

RAGHAVACHARI

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

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Presented to
B. K. Chatterjee Esq.,
with the best Compliments of
S. Raghavachari,
16. 12. 29.



THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION.

Centre for the Arts

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION

BY

S. RAGHAVACHARI.

with an appreciative foreword by

Prof. S. RADHAKRISHNAN, M. A.; I. E. S.
D. Litt.

King George V. Professor of Philosophy and
President of the Council of Post-
Graduate Studies in Arts
Calcutta University.

Centre for the Arts

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Late Lord Haldane's
Opinion about
The

Problem of Life
by

S. Raghavachari

"The deep doctrines
on which it is based bear
an appeal to young and
old, which ought to satisfy
India as it has satisfied
many of us here"

5705



A book full of pregnant thoughts, a book concerning which one can say, after finishing it, that there is scarcely a superfluous phrase from beginning to end. There is in it a tone of utter sincerity. It is indeed an original, forceful, strange book, which must set any one who reads it, thinking.

Dedication.

To

K. Shanker Rao. B. A.

Finance Department,

Govt. of India,

New Delhi,

Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

As a humble token of the author's
high admiration of his great
qualities of head
and heart.

INTRODUCTION

BY

Prof. S. RADHAKRISHNAN.

Mr. S. Raghavachari B.A. one of our enterprising University students gave an address some time ago on the *Problem of Religion*. He is very anxious to get it published and has asked me for a short foreword. I have looked through portions of it and am impressed by the writer's enthusiasm and earnestness. The work shows considerable reading and power of thought as well as expression. It is a good sign that our young men are attempting to wrestle with the fundamental processes of life and think for themselves. The main theme that religion is not a lesson to be learnt but a life to be lived will receive general acceptance.

S. Radhakrishnan,

28-12-28.

PREFATORY NOTE.

On the 6th. December, 1928, I delivered a speech under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. (College st. Branch, Calcutta.) in the Over-toun Hall. The subject was "The Problem of Religion", and the President, the Hon'ble the Raja of Nishipur, Minister, Local Self-Govt., Bengal.

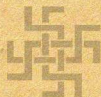
The thoughts, I had expressed were appreciated by many friends and acquaintances. Some of them, for whose opinion I have a high regard, expressed a strong desire to see the whole speech, printed. My own enthusiasm was equally intense in the matter. When I sat down to write, I found before long that I was actually writing a book of moderate size. I do not regret this development, however unpremeditated, it might have been. I hope, that after perusal, the reader will feel with me, that "The Problem of religion" is not a useless

addition to the literature on the subject. It brings a message of hope and goodwill where despair and distrust reign supreme. The whole subject is discussed from the standpoint of the man in the street; and all technical jargon is scrupulously avoided. It is my earnest hope that the book will serve as a harbinger of peace, and Religion will again become a bond of love among the peoples of the world. In publishing this book, I was not a little helped and encouraged by my beloved class-fellow, Bibhu Pada Kirti, who has written some of the sweetest poems and songs in English and Bengali. I cannot find a better opportunity to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to my esteemed friend Mr. Hanuman Prasad Poddar, (the founder of the Cosmopolitan Club at 10A, Central Avenue, for the promotion and diffusion of culture), whose earnest co-operation has made the speedy publication of the book possible. Last but not least, my grateful thanks are due to Prof. Radha-

krishnan, whose contact marks an era in my life, and who has kindly written a foreword to this book.

S. Raghavachari,

2nd Jan. 1929.



Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

THE PROBLEM OF RELIGION.

The problem of religion is as old as man. It is coeval with human self-consciousness. It has engaged the attention of man ever since he began to think. Nevertheless it is as far from a satisfactory solution as ever. What is worse man has been straying away from the right track. He has not yet set his foot on the right road to true religion. The reason is not difficult to discover : The problem of religion is co-extensive with the problem of life. Neither problem can be fully solved till the consummation of the process of human evolution. The progress of man is marked by three distinct stages :— the unanimity of the ignorant, the disagreement of the enquiring, and the unanimity of the wise. We are now in the second stage of this evolutionary process. Hence our

disunion. Hence our conflicting views on religion. Hence the bitterness of our religious controversy. It is only the realisation of the true significance and scope of religion that will make it a harbinger of peace and amity instead of a weapon of hatred and antagonism and usher in the third stage of human evolution. Hence the importance of this subject. Hence the paramount necessity to face and solve this problem of problems.

There are some who want to dispense with religion altogether on the ground that it has done us more harm than good. They contend that religion has been the bane of the world and that man would be happier without it. They also add that the progress of the west in civilization has been in proportion to its indifference to religion and that the depressed condition of the East is mainly due to religious bigotry and superstition. This position is not altogether unjustifiable. There is much truth in this contention. But it is based on a false view

of religion. Hence it is all the more necessary that we should earnestly discuss and solve the question "what is religion?" It is true that religion has done us more harm than good. It is true that greatest atrocities have been committed and are being committed in the name of religion. But to dispense with religion on that account would be like committing suicide because life is not free from misery. In the first place it is impossible to dispense with religion. Nor is it desirable. In the words of Dr. Barrows, "Religion is the atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being, and rather than dispense with it we can well endure the thin air of ritualism, the cold fogs of bigotry and even the noxious vapours of cruel superstition." It is not religion that is baneful but irreligion. Hence the urgent necessity for the knowledge and practice of true religion purified from all noxious elements and freed from the accretions of ages.

Moreover what a great philosopher says

in respect of philosophy applies with equal truth to religion. He says "If a man must philosophise, he must philosophise. If he must not philosophise, he must philosophise. In any case therefore he must philosophise." What he means to say is that man is a born philosopher and that he cannot but philosophise whether he will or no. He cannot get rid of philosophy. Similarly it must be borne in mind that the instinct of religion is inborn in man. Man is a born religionist. Religion will cling to him whether he will or no. He cannot evade its clutches. Consciously or unconsciously he must live in it. He must belong to theism or atheism, scepticism or agnosticism, monism or dualism, Idealism, or Materialism; he is bound to profess some *ism* or other. If not religion, he must profess irreligion. But this is true only in regard to extraordinary men. It is more difficult; it requires greater thought to be an atheist than a theist. The generality of men do not think at all. They simply

reflect the thoughts of other men. The majority of mankind can never do without religion. The average man can never get free from the sentiment of religion. True or false, pure or impure, some religion he must have. This truth is thus very forcefully described by Dr. Barrows:—"If all the sacred literature of the world were swept out of sight and out of mind, if Sinai, the mount of beatitudes, Calvary, all gone, the infant humanity will once again build the altars of faith and behold ascending and descending angels and listen once again to the songs of the spirits." Thus it will be seen that we cannot get free from the fetters of religion. Our nature clings to it. Our heart clamours for it. Life would appear intolerable without it. If this is true in regard to mankind in general, it is all the more so in regard to India in particular. "Religion is the life-blood of the Indian nation." Spirituality is our ideal. Hence the imperative necessity for solving the religious problem, so

that, inasmuch as we cannot do without religion, we may have the right sort of it or at any rate the least baneful. Before proceeding further I crave your indulgence in respect of one or two personal remarks that I think it necessary to make in order to remove any apprehensions that you may be inclined to entertain as regards my personal attitude towards the subject under consideration. It has become the fashion of the day for every speaker on religion to claim infallibility and universality for the religion in which he is born. This is the root cause of our religious failure. It underlies our religious dissensions. Dr. Barrows came to India to proclaim that Christianity was the only religion suited to become the Universal religion of the world. This weakness is commonly shared by the followers of every faith. It may not be found out of place to make a passing remark in this connection. In the first place it must be admitted that no religion based on the personality of its founder how-

