse of this awful desolation? We might think that God is a mere fable and dream of unscientific ages, too good to be true, or too cruel to be believed. But that God should be a living God and abandon His most lovable Child Jesus—how can this be? Dr. Fairbairn whose book on Jesus I happened to read many years ago made the apologetic for Jesus—that his feeling on the Cross was like that but God did not really leave Him—feeling different from fact. This appeared then utterly alien to the mind of Jesus, and does so still, for the distinction made between fact and feeling cannot be applied to Him. His feeling was a fact of the deepest

reality. We might, if this distinction be our guide, as well say that His feeling for God as the Father, was pre-eminently, a hallucination or projection of His own mind on the empty heavens, as Feurbach said, and as some psycho-analysts describe religion in general. We shall now examine this abandonment of Jesus by God.

He lived, if anyone ever did, in God, and if I may use Indian language, God was to Him not only the supreme Reality but the One without a second. When this awareness was destroyed, it may be for a few minutes even, He descended to the lowest deep than which there was no lower deep; did not Milton therefore envisage a realm of such darkness and desolation even darker and more desolate than the under-world or the Inferno of Dante? The only plank beneath him was carried away, and He plunged into the *nirvana* or *suniam* where God is not, from which He arose and the creational order. Such is the language used in ancient Hindu scriptures. In the beginning was this no-being which should not be confused with our ordinary popular fancy of zero—and zero even in mathematics is the beginning of all coordinates. It is a point, Euclidean miracle of position without magnitude. Jesus reached it, and we but stand trembling on the brink, gazing in awe-struck silence into the depths. When I use the word *nirvana*, something of the Buddhist attitude, or the *nirvana Saivism* an initiation may appear by way of analogy. However, such an analogy is a very inadequate one and we must go much further, if we can, to understand it. My meaning is that this was the final phase of the *kenosis*; the self-emptying in Philippians, and after this it was that the glorification of Jesus took place; then He became the divine human indwelling Christ. It is

out of this nothingness that remained of the Jesus of history that the Christ arose. Else He could not dwell in every soul that has united with Him in faith and obedience and love. As the mere human Jesus He could not do it and as belonging to the Being of God, He could only act as before the earthly life. The Jesus *plus* Christ combination is a new thing in the relations between God and man. Not an ego-centric relation but indwelling in God and man. Between the historical and the spiritual life of Christ in man is an unbridgeable gulf that he alone could have spanned and He spanned it in his Death. Wherefore he has been highly exalted above every other name. What is termed the 'Incarnation' is a long process—the life of the Lord, his Death, Resurrection, Ascension and the Parousia (Second Coming). The present is the dispensation of the Spirit and the immanent Christ.

In all that has gone before, it has been my endeavour to indicate that the historical Jesus could become the immanent by the process of negation—*neti neti*, not as a metaphysical necessity by which all the finite elements of His life should be done away with, and He would be raised to the realm of the Infinite. In this psychological way the *via negativa* known to all *adwaitins*, is not a perpetual distinction but an emergence into a more positive being than even the historical for the indwelling Christ. In all this I have avoided discussion of several matters—such as transcendence and immanence, the relevance of the concept of personality of God, personality and individuality. But of this I am becoming increasingly aware that the insistence of self-consciousness and individuality as meaning personality is a modern Protestant variation, not belonging to the ancient Catholic

theology, more in accordance with Indian metaphysics. We are too much burdened by our consciousness and self-consciousness. I desire to be rid of this growth—a sickly growth of the ego. I desire to be made one with the Christ, losing my abnormal self-consciousness, exclusive and well, and so-called rationality in the ocean of His life. What may remain of the 'I' it is not possible to say, for we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is. It is necessary in our theology to shift the emphasis from the modern European to the Oriental, from the Anglo-Saxon to the Russian. Therefore I sympathise with the spirit of the following statements. In Leo Tolstoy's '*Diary of My Youth from 1857*' occurs this stern pronouncement: 'Consciousness is the greatest moral evil which can take hold of a man.' The same thing has been said by Dostoevsky 'To be too acutely conscious is a failing, a real, a thorough failing; too much consciousness—I should even say every kind of consciousness—is a failing. I maintain this is so.' (Taken from '*Fragments From My Own Diary*' by Maxim Gorki). The Indian theological way must be to rid Jesus and the Christ of this over-much consciousness with which His life has been covered by modern theology. The historical Jesus has by this means become a mere dialectician, a reformer, and an asserter of messianic claims as they are called. We should receive the immortal Christ as the Universal Spirit of beauty, love and truth (*sat, chit and anandam*) and not as a separate individual spirit.

THE BACKGROUND FOR AN INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

It is to me inconceivable that there should be one uniform theology throughout India, any more than there is one system of religious metaphysics among the millions of Hindus from Mount Kailas to Kanyakumari. . . .

There again, our theological business is twofold : (1) One for the non-Christian peoples of India (2) another for the Christian brotherhood who acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus as the supreme Reality of God on the human plane—though the New Testament says it will be so throughout all the rational universe—cosmic and all-comprehensive. These two are not to be confounded nor separated, to use the language of the Creed—but for purposes of clear understanding must be kept separate. . . .

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As this is a very large and complicated theme, I cannot set down in any elaborate manner all that can be said from my view-point; it must, however, be borne in mind that I am only writing a prolegomenon, as it were, to the kinds of theological systems that can be started even now in India by Indian Christians who are being urged by the inner voice to venture forth from the Ur of the Chaldees.

1. The first and original impression made on my mind regarding God came from my Hindu surroundings and instructions. After all, the most vivid and even vital of later impressions must build on the early foundation, however new the additional material may be. Christian teaching can only modify and qualify and add new elements, and cannot displace the old. Such has been and still is the religious experience of all—of even primitive

peoples who have emerged from very old conception of the *mysterium tremendum*.

2. The impression was not polytheism, as some Christians are apt to imagine nor was it mere idolatry. . . . I believed, of course, in the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, but I would have stoutly maintained, all the same, that there is only one God and all these were so many forms of the great *Iswara*. Such is today and has been the view of Hindus, not only of the intellectuals but of the ordinary men among them. To put it bluntly, I could not think of pure abstract monotheism any more than the Christian who is a Trinitarian. In this respect the Christian and Hindu must differ from the Mussalman and the Jew who hold to some imaginary conception of the unity of God.

