

**CHRIST FOR INDIA**



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# CHRIST FOR INDIA

BEING

A PRESENTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN  
MESSAGE TO THE RELIGIOUS  
THOUGHT OF INDIA

BY

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'THE FAITH OF A CHRISTIAN,' 'THE EMPIRE OF CHRIST,' ETC.

To all men I have become all things, in the hope that in every one of these ways I may save some, and I do everything for the sake of the good news, that I may share with my hearers in its benefits —1 COR 1X 22 and 23

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AS A TRIBUTE TO  
THE STRONG FAITH AND STRENUOUS WORK OF  
THE MISSIONARIES TO INDIA  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO  
THE FUTURE APOSTLES OF INDIA  
WHO SHALL POSSESS THE LAND WE HAVE BUT SEEN FROM AFAR  
AND BUILD THE WALLS OF THAT CITY OF GOD  
OF WHICH WE HAVE BUT SEEN THE VISION

THE consideration of any of the problems of Indian missions thus briefly outlined strengthens the conviction that the main thing in India is not the increase of the missionary staff, nor yet the increase of the number of mission stations,—that is to say, the extensive development of missionary organisation,—but far rather is it an intellectual conflict concerning the profoundest speculations of human thought in matters of religion, of sociology, and of knowledge of mankind, a conflict in which Christianity and its representatives must give irrefutable evidence of the presence of the Spirit of might and power.—*A History of Missions in India*, Richter.

We stand on the border of a new age, when great reconstructions in world relations are imminent. . . . In these reconstructions the initiative of the East shall be felt in ways undreamed of by our fathers. The East shall come to its own again, and speak in the councils of the world. Time, the great restorer of postponed inheritances, the great adjuster of equities, shall summon the East, not to the recrudescence of old conflicts, but to new rivalries of the mind and of the spirit. The day of her visitation, the hour of her opportunity, shall come from God. Shall she know that day and be ready for that hour? The answer to that question is bound up in another: Shall the Oriental Consciousness place its sublime qualities at the service of Jesus Christ, and become unto the twentieth century what she was unto the first, a Prophet of the Highest?—*Barrows' Lectures*, 1906, Dr. Cuthbert Hall.

## PREFACE

“INDIA for Christ” is the watchword of the Church’s missionary activity in our great Indian Empire. It is the consummation for which the Indian missionary prays and works, the hope which inspires his early enthusiasm, and the faith which sustains him throughout the heat and burden of the day. “Christ for India,” however, is the watchword which must dominate his thought and shape his methods, if the great task in which he is engaged is to be brought to a successful issue. If the missionary’s work is to result in bringing India to Christ, his thought must begin, continue, and end in bringing Christ to India. This is recognised so far as the vernacular speech of India is concerned, but it is not sufficiently recognised so far as the vernacular thought of India is concerned. There are missionaries who present their message in a fluent and idiomatic vernacular, while their thought is utterly foreign to the audience they

address. There are even a greater number of Indian preachers who, while speaking in their mother tongue, invariably think their message in Western terms and shape their thought after Western patterns. This is to bring a Christ to India Whom the few may doubtless accept, but not a Christ Whom the many will welcome. The Christ is neither Eastern nor Western, it is true, but the apprehension of Him varies in proportion as the mind which apprehends is either the one or the other.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to present the Christian message in such a way that the Hindu mind may at least regard it as not necessarily foreign. The true presentation which is needed can only be made by one whose qualification is natural and not acquired. No one can be more conscious than the author of his defect in qualification, and failure in execution. His only qualification as a Western is a real sympathy with the religious mind of India and a generous appreciation of its religious thought. It is impossible for any Western to stand in the Hindu's place, as his eyes turn towards that wondrous figure of the Christ ; but it is possible to stand by his side and try to direct his gaze in the right direction. It is not possible to do so,

however, so long as one stands in front of him. One must face as he faces if one's directing is to be of any help to him. The Western reader must bear this in mind as he reads this presentation of the Christian message. The correctness of the position taken in the present work must be judged by the measure in which it faces the true Sun of all Christian thought and feeling—the Christ of God.

A good deal of misunderstanding would be avoided if it were only recognised that change of view is always due to change of position, and that change of position is the result, not of individual caprice but, of the thought-movement of the age. To face the Sun in the morning one must turn to the East, and if one would still face the Sun at eventide one must alter one's position and turn to the West. The alteration of position is not due to the whim of the individual, but to the earth-movement to which he has to accommodate himself. The beginning of each age finds some looking for Christ in the West where He was last seen, and others looking for Him in the East where alone He is visible, and the close finds them in the reverse position. The supreme concern is an orthodox position rather than an orthodox view, for the former enables us to see

Him, while the latter may hide Him from our eyes. Christ is doubtless the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, but the great thought-movements of each age slowly, but surely turn the gaze from the East of the morning to the West of the evening. Can we not admit that while the Sun does not move the earth does, and, instead of regretting the necessity of adjusting our position, the rather rejoice that the movement brings the whole earth under a life-giving and life-sustaining influence?