ever great, however attractive and imposing, can become the Universal religion. No man however divine can become the leader of the world; just as no general however great has been able to conquer the whole world. Humanity consists of different grades of intellect, and different tastes and temperaments. No single personality however charming can satisfy the varied standards, variegated tastes and temperaments of the whole humanity. Then again a religion which rests on the basis of a single personality stands on a fickle foundation. For instance Christianity is based on the divinity of Jesus Christ. If the existence of Jesus is doubted, Christianity falls to the ground. Christianity cannot appeal to one who is not attracted by the personality of the Nazarene. It is impossible that a single personality should attract the whole world. It cannot attract even a whole country. Similarly Muhamadanism centres round the personality of the great Prophet. Zoroastrianism de-

pende on Zoroaster; Buddhism on the Buddha. Thus almost all the great religions of the world hang on the personalities of their founders. Such a religion is intrinsically unsuited to become the Universal religion. I belong to a religion which is really nameless but which owing to the decay of religious thought in this country of late years has begun to be called Hinduism. One has to search in vain in all the religious scriptures for the term Hinduism. Hinduism is a foreign import. The Muhamadans called our religion Hinduism to distinguish it from their own; and we blindly adopted the new appellation. Our religion is a nameless religion. It has not derived its name even from such a great soul as the teacher of the Bhagavadgita. Nor has it been called after Sri Vedavyasa who may be described as the father of our religion. Our religious teachers understood the impropriety of associating their religion with a single personality, be that personality the

Universal Lord. Our religion may be described as Vedic religion. The Vedas are an exposition of the eternal principles of life. Each principle stands on its own merit. It does not receive its sanction from the greatness of the expounder. It is only such a religion that can lay claim to Universality. It does not depend on the greatness of an individual or individuals. It stands on the bed-rock of eternal truths. Individuality is diametrically opposed to Universality. They are poles asunder. A Universal religion is one which is founded on the Universal principles of life. A religion which is circumscribed within the limits of place, time, and person cannot become universal. Thus if there is any religion at all that has the inherent possibility of becoming universal, it is the Vedic religion. I loath to call it Hinduism.

The above remarks are likely to produce the impression that I have fallen into the same pit against which I declaimed at the

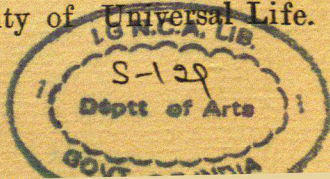
outset and that in this discourse I intend to establish the superiority of *my religion* over the other religions of the world. Although such an impression is warranted by my remarks, let me make it clear at once that nothing is farther from my intention. Moreover I am not of those who believe in a Universal Religion. No religion, as it exists at present, can become universal, apart from the question whether the ideal of a Universal Religion is not a mere dream. The advocates of Universal Religion ignore the most fundamental principle of creation. What is creation? The one becoming the many; Unity developing into Diversity. Variety and Multiplicity evolving from Unity is the fundamental principle underlying the ongoing of the world. Evolution means unfoldment. Wherever there is great religious zeal and religious thought, there is bound to be diversity of religion. A large number of men following the same religion implies the dearth of religious thought. Thought creates

separateness, variety, and multiplicity. If you cannot think, you are a copy of another man who thinks. The moment you begin to think, you are bound to differ from your friend. But to make diversity the cause of enmity indicates not thoughtfulness but thoughtlessness. Diversity has been the product of thoughtfulness. Thoughtlessness has made it a weapon of hatred. If all men were thinkers, there would be as many religions as there are men. As each man is a temple of God, the whole humanity will present the beautiful spectacle of varied and variegated temples consecrated to divine service. No man however great can become the representative of more than a single ray of Truth. The sum-total of Truth is to be sought in the combination of the varied rays of the whole humanity. The whole Truth is the monopoly of no individual soul. It is to be sought in the Universal Lord from whom emanate countless rays of varied beauty and variegated colour. Not more than a single

ray is vouchsafed to each individual. Do we hate each other simply because we differ physically? We are bound to differ intellectually as surely as we differ physically. Our differences ought to be regarded as enhancing the beauty of the creation. Such is the design of God. We should love our friend who differs from us. The realisation of this principle will put an end to all religious dissensions. It is arrogance to regard Truth as the monopoly of a single individual or a single community. Thus the advocates of Universal Religion unconsciously work for the disintegration of society. They unconsciously desire the death of religious thought. If there were only one thinker in the world, all the rest would blindly follow him. No two thinkers can follow each other. They may appreciate, admire, and love each other. They can never follow each other. It is only a thoughtless slave that will stoop to become a mere copy of another. No two thoughtful Christians can have the same

view of Christ. Thus the only Universal Religion possible is that of love, tolerance, and good will, consequent on the realisation of the supreme truth that each man is as much a vehicle of Truth as any other and that God is equally immanent in all men. The best way to realise the ideal of Universal Religion is by understanding and practising the principle enunciated in the Sermon on the Mount, "Judge not, lest ye should be judged." We are generally more ready to detect faults in others than in ourselves. A habit of self-introspection will kill this pernicious tendency; and men will soon perceive that they will render better service to humanity by living religion than by preaching it and that no religion can be regarded as true which is opposed to the principles of Love and Truth. Thus the only practicable ideal of Universal Religion will be found to be not a system or a creed but one based on the realisation of the Unity of Universal Life.

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After all man is his own saviour. The greatest achievement within the reach of every man is to save himself by the unfoldment of his own divinity. The best service one can render to the world is to realise the divinity of his own soul. Man will render more useful service by discovering his own defects and trying to remedy them than by criticising others and trying to appear superior to them. Self-introspection will lead to self-knowledge; will aid self-culture and hasten self-improvement. Self-culture is the only road to self-realisation. Self-realisation will reveal the Unity of Universal Life and this revelation will fill the heart with Universal Love. The realisation of universal love is the only practicable ideal of Universal Religion. Any other ideal is bound to end in failure. Universal religion in the sense of having the same form of worship and prayer, or of regarding the same personage as our only saviour, or of having the same conception of the Deity, or

of having the same system or creed, is bound to be for ever a mere dream. But we have first to understand what religion means, what is its origin, its object, its practical significance, and ultimate goal before we can discuss the ideal of a Universal Religion.

Before we begin to discuss what religion is, it may not be unprofitable to consider what it is not, so that the ground may be cleared of all extraneous elements and the scope of enquiry may be confined within its proper limits. This process of elimination will be found to be beneficial, for the true province and function of religion has become obscured by its being mixed up with extraneous elements which have grown around it from time immemorial and have obstructed the outflowing of the ideals of true religion. Before trying to determine what religion is, it is necessary to refer to the gross misconceptions that now prevail in regard to its scope and significance.