3. My impression of the divine was not one of fear and awe and of unworthiness based on the terrible conception of sin—a treason against the Majesty on High. The divine was to me not a distant object nor an unapproachable one. He was to be loved and approached in our difficulties: He would take care of His bhaktas. These thoughts were not brought home to mind by formal doctrinal, catechetical searching, but by means of the *Peria-Puranam* and *Thiruvilayadal* stories that were being narrated by our *Puranikas* and such teaching can be more lasting than dry dogmatic enunciations of truth in the form of propositions.

4. I was aware of sin, not in the Christian sense, based on Hebrew legalism, but as imperfection that we must get over and that God would pardon and bear it, as He is merciful and large-hearted enough not to pursue His revenge, as in the fashion of brute-hearted humans. The grand idea of *mukti* floated in a nebulous dazzling

air as a far-off divine event, not to be aspired after by one still in the lower stages.

5. Kindness to the so-called lower creation was very much in my heart, and has remained so, in spite of the brutal idea that our brothers and sisters, in many respects nobler than man, have no real place in the Lord's mind except to be ruled over by the puny lords of creation, which would be the Biblical interpretation, according to the ordinary Christian dogmatic theology, which I detest with all my heart. . . .

6. Christianity has never been to me a series of propositions clear-cut and defined, well-prepared for consumption and distribution. To my Hindu training I trace this reluctance to pin my faith in even the Apostles' creed—a truncated version of Christian truth which like the other Creed, the Nicene, leaves out the most revolutionary elements in the Synoptic Gospels.

To the wonderful mysteries and even paradoxes of the Christian faith, I give, with one of my old masters in Christian wisdom, and not theology, Cardinal Newman, real and not notional assent. In his great book, *The Grammar of Assent*, he makes the somewhat startling statement that Protestants, unlike Roman Catholics, give only a notional assent, that is, an assent to Christian Dogmas such as they would give to inferential propositions. Without here entering on a discussion of the place of reasoning in Christian theology, I may say that my thinking and feeling in regard to Christian truth is very real—coloured by my desire for vivid images. A Hindu, even the most philosophical like Sri Sankara, never gets over this vivid consciousness of divine things, and most Indian Christians are idolators in this respect.

7. Closely related to the above and arising in continuation of it, there is the insistent demand in my heart for a more realistic vision of the Lord Christ than is attained in Christian worship. The Hindu goes to the temple to get *Swami darsanam* (a sight of God), and an ordinary Christian, unless he is mystically inclined, goes to worship and sing praises and repeat the creeds, and hear the Word of God but not to see God. I am in the habit of saying that to the Hindu the organ of divine inspiration is sight; to the Hebrew it was the ear—though it is true that the authoritative Vedas and Upanishads are called *Sruti*, that which was heard by the Rishis. And so, without dwelling much more on this real distinction it is enough to say that I have longed for and sometimes felt the presence of the Lord even in a visible manner which may be set down as a mere dream-vision. And with this charge of the psychologist I am not concerned at present. I can only say that I am not satisfied with an inner consciousness of peace and harmony; nor can I take refuge in Scripture passages and promises for guaranteeing my religion, personal and intimate. Hence the oft-heard question put to the Christian preacher by an earnest Hindu, Have you seen God? which question drives the latter to despair, and, what is worse, to endless philosophising. He is afraid, quite naturally, to say 'Yes' without any hesitation.

These presuppositions and experiences are not surely only mine but the common heritage of all Indians in varying degrees and I have been struck by the presence of visual imagery in most Indians when their devotion reaches a certain intensity. This need not necessarily mean that some form of image worship is required, for as has been said, the mental imagery, in the chambers of

the mind, to use Ezekiel's phrase, is implicit in all of us, and requires only a stimulus to come into vivid representative character. So far and so much for an explanation of the background of an Indian Christian re-thinking of Christianity.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

.... My view is the downright Indian view which I think, is also the older Protestant view—that the Holy Scriptures are the sole authority for the determination of the Christian Faith ; it is the supreme *pramanam*, and to add either traditions, however thrilling they may be, or the creeds, however venerable, or statements of theologians, however eminent, is utterly repugnant to me. As among other religionists in India, Indian Christians recognise the supreme and infallible authority of the *Sruti*, though theological schools and sects may wrangle about the interpretations. Such was the status of the scriptures in the days of our Lord, and He gave it His emphatic approval. In India, it is the broad way of danger to appeal to man-made traditions and creeds—pure humanism—because it is to antiquity and its sanctions that Indians appeal to bolster up untenable practices and theories. To this criticism of the admission of traditions—none knows with certainty their number and nature.—I shall not address myself, for against Rome the Protestant polemic was directed from the Reformation onwards, though unfortunately the Reformation has fallen on evil days because of the false glamour of an imaginary Catholic Christianity. In India the introduction of these varieties, catholic, evangelical, dissent and even Protestant, is utterly unmeaning, and invests some of our clergy with an assumption of

ecclesiastical superiority at which we cannot help smiling; it is the turkey-cock spreading its black feathers in imitation of the peacock, to use a famous Tamil simile.

My own experience centres round the Holy Scriptures primarily, and secondarily round other helps and contribution from other sources. It is dangerous for any Indian thinker to adopt the cause of the wandering Jew, without any settled spiritual habitation; the Word of God only can be for him a refuge from the storm and a shelter in a dry and weary land where no water is. I cannot, of course, say that a man cannot be a good *bhakta* without knowing the scriptures in any real sense; but at least a minimum knowledge is desiderated of the facts of our Lord's Death and His Presence even more in relation to the *bhakta's* toilsome journey through the world. A good deal may be supplied by a living Church by its ministry, but at least the preachers must know the Word, as the prophet expected the official representatives of his people to learn and teach. But all this, I cannot set by the side of the authority and living fountain of the Christian *Veda* and *Agamam*; that is how my knowledge of Jesus Christ and His world-wide cosmic redemption, in all its significance, has come to me. Furthermore, it is not possible for me to say that any substantial additions have been made to the central core, by any subsequent discoveries. Interpretations there are, many and even conflicting, of Holy Scripture down the ages, but I am the sole judge of them all—but to the authority of the written Revelation, I bow with lowly reverence.