Religion is regarded as a particular de-

partment of human activity like reading, writing, singing, carpentry, or painting. A particular day has to be set apart for it or a particular hour every day; we need not bother about it at other times. For instance the Christians set apart the Sabbath for religion. They go to the church on that day and think that they need not think of religion on other days. This misconception is shared by almost all the religions of the world. There is no religion which has not caught the infection; and this erroneous view of religion has been productive of consequences most baneful to the growth of true religion. Religion is not one of the concerns of life. It is the primary end of existence and all other concerns must subserve that primary end. Religion is not only the science of life but the art of right living. There are different departments of human activity. When you are engaged in one of them, you cannot think of the rest. When you are engaged in writing, you can't attend to gardening. When you are going

out on a walk, you can't attend to cooking. Hence you set apart a separate time for each avocation. But religion is not a special avocation to be attended to at a particular time and neglected on other occasions. Religion is concerned with the object of your existence. Religion aims to discover the ultimate destiny of man and the way to its attainment. All other avocations of life are for a temporary purpose. We may attend to one business to get on and another to get honour. Thus each avocation has a temporary object in view and it may be given up after the object aimed at is secured. But religion does not belong to this category. It is a false view of religion to suppose that it is enough that you set apart a particular day or a particular hour for the worship of God. These questions relating to God, prayer, and worship will have to be discussed more fully later on. It is enough now to add that religion being the art of right living, that is to say, the chief function of religion being to teach

you how to live in such a manner as to realise your ultimate destiny, there can be no moment of your life when you can neglect the dictates of true religion. All other avocations are intended only to enable you to live. True religion teaches you how to live well. True religion enables you to perceive and to realise the goal of your life. Hence your whole life should be consecrated to the service of religion. You should be ready to discard any avocation contrary to the dictates of religion. True religion does not ask you to starve. It teaches you how to keep your body and soul together without detriment to your pilgrimage to the place of peace. True religion does not ask you to suffer or be miserable. "To be or not to be",—that is *not* the question. "How to be," is the real question. It is the question of questions. On the other hand Religion teaches you how to live in such a manner as to avoid immediate unhappiness with the prospect of attaining supreme bliss in the near future. It is not

contrary to the dictates of true religion to take interest in worldly concerns. True religion does not ask you to discard the work-a-day world. You may take part in all the activities of life. You may take interest in all the departments of human activity. But true religion teaches you how to fight the battle of life without for a moment losing sight of your ultimate destiny or being led astray from the path leading to your ultimate goal. True religion makes no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. It is all the same whether you are a king on the throne or a scavenger in the street. It looks upon life as a pilgrimage of the soul to the place of peace. In whatever station you may be placed, to whatever profession you may belong, true religion teaches you how to discharge the duties of your life without detriment to your ultimate destiny as man. True religion is not concerned with kings or dukes, viceroys or governors, collectors or

tahsildars, professors or students, clerks or menial servants, merchants or pleaders. True religion is mainly concerned with man as man and his ultimate destiny and the way to its attainment. It is chiefly concerned with the primary end of existence. The distinction between a good man and a bad man is the only distinction between men known to true religion. If you are a king, true religion will teach you how to discharge the duties of kingship without falling into the pitfalls of sensual indulgence on the one hand or those of pride and arrogance on the other, to enjoy immediate peace and happiness that very few kings could boast of and to safely reach the goal of supreme bliss which will be yours for evermore. True religion teaches us how to get over the trials and troubles of life and enjoy peace and happiness here and now and for evermore. True religion is not a thing to be set apart for a separate day or hour but permeates your whole life and pervades every

minute of your existence. There is not a moment when you can afford to be free from it. Religion is the only means of reconciling the apparently conflicting elements of life, which, when attuned to the ideal of religion lose their discordance and conduce to the enhancement of the general harmony of life. Religion is like the string which penetrates a garland of flowers and which by placing flowers of different shapes and colours, each in its place, not only unifies them into a beautiful garland but enhances the utility and beauty of each separate flower. Humanity consists of different nations and different individuals of an endless variety of intellectual grades, and of different types of taste and temperament. These differences do not in the least confound or confuse true religion. It is true religion alone that can help you to enjoy the beauty of creation. Religion looks upon the whole humanity as an organic whole in which every individual has his proper

place, in which every individual is great in his own place, in which the king on his throne is no better than the scavenger in the street, for both are equally necessary for the common good of the whole organism. The place occupied by each individual for the time being is in accordance with his physical and intellectual equipment. The external accident of birth or position does not entail any distinction of a spiritual nature. The king and the scavenger are both spiritually equal in the eye of God provided they both discharge satisfactorily the duties attaching to their respective stations. Spiritual greatness is not affected by the external circumstances of birth and position. The Brahmin is by profession a teacher and the Sudra a servant. Both are spiritually equal in the eye of religion. The Brahmin is no nearer to heaven than the Sudra. Dhamavyādha was a butcher by profession. But he had very few spiritual superiors even among the Brahmins. Religion harmonises the apparent

contradictions and inconsistencies of life. You are a bachelor and do not want to marry; then you have only to turn to Hanuman and Bhishma for inspiration and guidance. You are a king and are worried with the duties and responsibilities of kingship. Sri Rama, the ideal king, will come to your rescue, or the story of Janaka will provide you with the necessary equipment. Thus to whatever station you may belong, religion will never forsake you but will place before you ideals for your inspiration and guidance, ideals which will not only give you immediate peace and happiness but will gradually lead you, as it were, by the hand to the haven of supreme bliss.

I was talking to a friend of mine the other day. In the course of our conversation on several topics I referred to the general religious indifference that characterises modern thought. He suddenly retorted thus :—“Do not talk to me of religion till I am at least fifty. I have no time for religion

now. I can spare no time for the affairs of the other world, till I am quite free from the worries of this world. I shall have ample leisure to think of God and religion after I retire from public life." What a gross misconception? A misconception doubly misconceived! It is erroneous to hold that religion is exclusively concerned with the world to come. Even assuming it were so, it would still be none the less unwise to postpone it till the declining age; for there is no guarantee that we shall be alive the next moment. We may be called away at any time; and we should be ready to respond to the summons however sudden it may be. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be." We hold that our life is merely temporary and that the world to come is our permanent abode and that the pleasures of this world are merely transitory compared with the permanent bliss of paradise. Then we should be ever ready to quit this world of woe. It bespeaks short-sightedness to

postpone all thought about religion till a period when we shall have nothing better to do, and shall be unfit for even the ordinary duties of life. This misconception arises from the fact that religious belief is a belief in which we do not believe. Belief in God is a belief in which we do not believe. This may sound paradoxical; but it is none the less true. There is not one of us who believes in the existence of God in the same sense that he believes in the existence of a tangible object. It is the fashion of the day to speak about God. It is the fashion to condemn atheism and to declare oneself strongly in favour of theism. But does any one of us feel the presence of God in the same sense that we feel the existence of an object that can be perceived with the senses or inferred by the understanding? He who really feels the presence of God will not sin in secret. If belief in God were a true belief, there would be no falsehood in the world. A liar fears man but does not fear God. He does not

fear God because he is not sure of His presence. Most of those who thus talk of God are mere hypocrites. There may be honourable exceptions; but they are very rarely met with. Most men lie when they say that they believe in God. Most men cling to religion through sheer force of habit. The religion of most men is mere hypocrisy. It is put on as a mere cloak. It is a dead form without the true spirit. Man clings to it in the same way that we are unable to get rid of many things to which we are accustomed. The religion of most men is the result not of earnest thought or settled conviction but of thoughtless imitation. It is no wonder then that most men are indifferent to it and a large majority do not think of it till old age. True religion looks upon life as one unbroken and continuous whole. Just as manhood grows out of infancy and old age out of manhood, so our future life is no less a continuance of the present than the present is of the past. Past, present, and future consti-

tute an unbroken continuity. Just as our present life is determined by our conduct in the past, and our manhood is determined by our condition in childhood, so the future is but the outgrowth of the past. Our future is in our own hands. Consciously or unconsciously we shape our own future life. It is a misnomer to suppose that religion relates exclusively to our life in the world to come and that happiness in the next world entails misery here down below. It is a religious misconception to suppose that man is destined to be miserable in this world. It is a sacrilege to hold that our life here is bound to be miserable. It bespeaks ingratitude to Providence. It springs from ignorance of the untimate destiny of man. God has made man happy but he is every where miserable. What is worse he believes that he is destined to be miserable in this life and has to look forward to ~~to~~-futurity for compensation and comfort. The doctrine that human life is a sea of misery and that this world

is a scene of sin and woe and that man is naturally a sinner seems to be a device of the priestcraft invented with the countenance and co-operation of the state to keep the toiling millions in a perpetual state of slavish subjection and contented misery. The misery of man is due to his own wickedness, and not to any inherent defect of his own constitution or of the constitution of the world around him. The more we contemplate on the blessings showered on man by the Beneficent Providence, blessings designed to satisfy his varied demands, physical, intellectual and spiritual, the more we contemplate on the manifold bounty of Providence in constantly cooking the most delicious dishes of an endless variety of taste and nutriment to appease the hunger of man in the form of fruits, roots, nuts, and other vegetables of the most varied kinds, the manifold beauty of natural scenery to afford him intellectual pleasure by satisfying his aesthetic sense, and the sublime spectacle

of the illimitable ocean and the heavens to inspire him with the sentiment of religion by turning the mind inward to scrutinize the mysteries of the soul, the more we contemplate on the blessings of creation severally and collectively, the more are we overwhelmed with a feeling of disgust and detestation at the shocking spectacle of millions of human beings sunk in the depths of sin and misery, degradation and despair. Ninety per cent of mankind half-starved, half-naked, half-alive, in this world of plenty, in this Garden of Eden, in this Earthly Paradise! This is an explicable mystery! This is the greatest of all wonders! The question does not seem to have engaged the serious attention of publicists; for the precious doctrine that man is destined to be miserable in this world seems to be deeply implanted in the hearts of both the high and the low. No man can be completely happy. This life is not designed for our happiness. This view is confirmed by actual facts. The poor suffer

from want; the rich suffer from superfluity. If poverty has its hardships, wealth has its worries. The poor die of overwork, the rich die of boredom. The poor have their hardships, the rich have their ambitions. The poor die of starvation, the rich of indigestion. Both are equally miserable. The poor envy the rich, the rich envy each other. Both seek relief in self-forgetfulness with the aid of alcohol. The poor resort to the tavern, the rich to the gambling house. Excitement is mistaken for happiness. Appearance for reality. No man is happy. No man really lives but drags a weary existence interrupted by intervals of excitement. Thus the doctrine that man is destined to be miserable in this world, though false and pernicious, though inconsistent with a righteous conception of God as an embodiment of infinite love, is nevertheless borne out by facts as they exist in the present state of man, though brought on by the selfishness of the classes and the slavery of the masses engendered by the arro-

gance of the capitalists facilitated by the ignorance of the labourer. The present deplorable state of humanity has been mainly brought about by a false view of religion, wielded as a weapon by an unscrupulous priest craft in conjunction with the state to further the private ends of the classes by perpetuating the slavery of the masses. It is religion alone that can remedy the evil. It is idle to deny altogether the existence of the element of evil in the world. It is a metaphysical necessity. Good and Evil are dual concepts. The one cannot be conceived without the other. But the evil element inherent in the very nature of creation, and which is a metaphysical and moral necessity and therefore inevitable and ineradicable, is designed by Providence to act as a set off against and enhance the value of the blessings with which the world abounds. The ineradicable evil is bound to be infinitesimally small compared with its present huge Himalayan dimensions. Ninetynine per cent.

of the existing evil is engendered by the wickedness, immorality, and selfishness of the Powers-That-Be. It will melt away like the mist before the dawn if the masses awake and realise their strength. The power is there; the material is available. It needs organisation. A message of hope and love is the need of the hour. It is only true religion that can undo the havoc wrought by false religion. True religion is founded on a righteous conception of God, as an embodiment of infinite love. Such a God can never be vindictive. Human life is governed by eternal and unalterable laws. True religion is based on a perception of the laws of human life and human evolution. It is impossible to transgress a law and escape the penalty. The law of causation can never be violated. We cannot escape reaping the fruit of our action. Man is his own star. Man is a Providence unto himself. The punishment of sin is rather internal and immediate than external and remote. Man is degraded by

every low act that he does. He is exalted by each noble thought. Man shrinks every time he stoops to a mean act. Every offence stands self-condemned before it meets with public condemnation or legal conviction. The most dangerous verdict to be feared emanates from the inner machinery of justice. Thus there are certain eternal laws governing human life. True religion takes cognizance of these laws. Love, charity, sympathy, courage, honesty, truthfulness,—these qualities must grow from within and cannot be borrowed from without. They constitute the fundamental laws of human life. I must love man, not to please others, not to please even God, nor in expectation of any external reward but it is the law of my life. It is the law of my growth. Hatred and ill-will obstruct the expansion of my heart. They stunt the development of my soul. I love because it is the law of my life. I am glad because it facilitates my advancement. Sadness is opposed to the true nature of man.

It is a disease of the human heart. All good qualities, all righteous aspirations conduce to the development of the higher self and all bad qualities obstruct the outflowing of the divine in man. A hungry man asks for food. The pleasure of giving him food, appeasing his appetite, and enjoying the pleasure of relieving his pain and making him happy is happiness of the divinest description. It is in accordance with the law of spiritual development. True religion always emphasizes the importance of fulfilling these laws; but the ignorant man thinks that he gains nothing but loses much by charity, hospitality, and similar beneficence. Mirth conduces to health more than medicine. Fear is one of the most potent causes of sickness. Thus virtue is the law of our growth; and vice obstructs it. The realisation of this principle is the bed-rock of true religion. Thus true religion is bound to make us happy here and now. It is false religion that preaches that man is destined to be miserable

here and religion will make him happy in the world to come. Every one who realises this aspect of religion will at once understand how unwise it is to postpone the practice of religion to a period when you will be free from the worry of the work-a-day world. It is true religion alone that will teach you how to get over the worries of life. It is true religion alone that will enable you to live aright. It is true religion alone that will teach you how to enjoy the blessings of life, how to appreciate the beauties of the creation, and how to glorify the creator who in his infinite love has made abundant provision for your delectation, physical, intellectual and spiritual.

The practical utility of Religion has been largely diminished by its being thoughtlessly mixed up with much that is mystical, mythical, supernatural, so that a large mass of religious literature is beyond the comprehension of the average man and a considerable portion of the so-called reli-

gious teaching is unintelligible to the man in the street. The priest has ever been loath to reveal the secrets of religion to the common people. This was why there was much opposition to translating the Bible into the languages of the common people. This is why the priest even to-day is bent upon conducting prayer and worship in a classical tongue. This practice is based on the unrighteous ambition of the priestcraft to trade upon the ignorance of the common people. The object of religion is to uplift the downtrodden humanity. Man is sunk low in the depths of sin and misery. True religion seeks to exalt and elevate him to the lofty pedestal of divinity. Man is inherently divine. He is made in the image of God. The individual soul is a ray of the Universal Spirit. The future of man is fraught with immense possibility. Man is potentially divine. In his ignorance he knows not his divine origin. In his arrogance he has forgotten his kinship with the Deity. It is true

religion that can call forth his dormant faculties. True religion has no secrets to conceal. True religion can boast of no occultism. There are no essoteric sections in the realms of true religion. The doctrines of true religion are too simple and plain to need special initiation or to necessitate blind acceptance. There is too much work for the religious propagandist in the domain of the simplest, plainest, and most easily intelligible doctrines of true religion to allow him to dwell upon its mystic, supernatural, and occult aspects. Religion being the art of right living has missed its goal and is groping in the dark by laying too much stress upon the past and future worlds, and upon the metaphysical intangible aspects of life to the exclusion of more important and useful questions relating to the more tangible and more easily comprehensible aspects of the present life. How to live aright is the problem of religion. Hence true religion is both a science and an art.