Here in this context, reference must be made, quite appropriately, to the contest between fundamentalism and modernism, to neither of which I can give my unmixed adherence, for they spring from a conception of God's

Revelation which is not in accord with oriental thought. If I am obliged to choose between the two, probably it will be fundamentalism, and even verbal inspiration. This is much more in consonance with the view of the Indian Church, including the Roman Catholic Church. . . .

It is, therefore, incumbent on me, from my contact with and submission to the Bible, to say with the Psalmist that the word giveth light and is a lamp unto my feet, and with the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Not all that men have written about the Bible, its authors, dates and composition, interpretations, can add one cubit to the majesty of the Word. . . .

But difficulties have been raised that the Bible is not enough, that there are contradictions; that all the doctrines held in the churches cannot be deduced from the scriptures without the generous helping hand of the Creeds and General Councils and dogmatic expositions. My reply to all such is that if you cannot infer the church doctrine of the Trinity, as expounded in the Nicene Creed, then it must be frankly admitted. If a number of Bishops such as those that assembled in a rather excited atmosphere, and under the auspices of the Emperor are to be our guides, then the question that Cardinal Newman raised in his *Development of Christian Doctrine* must be squarely met . . . If it is said that the church has the God-given prerogatives to enunciate doctrines, then it may be asked, why stop with the sixth century? and which church is invested with this Jurisdiction?

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The Bible is an open book and whatever conclusions may be reached regarding its relevance, will have to be achieved by Indian Christian thought—on its own initia-

tive, without being unduly burdened by the views of scholars of the West whose erudition is unquestionably great but who are at the same time not alive to other lessons than they have caught. With regard to the subject of Inspiration and Revelation, the Indian Christian cannot but assume a different attitude, while admitting, as he would readily do, the validity and continuity and unity of the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments. To me, the Word of God is not a dogmatic assumption nor does my belief depend on the Church; in a very large sense it is independent of the judgement of any institution, and it is supreme in its sphere and judges the Church and cannot be judged by it; unless one can subordinate the Lord to man this magisterial position must be the all-pervading thought of Indian Christianity.

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Inspiration

As regards inspiration, it must be said that my reactions are inductive and cumulative, various and mystical. Let me explain. There is verbal inspiration, for the very words are God-breathed—as even in the case of the ill-fated mysterious Balaam from the mountains of Moab; This prophet from an apparently heathen home was inspired and he spoke the very words of prophecy. So it was in many cases of the prophetic ministry . . . It is illogical to separate the word from the Word—bad translations, faulty renderings, mistakes of copyists—there may be and are. These do not deflect me from the idea that certain parts of the Bible are verbally inspired. Then I believe in the inspiration of selection—for what is the history of Israel and of even the patriarchs, but a selection which could not have been done by a Mommsen, Gibbon, much less by a Macaulay, Froude, or Carlyle; for these

were not caught up into the mind of God and looked with veiled faces on Him along with the heavenly host. . . .

Furthermore, there is the gigantic theory that the visions, dreams and prophesyings have to be interpreted in terms of modern psychology, which consign all of them to the region of the underworld of the human mind—whether of the Freudian or of the more respectable mystical variety. That is, God is not in all of them; God cannot speak, and if a prophet hears Him speaking, it is only the inner working of an excited, though religious, imagination. Even our Lord's experience of the Divine Voice in His Baptism, not to speak of St. Paul's on the Damascus Road, suffers this torture on the operation table of the psuedo-science of modern psychology.

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The Old Testament

Now I shall set forth here a few lessons that have been imprinted on my mind by a study of the Old Testament which I take to be an integral part of the Bible and which I cannot, and few Indian Christians will or can, reject along the lines of that terrible Marcion and some of the gnostics.

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1. The Old Testament Revelation is founded on the moral government of the world by a moral governor, as old Bishop Butler would have called it. The whole history of Israel, especially its tragic parts, cannot be seen without the light of this great principle illuminating its pages; the complaint of secular historians like Renan who have to penetrate its mystery, as in the case of their own national history, on the principle of mere political and economic evolution, is justified; they cannot see anything beyond the avenging fury of an angry God and that of its pretentious agents. Rather, it is laid under the ban of condemnation

as theocracy—that western democracies have had the inestimable good fortune to repudiate as inconsistent with modern liberalism and the denial of the supernatural. Put the problem in another way, is it conceivable that any national or even international historian should arise in any of the western lands, democratic or otherwise, who could narrate the history of their country with half the insight, let alone the impartiality, of the Jewish historians? I am afraid it will almost turn out a miracle—such a feat. In view of the actuality of this idea, inseparably connected with the misunderstood doctrine of monotheism that is regarded as the highest peak attained by the prophets, let me draw some of the salient implications, set out so prominently in the simple records of the Old Testament, in contrast with voluminous pages of a Gibbon or Macaulay as the one historian who approaches nearly the Hebrew, but he had drunk from the founts of the Biblical revelation.

2. The moral government of the world is to be vindicated by the establishment of His righteousness or *santana dharma*, the Indian equivalent of the Hebrew conception. God is not only the law-giver in any political sense, but His being is righteousness and it works as an immanent, personal agency in historical affairs. You may call it *karma* as an indwelling moral operative cause, implying not a mere mechanical cause, as Buddhists believed which was controverted by our Saivite Siddhantins as inadequate; Siva himself directly gives the *phalans*, the fruits of righteousness and its contrary; the modern conception of a natural law, and as Prof. Whitehead had pointed out, it is from this moral hegemony of God, that the conception of scientific law arose, when imperial science started on its career in the sixteenth century in Europe.

3. The moral law is no respecter of persons or nations: there is no favouritism or nepotism with God. The conception of Israel as the people of God, not like other nations, living or trying to live alone apart from the other peoples, which is repeated *ad nauseum*, as a great blot on the impartiality of God, cannot be sustained by any candid critic who leaves behind him his nationalist English, German or American prejudices. Apart from the deep consciousness of the prophets of Israel, it is a mystery why they chose to regard themselves in this light, as the children of Abraham to whom God gave the wonderful promise. *In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed.* But this idea, running like a blood-red thread through its history, never deflected them from the terrible task of denouncing God's punishment on Israel's sins and how Israel sinned and suffered agonies in its long history is writ large in its pages. The very fact of being the chosen people became almost intolerable in proportion to its high calling and defection, and the punishment of national humiliation and dispersion and destruction of its hopes were considered by some of them as more than what was really merited. The problem was why should Israel alone suffer at the hands of the alien imperialisms of Assyria, Babylon, even Persia (not so bad), of Greece and Rome, much worse than Israel for forgetting God and His laws.