It is the true science of life and the art of right living. It is therefore necessary that we should consider life as it is irrespective of what will become of us after death or what we were before the commencement of this life. Such questions will simply lead to vain discussion and idle argumentation. Religion is primarily concerned with our present life. It ought to primarily solve the problem how to transform this world which is now a hell of misery into a heaven of supreme bliss. True religion is mainly concerned with the hard facts of the present life and not with the imaginary problems relating to past and future lives. Life before death is of far greater importance than life after death. Life before death is an admitted and undisputed fact. Life after death is still shrouded in mystery. It is neither possible nor is it very necessary for the purpose of true religion to solve problems relating to the worlds that lie both before and after our present life

in this world. The tangible, and indubitable facts of our present life constitute the proper subject-matter of true religion. Religion has fallen into disrepute and become unpopular owing to fruitless excursions into the imaginary realms of abstract discussions. There is ample work for religion to accomplish in the concrete, real, and tangible realm of the work-a-day world. Thus alone can religion vindicate itself. Thus alone can religion make amends for past neglect. Man is born to be happy. He is heir to the whole creation. He is surrounded by an ever-growing variety of wonderful objects that invite every one of his faculties to enjoy, to appreciate and to admire and that bring home to him in unmistakable and clear though inarticulate tones the August Presence of All-loving Providence. Nevertheless man is unhappy. What has occasioned this strange metamorphosis? What are the true causes of human misery? Man is feeling and enjoying the

infinite bounty of Providence. Is it not an inexplicable mystery that man should still be unhappy? Does it not bespeak ingratitude to God? The worst of it is that the majority of men are grovelling in sin and misery. To diagnose the causes of this deplorable disease and to discover and adopt the means of eradicating it is the proper function of true religion. Religion has hitherto evaded the problem by propounding false theories and preaching the most unwholesome pernicious doctrine that man is destined to be miserable in this world and that each man should rest content with his lot and resign himself into the hands of Providence looking forward to the world to come for compensation and comfort. A strange theory of life! The most baneful doctrine of false religion! Man, the favourite child of God, the crowning glory of creation, man made not only in the image of God but out of His very substance, this temple of God, this microcosm of Provi-

dence, this heir to the infinite blessings of creation, destined to starve in the midst of plenty! Destined to be miserable in this earthly Paradise! A more pernicious theory inconceivable! A more detestable doctrine unthinkable! To lay bare the falsity of this baneful theory, and to present it to mankind in all its naked ugliness is the most glorious task to be accomplished by true religion. True religion does not indulge in vain controversy or idle argumentation. True religion has no time to waste on questions of purely academic interest, questions which are concerned with airy nothings, and therefore unintelligible and uninteresting to the majority of mankind, questions which it is neither possible nor profitable to satisfactorily solve. The true province of religion is confined to the real, tangible, and undisputed facts of human life. Thus alone can religion become a powerful instrument of human progress. Thus alone can religion lead humanity forward to the Place of Peace.

Another defect of modern religious thought is that it is largely mixed up with philosophy and, what is worse, philosophy is often mistaken for religion. Religion is nothing if it is not practical. True Religion is synonymous with practical life. The gradual unfoldment of the divine in man is the goal of true Religion. This ideal can never be realised by merely thinking or talking but by living Religion. The problem of philosophy is the discovery of Truth. If Truth cannot be found out in this generation or even in this century, the philosopher can afford to wait; but the religionist cannot afford to wait in this manner. Religion being mainly concerned with practical life, the religionist cannot afford to postpone his life till after the problem is completely solved. Right living is both the means and the end of the solution of the religious problem. Practice must remedy the defects of the theory. Man must try to live according to the highest ideal of

religion within his reach. The realisation of one ideal will bring into view the next above it. Thus religious life is a series of realisations. If the ideal be found deficient, practice will make it perfect. Life will knock it to proper shape. Consequently religion is mainly concerned with questions of immediate importance to our actual life. Religion has now dwindled into a mockery because its practical importance and utility has been neglected. While religion ought to be chiefly concerned with questions of practical importance to actual life, questions relating to the tangible, intelligible, and real matters affecting the actual life of the work-a-day world, the admixture of philosophy has introduced into it problems metaphysical and supernatural, problems that are not of immediate importance to actual life problems that give room to diversity of views and that are not only unintelligible to the majority of men but constitute the battleground of bitter controversy. The introduc-

tion of philosophy into religion marks the beginning of religious degeneration. Religion began to lose its hold on the popular mind the moment it had become incapable of producing tangible results. Philosophy has raised it far beyond the pale of actual life; far beyond the level of the average man. The introduction of philosophy into religion is mainly responsible for the religious indifference of the modern age. Hence religion will miss its goal and can never influence the practical life of man, unless it is clearly distinguished from philosophy so that the province of religion may be completely purged of philosophic controversy and philosophic jargon and scrupulously safeguarded against the intrusion of philosophic riddles. True religion is mainly concerned with the simple, plain, and easily intelligible questions of practical life. As such it ought to be free from all controversial topics. It affords little scope for difference of opinion, for the simple, real, and tangible facts of life constitute its sub-

ject-matter. It should therefore have been a bond of union between man and man, but philosophy has made it a weapon of discord. It is true that life cannot be divided into water-tight compartments. It is true that life is one indivisible integral composite whole. It is true that a man's views on one aspect of life cannot but to some extent colour and modify his views on other questions. It is true that our views on religion, politics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology and all the vital concerns of life are interdependent and inter-related and their mutual influence is inevitable. Although in one sense, and that the highest, deepest and widest sense, religion comprehends philosophy and science and it is impossible to avoid their inter-relation and mutual influence, whereby philosophy and science become the handmaids of religion religion and philosophic and scientific views exercise most potent influence over one's religious tendencies, yet for the purpose of scientific accuracy and to avoid confusion of

thought and to facilitate a clear understanding of the subject, it is necessary that their respective provinces should be clearly marked and distinguished from each other.

Religion is founded on faith; Philosophy on reason. Faith originally meant blind belief; for men were in the beginning asked to believe without question the dogmas of religion. But this is not the sense in which the term *faith* is understood now. Its meaning has gradually changed with the evolution of religious thought. It is now understood in the sense of *intuitive perception* of the Divine. It is the response of the heart to Divine Presence. It is the carrying of child-like impressionability into the era of manhood. This meaning of *faith* has been the outcome of the later development of religious thought in response to the onslaughts of rationalism against the autocracy of religious dogmatism. With all these definitions the meaning of the term *faith* is far from clear. They proceed from an attempt

to conceal the real meaning of *Faith*, viz., *Blind belief*; for most of the religions have found it impossible to get rid of *dogmatism*; for they have to begin with the postulate of the existence of God. It is Buddhism alone that could overcome the difficulty. Buddha denounced all discussion about God. Nor did he enjoin blind belief. He never asked any one to believe what he did not himself experience. Buddha alone of all religious teachers fully respected the dignity of man and his independence of judgment. He declared "Do not believe anything simply because it is contained in the Vedas, or because your ancestors believed it or because the priest believes it or some others whom you respect believe it. Do not believe anything till you have found it to be true in your own experience." Vexed with the endless insincere controversies about God in which the learned logicians indulged not to find out Truth but to exhibit their intellectual keenness, he declared, "What matters it

whether God exists or not. Even God cannot save you unless you perform good *Karma*. It is your *karma* alone that can save you. You reap only what you sow, neither more nor less. Do therefore good *kama*. Be of good character. Practise ahimsa. Suppose you want to go a particular place. What do you do? You will find out the road to it. Similarly you want to get free from the trammels of rebirth. You want to go to the place of eternal peace. You want to attain eternal bliss. There is a path leading to it, viz, the path of good *karma*. Follow that path and you will attain freedom." This is the essential teaching of Lord Buddha. It is based on the realisation of the dignity of human soul. It is slavery to pay homage except to one's own reason. Dogmatism still clings to every other religion except Buddhism. It may be regarded as harmless so long as it does not extend beyond the postulation of the of the Supreme Deity. "God" says Dean Inge, "is the beginning of Religion and the

end of Philosophy". But philosophy seeks to plod its ways to Truth with the weapon of reason. Religion begins where philosophy ends.

The heart is the province of religion; the intellect is the weapon of philosophy. Religion is rather emotional than rational philosophy is mainly rational. This does not imply that reason has to be discarded in religious life. The purification of the heart is indispensable to true religious life. Intellectual excellence is enough for philosophic investigation. Religion is practical, philosophy theoretical. It has been the neglect of the practical importance of religion that is the main cause of religious degeneration. These distinctions between religion and philosophy are of supreme importance to the cause of True religion in general and to Hinduism or Vedic religion in particular. The cause of religion has bitterly suffered in India, and religion has now dwindled into a deplorable state of utter chaos owing to

the incessant inroads of philosophic discussion into the practical domain of religious life and Hinduism which ought to be a strong bond of union at least among the Hindus has been split up into countless sects and sub-sects, each claiming to be the sole custodian and privileged exponent of Vedic truth, and resenting and denouncing the claims of all the rest. This deplorable state of Hinduism is due to the ignorance of the primary distinction between religion and philosophy and to the consequent habit of mistaking philosophy for religion owing to the decay of religious thought and the degeneracy of religious life. As a religion, Hinduism is one and undivided. The different sects of Hinduism have been the outcome of philosophic differences, which are of way little importance to the practice of religion. Every one, who claims to be called a Hindu, believes in the divinity of the Vedas, in the importance of *karma* as a means to physical purification, in the avatars of Vishnu, as portrayed in the Puranas and

hinted in the Bhagavatgita, in the doctrine of Transmigration, in the religious necessity and the economic efficiency of the caste system, in the proper performance of the duties of the four Ashramas as successive stages in the path of Self-Realisation, and in Yoga as the path to supreme bliss. When there are so many principles common to Hinduism, principles which are of immediate importance to the practice of religion, does it not look ridiculous, does it not bespeak intellectual decay and moral degradation to build an edifice of hatred and antagonism on such slender foundations as fine-drawn distinctions and hair-splitting argumentation? The differences that divide the subsets of Hinduism are really philosophical and not religious. They are merely intellectual and of academic interest and not of any practical significance. Such differences prevail in every religion and in every country. For example, in the West there are idealists, rationalists, nominalists and realists, philo-

sophers of several schools of thought, professing the same religion of Christianity and drinking at the same spiritual fountain. Such differences existed even among the Ancient Rishis of India. But they knew the trivial nature of their controversy and their differences did not give birth to hatred and antagonism. The root cause of the hatred between the different sects of Hinduism is ignorance of the true nature of the underlying differences. When the truth is thus shrouded in darkness, the mole hill is exaggerated into a mountain. Hence the true remedy is religious knowledge and culture. The study of religious scriptures and the practice of true religion, with a special emphasis on the importance of religious life, as distinguished from idle and unprofitable philosophic controversy, lays the foundation for religious unity and national solidarity. The unity of Hinduism and Hindu nationality will constitute a valuable asset for the general progress of Universal Humanity.

Various other misconceptions in regard to religion have come into being, grown in power, and begun to reign supreme owing to the ignorance of the masses and the arrogance, owing to the thoughtlessness of the former selfishness of the latter, resulting in the tyranny of the priestcraft and the slavery of the common people and involving both in a wretched plight of unspeakable misery, so that, unless the masses open their eyes and realise the true scope and practical significance of religion and purify it from the noxious elements that have grown around it from time immemorial and the message of true religion is dinned into the ears of the modern man, the whole mankind will be driven along the torrent of sin and misery into the woeful pit of bottomless perdition. Religion is mainly the private concern of each individual. It is the path that man should adopt for gaining eternal freedom. Properly speaking there are as many religions in the world as there are thoughtful men. Each

thinker should chalk out for himself the path of discipleship. It is the look-out of each individual to live in such a manner as to realise his religious ideal. Religion should therefore be confined to the private life of each individual. Religious preaching is indispensable. Religious discussion with a view to discover truth and profit by each other's experience facilitates religious advancement. But religious institutions as constituted at present are rather a hindrance than a help to true religious life. Worship and prayer ought to be left to each individual's private life. Worship and prayer can best be performed in solitude in a private room set apart for the purpose. There should be public places of religious propadanda. A public place of religious worship is a contradiction in terms. Worship ought to be in private. Solitude and meditation are indispensable to true worship. There may be a public place of worship to a houseless stranger, just as there is a Dharmasala for the

accommodation of houseless foreigners. A temple is good so long as it is meant for religious preaching. A temple is a hindrance to true religion as at present constituted. Religious preaching has become a scarcity in a temple. As true worship of God is impossible in a public place, every temple may be described as the abode of Satan. The temple authorities are the worshippers of Mammon. The worshipper in the temple is a disciple of Moloch. Thus in every modern temple Satan reigns supreme.

Then again the symbolism of religion is mistaken for its true substance; the form is mistaken for the spirit; the non-essentials are identified with the essentials of religion. The characteristics of all the great religions of the world have thus been put in a nutshell :—

“In essentials unity

In non-essentials diversity

In all things charity.”

The populace can never completely get

rid of external symbols. Even the cultured find it an uphill work. Symbolism is indispensable to religious practice; but it will be a hindrance to religious growth, as it has grown to be at present, if its significance is lost sight of and if it is identified with the essential spirit of religion. Symbolism is the external form of religion. The spirit of true religion is the same; the forms may be different; the forms are bound to be different. Symbolism is like the external clothing of the spirit of religion. Do you hate your friend for putting on a different kind of dress from your own? It enhances the beauty of true religion that it appears in different garbs in different places. Symbols are the non-essentials of religion. They are nevertheless indispensable. No religion can do without them. But their diversity need cause no hatred or antagonism. It is now the root-cause of religious enmity because their true nature is misunderstood and they are wrongly identified with the true spirit of religion.

The essentials of religion having been forgotten, the paramount importance of love as the corner-stone of religious life having been lost sight of, the dry bones of religion are adhered to as its essential spirit and a diabolic spirit of hatred and intolerance has usurped the place of love, sympathy, tolerance, and good-will. But this need be no cause for despair; for the growth of religious life has always kept pace with the growth of human evolution. The purest form of religion has never been within the reach of any community as a community. There might have been individuals in every Community who attained to a high degree of spiritual development. But it has not yet been the common property of a whole community. This has been due to the inherent defect of the present stage of human evolution. Man has started from the state of the savage and is gradually advancing to the state of the sage. Every country can boast of individuals in every age who could forestall the future, who have

been described to be far in advance of their age, and who could realise in their practical life ideals which are bound to remain for a long time to come confined merely to realm of dreamland. But mankind as a whole has emerged from the stage of the savage and is groping its way to the ideal of the sage. The greatest hindrance to human progress emanates from the perversity of man. Love of power is the only obstacle to true progress. Love of domination over our fellowmen has delayed the true progress of mankind. The few who want to rise majestic on the ashes of their fellowmen have abused their natural gifts for their own self-aggrandizement by perpetuating the slavery of the vast majority of mankind; and religion which ought to be the means of securing freedom and happiness has become in the hands of the selfish few an instrument for forging the fetters of their fellowmen. But the select few, who possess some natural advantages over their fellowmen, and abuse them for the