4. The answer to this came in the proclamation that these imperialisms of the past (not unlike those of the modern world) were the rods in the hand of God, and if they arrogated to themselves the attributes of omnipotence, they would be doomed, as Assyria and Babylon were undoubtedly—leaving behind mere mounds of earth for the exploration and edification of archæologists who have

brought out the confirmation of Biblical history contained in its buried clay tablets. This is the terrible lesson of Israel's history, that escapes the lynx-eyed analysis of Keunan and Wellhausen and his followers because their *conception of the moral law is moribund today, and the nations are rushing to their expected doom, the prophets would have said in these fateful days after the war.*

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Social Justice

This moral law is not a mere soft soap and almsgiving as conceived by our modern culture and civilization. It is the sternest law of social justice, the removal of the oppression of the poor and the needy and their economic exploitation in all its forms, as announced by an Amos and an Isaiah, and finding its fitting climax in the song of the Blessed Virgin Mary who spoke of the mighty being hurled from their thrones—kings and autocrats—of the haughty being scattered in the pride of their intellect, the rich being sent empty away and the hungry being filled. Alas, some of our churches sing the *Magnificat* and its function ends there—without any understanding of the revolutionary explosive-idea lying in the words of the hand-maiden of the Lord. If India is going to have any vibrant theology beyond the dry bone of dogma—which is a caricature of divine truth and justice,—let it take account of this central mystery, and not wander like the theologians of the Nicene and the modern world, not to speak of the medieval, in the barren waste land where no water is. . . .

MEANING OF SALVATION IN CHRIST

While I hold to the fact that Jesus Christ is our Saviour without a shadow of doubt and have in my own experience found and felt His Grace and Saving Power, it is not possible for me to subscribe to this doctrine as exhausting the entire range of the Christian idea of salvation as revealed in the New Testament and in Christian experience. To discuss in detail these points would take me beyond the legitimate scope of this essay but a few points may be jotted down :

1. Salvation, as I have just stated, covers a much more comprehensive field than is usually intended by some believers—it covers the whole range of individual life, the burden of sin and sins; and our justification in the sight of God. One of the most deplorable features of this narrow conception is that it leaves untouched society in its own un-Christian and anti-Christian ways, with the result that the saved man, while repenting for certain sins like sexual immorality and a few glaring transgressions, accepts the sins of the social order as legitimate and even participates in them for his own advantage. Solidarity of the individual with the social area is not realised and Christians look upon the turmoil of oppression and injustice in the world with complacency and their conscience and hearts become petrified. . . . In our mind, our Lord's Kingdom of God has been rendered innocuous and tame by being reduced to a scheme of getting our petty souls saved—He that saveth his soul shall lose it, is misunderstood.

2. It is, of course, true that the contact of God in Jesus Christ with the soul, resulting in the experience of

salvation, may be sudden and cataclysmic, as in certain well-known cases, though even here, previous preparation cannot be ruled out; even St. Paul probably was no exception. The emphasis that some revivalists lay on the exact hour and date of conversion is based on the *legalistic idea* that if a man can know when he is married, he should not be ignorant of the time of his wedding.

My salvation is not only of the past, but of the present and future, till it is finished when He comes to transform us into His perfect form and image—that is New Testament teaching.

3. In the revivalist preaching, conversion is said to be a full consciousness of our sins and the washing of them by the blood of the Lord; hence forgiveness. While this is absolutely true, it is not true from the beginning. In my own case it was the beauty, the sublimity and mystery of His character and Person that drew me gradually to His lotus feet—then the consciousness of my own sins and sinful nature were set in the light of His transcendent purity, and then my going to Him for cleansing and forgiveness, and a more intensive and wider awareness of my own *unworthiness and lost condition*. This process is still proceeding because the Lord is lofty and His call is to ascend to the *hill of the Lord ever and ever*.

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND NON-CHRISTIAN FAITHS

In the following discussion, it will be noted that the non-Christian faith that receives prominence is Hinduism, and not the other religions of which the writer cannot claim such knowledge as would entitle him to speak with assurance.

The position is this today in India. Hindu Monism as it is called, though it is not the only form of Hinduism, has fashioned a theory of religions that is accepted as almost an indisputable axiom. Apart from the fact that this would serve to avoid any serious study of Christianity, it must be admitted that in Hinduism there is a spirit that welcomes it. The historian of the Roman Empire said with his wonted irony that to the philosopher all religions are false and to the people all religions are equally true. In India, both to the Hindu thinker and the masses, all religions are equally true. It is a genuine conviction. Yet, the practical exigencies of the communal problems of India have not left this dogma untouched. To the question, why should there be opposition to a Hindu becoming a Christian if Christianity is as good as Hinduism, there has been no answer. It is felt that one's ancestral religion should not be given up. Here the individual's attitude and needs are ignored. Such a change of faith is regarded as an insult to the old faith, and a weakening of the Hindu social order which in turn, will lead to the diminution of the political predominance that Hindu leaders enjoy in India today. Unfortunately, such is the real motive behind the opposition to Christianity in India. During the hey-day of Hindu

revivalism which lasted from the eighties of the nineteenth century up to the Gandhian era in politics, the religious motive was prominent. Politics did not intrude into the religious sphere. Today the religious motive, that is, of Hinduism as a faith of supreme value to the individual and society, is either conspicuous by its absence, or a subtle admixture of the two has taken its place. Most Hindu leaders are indifferent to what the Christian and the true Hindu religious men are anxious about, viz., that man should be brought into living contact with the secret of the universe, God. Provided Hindus do not become Christians and Moslems, it does not matter to them whether they live a religious life or not.

The Christian movement in India is puzzled and perplexed by this twofold attitude of political Hindus. There are the Sanatanists, the religious Hindus who are not perturbed by numerical landslides of Hinduism, but who insist on upholding orthodoxy in its rigidity. To such, the religious motive is supreme, and their sincerity is manifest, even though they may be regarded by the rationalists as reactionaries. To them, the loss of the untouchables, the Harijans, is a matter, no doubt, to be deplored. But they would not abate one jot or tittle of orthodox Hinduism for keeping Harijans within its fold or rather beyond its gates. To them the ancient 'Varnashrama Dharma', the caste structure, is sacrosanct, and not a single stone should be removed from it. Because of this rigid orthodoxy one feels a great deal of sympathy with the Sanatanists. They are, however, less subtle, and more candid than the political Hindus. The latter would seem to throw open the door of Hindu society to Harijans, but at the same time, caste remains, and caste is still the dominating principle. Under the impact

of modernism, the caste system seems to be giving way ; and yet no one can say that it will not ultimately survive modern civilisation. So great is the genius of it, the genius that overcame the universalism of Buddhism, tided over the iconoclastic zeal of Islam, and has even cajoled Christianity to admit it within its sphere.

There is one other aspect of Hinduism that Christianity in India has failed to bring to the forefront. Till now, the deeper elements of Hinduism and those of Christianity have not come to close grips. To what extent they can combine and where the conflict will rage, cannot be easily predicted. The outer walls and fortifications have been attacked and the breaches have been made. Hindus who are keenly alive to the weak spots are on the move to strengthen the defences and repair the defects. No longer can Christians succeed in India by dwelling on the miseries of widowhood and child marriages. No longer can the woes of the Harijans be exploited for recruiting to the Christian Church. Nay, no longer can the Hindus be twitted with customs for the Christians themselves are now, in their efforts to bring about union, insisting on the sanctity of ecclesiastical customs. While Hindus are called upon to forsake customs far older than the Christian Church, the latter calls on Indian Christians to adopt the customs of Western Churches that, compared to the antiquity of Hindu customs, are but of yesterday. The old apologetics is now outmoded and falls flat on Hindu minds. Christianity and Hinduism are not the old religions that the early evangelical missionaries knew. They are new and demand a deeper analysis and finer methods of discernment.

How are we, then, to view the inter-relations of Christianity and Hinduism ? In this connection, it is not

clear what is really meant by relations? They are, of course, not historically related like Islam and Christianity. Nor have they had mutual reactions till the coming of the missionaries of the Roman Church and the various Protestant Churches. Christianity has a far more ancient history in the Syrian Churches of Travancore and Cochin. But strange to say this Eastern Church does not seem to have produced any impression on Hinduism. It was probably because, if one may hazard a guess, the Syrian Church soon decayed into another caste within Hinduism, only keeping up its connection with Antioch and Babylon. Excluding these historical facts, we are driven to discover inter-relations on the plane of pure theology and metaphysics. Here we are at sea with no compass to show the direction and no rudder to steer the vessel. Not that we discourage comparative estimates of theological doctrines. But within the catholicism of Hinduism, more catholic than the catholicism of Christianity, hardly a single Christian doctrine can fail to find its parallel and place. This wide statement has an exception that we shall mention later on, and in our opinion it is the exception that proves the rule. To this we shall return later on, only remarking here that this noble exception is not part of the Christian evangel, but the whole of it.

Before we proceed further, some of the old distinctions that missionary preaching delighted in must be given the quietus, though in the field of religion no idea completely dies. It will remain in remote corners and in the subconscious mind of even the liberal. These distinctions are clear-cut and dry, and have none of the natural features that connect the species of the animal world with one another, according to evolutionary naturalists. One such is that Christianity is the true religion and Hinduism is

false. A second one is, Christianity is the perfect religion and Hinduism is an imperfect religion. A third one, associated with the name of Dr. Farquhar and before him with Dr. Miller of the Madras Christian College, made Christianity the crown of Hinduism. These are now untenable, especially the first one. In the second and third, there is a good deal, but it is good only for the evaluation of religious ideas. In *The Everlasting Man*, the late G.K. Chesterton displayed his genius by showing how the mythologies of Greece and Rome and their philosophies received their true completion in Christianity. Long before him, the Fathers of the Alexandrian Church like Origen and Clement did this work with consummate ability in the presence of the ancient gods, demons and philosophers. But whether they succeeded in converting the people and philosophers to the view that their religions and philosophies were a *preparatio evangelica*, history does not tell us. The truth of the matter is that Christianity influenced and convinced the ancient world of Rome and Greece, to the extent that it did really, not by comparisons and contrasts of which *The Everlasting Man* is such brilliant storehouse, but directly.

While, as we shall indicate presently, these distinctions are at fault in their appreciation of Hinduism as a living religion, it is curious that an old distinction that Western theologians drew has not been so much mentioned. This is the distinction that Bishop Butler gave emphasis to, that between revealed religion and natural religion; it was not a distinction that even Butler could approve of in its entirety. For he insisted that Christianity contained two religions. On the one hand, it was a republication in purity of the essentials of natural religion, and on the other the particular revelation given through Jesus of

which the New Testament is the record. No doubt this treatment of Christianity by Butler was necessitated by the deistic controversies of his day. He could show, as he did with inimitable genius, that if one believed in natural religion, then the difficulties of revealed religion are such as natural religion, too, has to contend against. This is to say, revealed religion, Christianity, is a dispensation of God, is a scheme, to use Butler's language, containing things that reason could not have discovered but are, nevertheless, not repugnant to reason. The proof of this new dispensation is miracles wrought by its Founder and His apostles. There must be many things in it, strange, mysterious and inexplicable, but these belong to the supernatural order which is as much subject to God as the order postulated by natural religion. To-day, Butler's argument, based on the analogy of revealed religion to natural has lost its force—not all of it, but the greater part of it. For he who ceases to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son, ceases to believe in God as Father. This may be put in a manner even more startling—it is easier to believe in Jesus than to believe in God whose existence and attributes the theologian of so-called natural religion tries to prove.

Secondly, Butler's idea that there is such a thing as natural religion, apart from revelation, is contrary to the doctrines of the different non-Christian faiths. All of these claim in some measure to have been revealed by God, except, of course, Buddhism, a religion without God but where the Buddha is raised to the position of God. Thus Butler's distinction becomes one without a difference and has to be abandoned. We have not done with the idea of revelation as belonging to religion, as a phase of man's life on earth. Butler and the early theologians, and to a

certain extent, Karl Barth, would seem to believe in primeaval revelation, and that the various non-Christian faiths are systems where there are still traces discernible of it. Therefore, the truths that non-Christian religions embody have thus the ancient impress and seal, and are not mere truth that human reason has hammered out of its inner resources and from observing the natural and human order.