oppression of those whose destinies have been entrusted by Providence to their care and who might have attained eternal glory if they had used their gifts for the elevation of the depressed classes, these perverted men know not that they are digging their own grave every time they oppress their helpless fellowmen. They know not that humanity constitutes one solid sympathetic organism. They know not that humanity must rise or fall together. They know not how every sin that they commit carries with it its own penalty; they know not they are immediately degraded by every evil thought that they think and every evil act that they do. The punishment of evil is inevitable and immediate. It is implied in the very constitution of our nature. Just as over-eating causes indigestion, fear induces disease, and sin entails degradation. Virtue need not wait for reward from without. Man is immediately exalted by virtue and degraded by vice. Man is inherently virtuous. Man is born good; but circum-

stances may make him wicked. Vice is a disease of the human heart. A pure heart is filled with noble instincts. It needs no effort to be good. It needs no special attempt to speak Truth. Truth, love, charity, and goodness, these are natural to man. It needs an effort to tell a lie; a lie stands self-condemned. Hence the perversity and tyranny of the select few who cling to their wealth power, and rank with the same sickly and irresistible craving as the drunkard clings to his evil habit, will hurl them headlong into an abyss of irretrievable ruin, unless they abandon their course of wickedness and use their natural gifts for the elevation of the depressed classes and the common redemption of the whole mankind. Man starts from the state of the savage and strives to develop into a sage. The sage and the savage are outwardly alike; both cling to the state of nature; but what a world of internal difference! The savage is ignorant, the sage is wise. The savage is influenced by his

circumstances, but the sage uses them to his advantage. The sage has the whole cycle of evolution at his back, whereas it stretches infinite before the savage. The savage is yet to taste the bitter fruit of civilization, is yet to face and overcome the trials and temptations of artificial vanity whereas the sage is seated firm on the bed-rock of natural state, having realised the empty glamour of artificial enjoyment. The savage defies natural phenomena through ignorance and fear whereas the sage realises the presence of the Universal Lord in every atom of manifested universe. The savage is naked owing to ignorance and want; the nakedness of the sage is due to his wisdom and scorn of everything artificial. The savage worships God through fear; but the sage worships through love. The human evolution is from the state of the savage to that of the Sage. Man is gradually growing back to the state of nature. He has fallen from that state through ignorance. He has abandoned the

ideal state of nature owing to his abuse of the gift of reason. He has been endowed with Free-will so that he may develop into a God. He has abused it and the result is that he has fallen even below the level of brutes. He has been gifted with Free-will so that he may appreciate the ways and works of God and glorify the Supreme Deity but in his ignorance and arrogance he thought that he could live better than God has made him, that he could live better than the lower animals that are subject to uncontrollable instincts, and has begun to abuse the gift of reason to minister to his physical wants, so that he has made himself more unhealthy, more unhappy and more brutal than brutes. Not content with the bounty of nature he has begun to live upon artificial substitutes, as if he could make himself a better animal than God has made him and the result is that he is physically far worse than the lowest of lower animals. But this experience is an indispensable prerequisite to development in-

to a sage. He thought himself wiser than his Maker; and it is high time he saw his error. We are therefore travelling back to the state of nature. We are retracing our steps to the Garden of Eden. The consummation of the progress of human evolution will synchronise with the rehabilitation of the whole mankind in the Garden of Eden. This Earth itself will be suddenly transformed into the Garden of Eden if man were to abandon his evil ways and cease for ever his work of destruction. Thus it will be clear that we are gradually advancing to our goal. True religion will accelerate our pace. True religion will hasten our pilgrimage. I am not of those that believe that religion was in the past better than it is now. History tells a different story. The history of religion is full of the most shocking instances of religious intolerance, and persecution of the most atrocious description. The evolution of the conception of God will confirm the view that we have gradually emerged from the crudest

forms of religion and are struggling our way onward to Truth and Righteousness.

Family, society, state, and religion constitute the quadruple wheel of the chariot of civilization. Although the sentiment of religion is inborn in man, the systematization of religion as a social institution took place chronologically as the last of this series. Nevertheless it is the foremost wheel of our progress and adds strength and stability not only to the other wheels but to the chariot as a whole. Religion originated in weakness, and grew through wickedness. Civilization itself is looked upon as a disease. Hence the necessity for such a treatise as "civilization. Its cause and cure." But it owes its strength and stability to the fourth wheel Religion. Hence the imperative necessity for True Religion. The purification of Religion and the realisation of True religious ideal will sound the death knell of modern civilization and usher in an era of peace and happiness for the toiling millions. The origin

of Family is in human frailty. Man's excessive desire for sexual indulgence necessitated the Family bondage. Marriage is a fall from the ideal. The instinct of propagation is the strongest instinct in man save that of self-preservation. It is a sacred instinct. Family bondage would never have come into being if the sexual instinct of man had been pure and uncorrupted. Man began to stray away from the pure path of nature, and sensual indulgence and more especially unnatural food corrupted his sexual instinct, and what was designed for propagation was resorted to for pleasure. The restriction of marriage was intended as a safeguard against promiscuous sexual indulgence. But what was intended as a remedy has but served to aggravate the disease. Marriage is thus a fall from the ideal state of natural life. The institution of marriage marks the beginning of human thralldom. It is the commencement of artificial restraint. It is the first lapse from the free atmosphere of

natural state. It is the first fetter in the chain of human slavery. The aid of religion was called in to make the family bondage perfect and perpetual by sanctifying in institution of marriage with a spiritual significance. Thus Satan cooperated with Sin to bring Death into the world of man and all its woe; for bondage is worse than death.

Man's excessive desire for property has entangled him in social bondage. Man is a social being. He is naturally endowed with a healthy social instinct. But social bondage implies the death of true social instinct. The family bondage curbed the freedom of man by the creation of a series of family obligations. These engendered an excessive desire for property. Thus for the sake of self-preservation a number of families were obliged to live together and this was the commencement of communal life. Social life became necessary for self-defence, for defending property against the depredation of the robber. But this was not enough. One

sin leads to a series of sins. One lie necessitates a hundred lies. Similarly one fetter leads to a series of shackles. Family bondage led to social life and social bondage necessitated the political.

When two communities lived side by side they could not live in peace. The stronger community began to oppress the weaker. The weaker had no surety of enjoying the fruit of its labour. Moreover there was disturbance of peace from within as well as from without. Within the same community the strong sometimes oppressed the weak. Thus there was necessity for the protection of person and property, for the maintenance of peace and order against offenders from within as well as from without. This was the commencement of political life. This was the origin of the State. By this time man became enchained in the triple fetter of family, social, and political bondage. But the true character of the triple cord was concealed by being clothed with the glamour

of spiritual significance by the golden hues of religious fetters. The king paid homage to the priest and the priest annointed royalty with divinity. The conjoint authority of the state and the church, sanctified as it was by the sanction of the Supreme Deity, strengthened and stabilized all the other fetters, which the common people were taught to endure without murmur as incidental to human imperfection and inevitable in this world of woe, so that the tyranny of religion has perfected the thralldom of man. We are accustomed to console ourselves with the belief that we have survived the age of slavery. We know not that physical slavery is slavery of the most harmless type. When man subject to physical thralldom, he knew that he was a slave. He was fully aware of his helpless condition. He was not blind to his ignominious state. Man has subsequently fallen victim to worse forms of slavery. The worst form of slavery is that which puts on the garb of freedom, just as our worst enemy

is he who comes to us in the guise of a friend. Man is now a slave without realising his sad plight. Externally he is a victim to the tyranny of capitalism. Internally he is a slave to social and religious tyranny. The test of true religion is the presence of full scope for the development of individual freedom. It is true religion alone that will facilitate the outflowering of the individual conscience. The soul is no respecter of persons. It knows no fear. It is free and eternally free. It knows no compromise, no hypocrisy, no diplomacy. This is the message of True religion.