We shall do well to dwell a little more on this. When Butler had not long done his refutation that natural religion could dispense with revealed religion then the former was itself dispensed with. Eighteenth century science in France said, to use the language of an eminent astronomer, Science has no need for the hypothesis of God. From nature to nature's God, the pious poet's adoration of nature as the creation of God, became a mere sentimental religion. On the other hand, nature and her laws became self-sufficient more and more. With the evolutionary view of Darwin, all traces of God's design were wiped out from nature and a voiceless and grim deity, in the shape of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, was installed on the throne of the universe. Thus, science was driven either by its own logic or by the genius of its expounders to dogmatic negation. Natural religion, in the Butlerian sense, ceased to be a religion; though even the worship of nature was not allowed. For nature was only a complex machine. And a complex machine could possess consciousness even of a high order, as the anti-machinists of *Erewhon* described by the Butler of a later day. But somehow the human mind cannot worship a machine which has no mind, much less a heart but is controlled by an outside intelligence located within or without it.

But in these days the old Newtonian physics has collapsed, says a great mathematician. The view that the universe is a machine is found out. On the whole, it is a machine, but in the ultimate analysis of its atoms, it is not a machine. Another mathematician has gone to the length of reviving the doctrines of Berkeley and of Plato, describing the architect of the universe as a geometer. But here science stops. It knows nothing of its mind and will and design. Thus, agnosticism once again sweeps over human speculation. If the human heart claims to be heard, science turns a deaf ear to it. Through the thunder there does not peal forth a human voice, 'A heart I made and a heart beats here'. At the most, science knows the supremacy of the mathematical mind and nothing more; at the least, a vast machine grinding on its way through endless aeons. This conception of the limits of reason can be acknowledged by all religions. Hinduism, for instance, goes beyond reason and appeals to revelations. The *Brahman* stretches beyond the categories of reason. These can only be employed not in their positive significance but negatively. To apply these to God, to describe Him thus, is to make the Infinite finite. To this extent, natural religion, in the Butlerian sense, is proved by reason, that there is an intelligence by whose activity the universe has come into being and sustained and may ultimately cease to be. But of the nature of this intelligence and His relation to us, humans, if there be any such, science is profoundly unaware, and may continue to be so till the end of the chapter. Here comes the necessity of faiths, that it takes man beyond the bounds of reason. Where reason falters and fails, faith believes and is assured of the substance of things not seen, being itself its own evidence. What constitutes

faith, whether it be creative or merely receptive, whether it is dynamically active in penetrating into the mysteries of God, or it is only a mere outgoing to Him when He manifests the unmanifested,—on these there are differences among theologians of Hinduism as among those of Christianity. The *Bhakti* school says, the *Bhagavan* comes to us of His own free will and grace, when *guru* opens the eyes of our understanding. The philosophical monist does not agree with this, saying, the *Brahman* neither comes nor goes. It is realisation of the inmost in man. When the inmost depths are plumbed, the one is realised in the ineffable state. Thus, in brief, we have outlined the view that Hinduism, like Christianity, claims to be a revelation from God and cannot be assigned the sphere and functions of natural religion.

The present writer's own experience as a Hindu and his contacts with religious-minded Hindus are evidence that Hinduism satisfies its votaries. It used to be said and is still held, that the needs of man cannot be satisfied by Hindu thought and its practical *Sadhanas*. Where, therefore, Hinduism ended, Christianity began. In Christianity are to be found the resources for full spiritual maturity. An interpretation like this is vitiated by subjective attitudes. Because Hinduism cannot be satisfactory to the Christians, it must be equally so to the believing Hindu—such a conclusion cannot be drawn. We might as well say that because Fascism and Communism are hateful to the Democrat, therefore they are and should be disliked by the Italian and the Russian. The Hindu psychology is affected in quite an opposite manner. We must, therefore, candidly recognise the manifest fact that Hinduism does provide the spiritual nourishment that Hindus demand. What becomes then of the oft-

repeated assertions of converts from Hinduism, genuine and keen-minded, that it was the inadequacy of their ancestral religion that opened the way to Christianity. There is the famous example in the Christian Church of St. Augustine; and before him St. Paul. The analogies from the Church have been held to be typical of the mental process that leads souls from non-Christian faiths to Christianity. When we consider St. Paul's conversion, it does not bear out the fact that modern liberal theology sees in it, viz., that he was dissatisfied with the legalistic interpretation of Judaism and, therefore, the Gospel appealed to him as leading to the path of true righteousness which is of God through faith in Christ. It was an ordinary mental evolution and on ordinary principles of mental transformation his conversion is sought to be explained. On the contrary, he always said that it was a revelation of the Son to him; not mediated by any human agency or by the ordinary laws of mental evolution. Later on in the light of the Gospel of the Cross and the Resurrection of the Lord, he could see the inadequacy of the law, of all human means, to redeem man from the realm of the evil and the good. Before he was known of Christ; he could not have reasoned as he did in the Romans and the Galatians. So much is this the case that modern Jewish scholars like Prof. Montefiore regard Paul's estimate of the Judaism of his day as prejudiced and onesided. They account for his conversion on the hypothesis that he came under the sway of the mystery religions current in Asia Minor, and among those he found the Christ-cult the most satisfactory from his Jewish upbringing. Such an explanation does not explain, nor is it in agreement with, Paul's own version and experience. Besides, it does not help the evangelist who

claims that non-Christian faiths fail to satisfy their adherents. Even on this ground, it was the introduction of the new view of the mystery-religions that profoundly affected his religious attitude and his outlook on the religion of Israel and its destiny.

To dwell on this example of Paul a little longer, he saw the fulfilment of the law in Christ only after he submitted to the Lord. The Old Testament then became really the old religion which pointed to Him. In every page of it and in the election of Abraham, in the choice of Jacob, and of Ishmael and Hagar, Sinai and Zion, he saw the prophecy that was to be fulfilled in the Lord. According to the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless. If this is the criterion, no dissatisfaction need be felt. Paul's statement of the gospel as the superseding of the law by the gospel had no meaning to the devout and the orthodox Jew. Further, he could not see in the judicial murder of Jesus all those tremendous truths of God's new manifestation of Himself to men. This was revelation, the pure act of God, the vertical on the horizontal, to use Barth's expression. It was not part and parcel of the Old Testament, immanent in it and waiting to be unfolded by Paul's genius. It was the revelation of the Son to him that wrought the change and gave the new conception of the Old Testament to him which his Jewish brethren in Israel after the flesh refused to accept.

The principle, thus exemplified in this noble instance of Paul, must be the one that should guide us in our search. All religions have each one its own centre from which proceed the radii to the circumference. These circles, these religions, are self-contained and self-consistent. They do not intersect as religions except where history lays its hand. As between Hinduism and

Buddhism, there is such a historical connection as between Islam and Christianity and Judaism. Apart from such historical occasions, the religions stand round their own centre. There are no doubt analogies, rather ideas and practices, apparently similar in significance, but comparisons can be made between them. The basic ideas are different; and no common accepted standard can be found that will justify them. To this extent the Indian maxim that each religion is good to its own followers is right. It is right to him up to the stage when a new element enters that shifts the centre of gravity from the old to the new. Both the Hindu and Gandhian type and the Christian and the missionary type follow the same principle and commit the same mistake. Both believe that a common standard is always present for the evaluation of different religions. The former, using it, arrives at the conclusion that all religions are equal; the latter that Hinduism is imperfect and unsatisfactory, whereas Christianity is perfect and satisfactory.

If this is so, as we believe it is, why should the Christian evangel be preached to the Hindu? If Hinduism could satisfy the spiritual needs of its followers, why bring in Christianity at all, and not leave him to work out his own solution in his own faith? The simple answer is not that we want to bring the Hindu from one religion to another, from a false to a true religion. This is too simple a statement to cover all the relevant facts. Christianity, in this view, is not a different religion so much as a different region. If it be further asked why the Christian religion should be preferred to the Hindu, the answer is that no one actually does so, till the Lord chooses to call him. That is the undoubted fact on which Christianity as the revelation of God in Christ moves. When God calls, if

the call is heard by man, what moves him is not that his old country is bad but that he has to obey the heavenly invitation. There is nothing in Christianity that can validate its contents except the call and election by God. Thus the question is removed from the controversies regarding doctrines and rites to God's own design. Let me illustrate this view that would steer clear of all the shoals and rocks on the shore to the boundless ocean of God's grace in Christ that takes little or no account of man's antecedents in religion when it lays hold on him.

When Peter in the Acts hears what Cornelius, the Roman Captain, described regarding the vision he had, Peter said, I clearly see that God makes no distinctions between one man and another; but that in every nation those who fear him and live good lives are acceptable to him (Weymouth's New Testament). Cornelius himself said that an angel said, 'Your prayers and charities have gone up as a memorial before God'. In the character sketch of Cornelius, which may be taken as a typical conversion to Christianity in the original sense, the gift of the Holy Spirit, some features are worthy of our particular notice as bearing on our subject: (1) God deals with individuals; (2) There is no mention of the religion or sect to which he was affiliated; (3) Probably he was an Italian and certainly an officer in the Army—his calling in life, probably a more personal affair than his religious ancestry; (4) His religious disposition is described, his inmost longings as expressed in prayer and his philanthropy; (5) Peter says that he has learnt that God takes no account of his religious creed, but He makes known His acceptance to the Individual; (6) This acceptance is primary and leads to a future revelation of His will as described in Jesus. From this luminous narrative the mind of the

Lord emerges like the Rock of Ages from the stormy sea of religious polemics. He accepts a man, to whatever religion or sect or nation he may belong—not only a son of Abraham, or a member of the Christian Church. Christ's evangel to such an accepted soul is the further gift. It is not a new religion added to the old or superseding it. For it is a gift, *sui generis* springing from the will of the Lord. To the man, accepted of the Lord, a mere narrative of the Lord's earthly life, death, and resurrection, opened the door of faith and conferred the gifts of the Spirit. In the New Testament there are few or no contrasts and comparisons between the Gospel and non-Christian faiths. But there is one glaring comparison—that between the Gospel dispensation and the Mosaic. There are, however, references to the Thessalonians giving up idols to serve the living God, to other Christians being taken from darkness to the marvellous light of the Gospel. The emphasis is on the positiveness of Christianity and not the polemics, on the spiritual and moral state of Christians rather than on their religious beliefs.

This peculiar position of the New Testament must lead to a different conception of the non-Christian faiths. To grasp this vividness, a distinction should be made in our estimates viewed from the philosophical as distinguished from the devotional or prayer life. The former rarely, if ever, points to the picture of a struggling and sorrowing soul who feels that his life has been a defeat and to whom the world is an unintelligible burden, and God's face seems to be far off in rolling clouds and darkness. The philosophy is a rounded whole, perfected by the discussions of centuries in the schools. The souls crying to God in agony and despair, or exalted by a glimpse of His grace and truth; sinking in the deep mire or lifting up to the

holy hill—that is the object of God's solicitude; so that the Psalms take us deeper into the heart of the religious men of Israel than the historical books where a philosophy of history selects and rejects facts. Here is the cry, Why standest thou far off? Oh my soul, why art thou cast down within me? Out of the depths have I cried. This is religion. And how was the storm-tossed and despairing soul of Psalms comforted? Some of them are unrelieved in gloom and heart-rending despair. How did the salvation of God shine out to them? We are not told how the Lord came to them, but certain it is that light came to them out of darkness. Can any religious philosophy analyse the secret? The broken and contrite heart is precious unto Him. None meets Him and is lifted up except by His grace, and His grace alone. But how this grace, mysterious, ineffable, and falling like rain on the dry plains of India, is mediated to the hungry and thirsty souls, is more than we can say. Those in pre-Christian and the Christian centuries who had no knowledge of the coming of the Blessed One but cried with strong tears were saved by the same grace that saves us today, though we now know Him—by no means a personal merit.