The existence of God has been an essential postulate of every religion except Buddhism. But man's idea of God has ever been anthropomorphic. Man can never outgrow this conception. Man is imperfect and God is an embodiment of human qualities in a perfect state. Man is strong; God is Almighty. Man has knowledge; God is Omniscient. Thus the evolution of man and

his ideas has also contributed to the evolution of the conception of God. Man has started with the most unrighteous conception of God. Man first found himself in the midst of natural forces which he could neither understand nor control. This induced a feeling of impotency and helplessness. This led to the deification of external phenomena. This induced a fearful worship of God conceived as an embodiment of all the good as well as bad qualities of man in a perfect state. God is angry, God is vindictive. The anger of God has to be appeased by the offering of sacrifices. The power of God is irresistible unlike the power of man. Hence no man can offend God with impunity. This unrighteous conception of God still clings to most religions and characterises the lowest forms of religious worship. The idea of sacrifice is a relic of ancient barbarism. Fear of God is opposed to the ideal of True religion. Just as the Reformation in the west marked an age of Renaissance

and gradually led to the Revolution of political ideas, similarly the growth of political ideal has contributed to the purification of the conception of God. Milton, the great poet, was an independent from the political point of view. It is a wonder why his political independence did not lead to the purification of his religious ideal. It is a wonder how his contempt of external authority in politics did not beget a similar contempt of religious tyranny and spiritual thralldom. This is why his best ideas and sentiments had to be expressed through the mouthpiece of Satan :—

“Is this the region, this the soil, the clime”
Said then the lost Archangel, “this the seat
That we must change for Heaven? This mourn-
ful gloom

For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is Sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best,
Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made
supreme
Above his equals. Farewell happy fields

Where joy for ever dwells. Hail, horrors! hail,
 Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
 Receive thy new possessor, one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.

Here at least
 We shall be free.....”

These lines embody the spontaneous outburst of the true Miltonic spirit of self-assertion and independence, love of freedom, hatred of external authority, and condemnation of the general tendency of authority which proceeds on the assumption that might is right. No less expensive is the following declamation of Belial:—

Suppose he should relent
 And publish grace to all on promise made
 Of new subjection; with what eyes could we
 Stand in his presence humble and receive
 Strict laws imposed, to celebrate his throne
 With warbled hymns, and to his Godhead
 Sing forced Halleluiahs; while he lordly sits
 Our envied sovran, and his altar breathes
 Ambrosial odours and ambrosial flowers,
 Our servile offerings? This must be our task
 In Heaven, this our delight; how wearisome
 Eternity so spent in worship paid
 To whom we hate!.....

Such a conception of God is revolting to the true dignity of the human soul. Just as the only political authority that we can obey without detriment to our self-respect and self-idealisation is the one which is not inconsistent with our political conscience, one which is in accordance with our political ideal, one which is based on a recognition of our political independence, one which is but an external manifestation of our individual will, one in obeying which we impliedly obey the laws of our political life, one which has received the sanction of our approval, one in respecting which we respect our own individual will, one which is not inconsistent with our individual growth and advancement, and one which is but an external symbol of the authority of our higher self, similarly it is opposed to true religion to pay homage to external authority through fear or compulsion; the only external authority recognised by true religion is but an external symbol of our highest religious ideal. Fear of God is

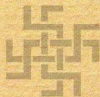
a relic ancient barbarism. Fear makes me a slave, whether of God or of King. God represents the highest ideal of my life. I love God because he is the embodiment of my highest aspirations and noblest ideals. Prayer is baneful even if it be for divine gifts. Prayer is baneful if it be for divine gifts. Prayer is the outpouring of heart-felt love and admiration. I am truthful not because I fear God or Man, but because Truth conduces to my growth. I love humanity because I love myself and because I realise my inseparable unity with entire humanity. Love is the law of my life; hatred obstructs my growth. I love virtue and hate vice, not because virtue gives me a passport to heaven, and vice entails the misery of hell, but virtue expands my heart and enlarges my being whereas vice cripples my life and retards the outflowering of my higher self. Just as the breach of hygienic principles entails the loss of physical health and physical well-being, the breach of the cardinal principles of reli-

gion :—Truthfulness, love, and charity—entails the loss of spiritual health and spiritual strength. True happiness is the goal of true religion. True religion leads to immediate happiness and ultimate bliss. The practice of true religion is founded on the eternal principles of Truth and Love. True religion pays homage to these principles not as symbols of external authority, not through fear of punishment or love of reward, but as the laws of spiritual life which conduce to the spiritual growth and spiritual perfection. Truth and Love constitute the real aspect of True Divinity. Truth and Love are the sword and shield of spiritual life. Truth and Love are the spiritual weapons of the battle of life. Truth and love constitute the twofold wheel of the vehicle of eternal bliss. The God of True religion is an embodiment of Truth, love and beauty. The realisation of such a God is self-realisation. After all, what is self-realisation but the expansion of the individual self

to the full circle of the Universe. What is self-realisation but the realisation of the identity of the individual self with the Universal. Self-realisation is self-annihilation. You realise yourself only when you lose sight of yourself. Self-forgetfulness is self-realisation. The most glorious deeds are inspired in a moment of self-forgetfulness. You realise God when you forget yourself. This is what is meant by the beatitude of saints. It is false religion that promises you freedom through thralldom. True religion gives you immediate freedom and conduces to ultimate bliss. The approval of the individual conscience is the condition precedent to the approbation of society and of God. The punishment of sin is internal and immediate rather than external and remote. This is the lesson suggested by the precepts "Know thyself," "Trust Thyself," and "Obey thyself." This is the spiritual message of all religions. True religion wants you to be true to yourself, true to your

conscience, true to your higher self and true to your true nature. It is true religion alone that can conduce to the realisation of the ideal hinted in the following lines of Wordsworth :—

Serene will be our days and bright
And happy will our nature be
When love is an unerring light
And joy its own security.



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APPENDIX.

Marriage and Religion.

[The following is an extract from an article published by Mr. S. Raghavachari, in the *Bengalee*. The reader will appreciate the relevancy of its republication here.]

The institution of marriage has entailed the family bondage which is tantamount to personal bondage, which in turn paved the way to property bondage. Thus the individual self, with unlimited possibilities for infinite expansion, naturally became circumscribed within the narrow limits of person and property and the ideas of "I" and "My" receiving special emphasis in the regulation of the individual and social life of man have not only divided man against man but have necessitated the demarcation of communal and national interests and created unhealthy competition and unwholesome rivalry in the general life of the whole mankind. Thus the

true progress of man has been impeded, the expansion of his soul obstructed, his intellect crippled, his body dwarfed, and instead of *living* in its true sense, he is dragging a weary existence of alternate intervals of excitement and exhaustion, of ignorance and sin, discontent and misery. He is a constant victim to restlessness and despair. He is oppressed with an overpowering sense of helplessness, a killing sense of despair. What he wants is a message of hope and strength. He has forgotten his divine mission. He has forgotten his destiny. His true vision has been dimmed by selfishness, his ultimate goal lost sight of in the vain and exciting pursuits of the moment. To remind him of his true destiny is the message of True Religion. It is true religion that will teach man how to develop into a God. It is true religion that can make a heaven of earth.

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