The application here is that the Hindu *bhaktas* who wept and rejoiced in God, in their loneliness and self-loathing, were visited by Him. This is, to the present writer an indubitable fact of experience. Leave alone the academic theologies of the *Vedanta* and *Siddhanta* of monism and dualism qualified or unqualified, and take the genuine utterances of the singers, say, in the Tamil land. Even in this devotional literature, a good deal is conventional and credal and therefore rhetorical and merely rhythmical. The pent-up agony rushes through here and

there and the man stands a shivering and sad soul before Him. One such poet of the South country was Ramalinga whose hymns have gone to the hearts and homes of our people. He depends on what, for the salvation of his soul, rather for the good of men? Not on the *Vedas*, the philosophies, and even the worship in temples—sacraments and rites—but on the love and grace of the Lord. This love and grace are often expressed in mythological medium, as *Siva* drinking the poison which came out of the mouth of the serpent *Vasuki*, or of the same God killing Death (*Yama*) to protect His worshipper who took refuge in him, and so on. The experience of his grace was prior to myth and explained it. It formed, no doubt, to many, if not to all, a rock fact for the soul's dependence on His grace. This emergence of the idea of grace out of the conflict with the rigid law of *Karma*, the triumph of grace over law in Hinduism was achieved not alone, we are assured, by the unaided human heart, but by the interposition of the Lord Himself who showed to men, apart from the historical revelation in Jesus Christ, His saving grace.

As between Christianity and Hinduism as rival faiths, comparisons are futile and fruitless, to say the least, apart from the emotional wrangles and wriggings they cause. People are wedded each one to his own. And the controversialist who thinks of triumph, cannot escape from the suspicion of prejudice and intolerance. Nor can the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, if applied to the religious field, be ever a safe criterion. That Christianity alone, as is at present understood and practised, will survive the conflicts of faiths in modern India, may be a matter of faith, but it cannot be a present argument. Nor should it be forgotten that

the fittest is not always nor even often the best of its kind. History is a strange court before which to argue the respective merits of religious truth. A doctrine, it may be claimed, that has stood the test of time, may well be regarded as a truth or as containing truth. If this be so, Hinduism may well point to it as being in its favour, besides being the religion of millions. Time and numbers cannot be claimed by Christianity, for Christianity is but of yesterday and the religion of only a minority of the world's population. Thus we are forced to leave behind the test of St. Vincent, *orbis terrarum*, the test of Catholic validity. We turn our gaze from the dim plains where rival faiths battle to the individual heart which knows its own bitterness and where no man intermeddeth. Then the distinction is seen as between not Christianity and Hinduism but as between the Hindu and the Christian. The salvation of each, as understood by each, is by the grace of the Lord; the former by the grace of God without the historical Christ and the other by the grace of God in Christ.

Why, then, should the Gospel be proclaimed to the Hindu, if the Hindu can be saved and is saved by the grace of God, apart from the historical Jesus? The reason of it is not to be found in the alleged supremacy of Christianity over Hinduism, but in Christ Himself who reveals Himself to the preacher. This reason is not intellectual nor historical; it cannot be exploited for evangelism. The evangelist who puts forward arguments of this type, accounts for the faith in him by arguments that not only fall short of it but are irrelevant to it. To use Barthian language, even Christianity, as a historical residue—and not as revelation—is only

a finger-post, pointing to the Blessed One. Christ cannot oppose Hinduism nor does He. He comes to the heart, weary and heavy-laden, as He came to the Samaritan at the well of Jacob, apart from the controversy of Mount Zion and Mount Gerizim. No doubt, it is hard for the rigorous knight-errant of the faith to be deprived of the ordinary weapons of controversy. The true Christian evangelist, however, feels again and again how impotent his weapons are. Hinduism, like the ghost in Hamlet, is intangible. It seems to dissolve but reunites to appear again. It is a spirit and not mere casual intellectual deposit. When he discards the carnal weapons, he is armed with those of a spiritual kind. Confessed failure of the endless debates about Hinduism and Christianity is the condition precedent. The duellists throw away their swords, and after shaking hands, they retire, each one to his own inmost heart. The Christian hears the whisper of the Lord that not unto him but to Him belongs mercy that follows the wandering soul. To the Hindu, perhaps, He comes, revealing Himself as the Crucified one and *Rshi* or perhaps as a stranger whose face is veiled in an impenetrable mask. The word of Mercy is spoken, and the heart overflows with rapture because of the undeserved forgiveness—a miracle of the divine love. This becomes a sacred memory which sustains him ever after at times of defeat and darkness, the presage of a fuller victory and light. Thus, he goes on rejoicing and sorrowing, talking to the world of some recondite philosophy which is apart from the real secret of his salvation. When his eye opens on another day in another world, he will know who has saved him. Tell them the veil

is on His face ; then it will be lifted, and he will behold Him as He is.

This long argument is not meant to suppress the study of Hinduism and its relation to Christianity by way of comparison of doctrines and sacraments. They are sometimes useful ; but this raw utility should not blind us to its limitations. The Lord is not to be found in the thunder of polemics nor in the fire of comparative religion. He refuses all such comparisons. But there are, however many helps that have been, in experience, found to be of some value. To these we return, finding that we cannot dispense with human means. Let me enumerate some of them. (1) Even a simple picture of the life of Christ moves, and the appeal penetrates more deeply than is thought. But the difficulty of drawing such a picture is great indeed. There are elements in the life of the Jesus of History, as He is called, that cannot be understood by a devout Hindu. The traditional idea of Jesus meek and mild may attract. But what about His terrible denunciation and what critics have called His fanaticism ! His love was not of the ordinary sentimental type nor his anger—anger which the Hindu is accustomed to consider not befitting the life of a good man. Therefore, it takes some time of calm thought before he can see the appropriateness of such love and such anger. His love is not of the exacting monopolising variety that the strong man wants to shake off, nor of the pitying and clinging type that the weak man delights in. There is no name in any language for it. This love is that of Jesus, apart from every other. His anger has no element of egoism. It is the pure flame of the divine wrath. To submit to it is to become pure and radiant in the light.

(2) The lives of individual *bhaktas* of the Lord, if they reflect some glory of his, have a strange magnetism. There are some such among us but that light is hidden with Christ in God. The true Christian *Bhaktas* shrink from the vulgar light of publicity: whereas in India sanctity is often paraded with pomp, and admiring followers cry up its merit and create awe in simple minds by keeping the hero behind closed doors and silence. (3) There is one strong proof the very mention of which will bring a smile of pity to many enlightened moderns, that is, the gift of healing by spiritual means. Not to dilate on this, it must suffice to say that such manifestation of power may reveal more than all our subtle reasonings.