Though the present work is a presentation of Christianity specially addressed to the Hindu mind, it may not be without its message in the West. The reconstruction of religious belief is no less needed in the West, if the West is to be retained in her allegiance to the Christ to Whom she has been won. In that reconstruction of religious belief which the modern mind demands, every type of religious thought has some contribution to offer, which, however small, may yet find a place in the temple which we are always building, but can never hope or even wish to finish.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RECONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

OUR religious beliefs are so hallowed by sacred associations with the past, so intimately connected with the customs and sanctions of society, and so essential for the right conduct of life, that the question of their reconstruction is one of extreme difficulty and delicacy. Such considerations frequently lead us to bear the ills we know and recognise rather than incur the danger and difficulty which we see to be involved in any reconstruction of religious belief. The established order, whether in the realm of belief or conduct, has at least been tested ; has yielded results which, whatever may be their defects, have merits which can be recognised ; whereas to reconstruct is to embark on an unknown voyage of discovery which may end in a catastrophe. Modesty as well as timidity alike urge us to refrain from a task to which we are doubtful of being called, and the accomplishment of which may be beyond our powers. In no country are these considerations

more realised than in India, and in none are the forces of religious conservatism so powerful. All men are more or less conservatives by birth, but the Hindu is a twice-born conservative. The wealth of India's indigenous religious thinking has been so great that, while her exports have been vast, her imports have been almost nil. She has worked up her raw material into various patterns and designs suited to all tastes, and as she has rigidly kept her people in religious isolation from others, the tastes have been as indigenous as the raw material. It is the contact with Christian religious thought which has at last enabled her to perceive that there may be heights and depths in religious thinking which have not yet been scaled or sounded. The modern religious Hindu, therefore, is becoming slowly conscious of some need for the reconstruction of religious belief.

In India at the present day there are thousands of people who continue to live in houses which are utterly beyond repair, totally inadequate for their modern needs, and absolutely insanitary, simply because they have grown accustomed to them and shrink from the task of rebuilding them. They will spend money on useless patching up which would more than suffice for the erection of a modern and suitable residence. They will see their nearest and dearest succumb to disease, entirely due to the insanitary condition of their dwellings; they will suffer untold discomfort

from the wretched hovels in which they persist in living, and yet nothing will induce them to rise up and build houses which shall be homes of comfort and health. It is not with many of these that they cannot afford to rebuild; it is the natural inertia, coupled with old associations, which makes them loth to reconstruct their homes on improved and modern lines. The same thing is true of those religious beliefs which constitute the home of the soul, from the comfort and security of which we draw our inspiration and strength for the tasks which await us in the outer world of active life. Insanitary homes cannot make us strong and healthy workers; hovels cannot shelter us from the storms and tempests of life. When our religious beliefs are hollow and unsound we have no strength for the activities of life. When the home of our soul affords us no refuge from the storm of sorrow and trouble our condition is indeed pitiable. What is true of the individual is true also of the nation and of the race. The nation whose religion is in decay is the nation whose existence is in peril. Politics may usurp the place of religion, but they can never fill its place in national life and well-being. Politics are the channels along which are conveyed the national thought and feeling which await expression, but religion is the river of life which rises in the high places of the soul, and from which all true thought and feeling are derived.

The channels are necessary or the water in the river will run to waste ; they must be well planned or the fields will remain uncultivated ; they must be properly controlled or they will flood a few acres at the expense of the many. The irrigation channel, however, can never take the place of the river, and it can never be higher than the level of the river at its source. All which things are an allegory, the application of which to the present condition of political unrest in India to-day is a tempting subject, but one which is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

The question of the reconstruction of religious belief in India is one which is far more vital to her true development and well-being than is at present realised. India's claim to a foremost place amongst the great nations of the world is based, not upon her contributions to political life but, upon her rich contribution to the religious life of the race. The people of India are essentially a people with a spiritual outlook upon the Universe, a people to whom the things which are seen are recognised as temporal and temporary, while the things which are unseen are alone eternal and permanent. To keep this view prominently before the minds of men ; to insist upon it in the face of all opposition ; to live in the light of it, in spite of the absorption of other peoples in lesser aims ; this is the mission of India to the world, a mission for which she has been specially endowed, and to

which she has been specially called of God. Other interests are not thereby excluded, but if this is abandoned or relegated to a secondary place, then India will lose her special rank amongst the races of the world.

It is because of this exalted conception of the nature of India's task that the necessity for a reconstruction of her religious beliefs needs to be emphasised. A nation may linger on the results of its past achievements, but it can never truly live on them. Capital which is unemployed, however vast in amount, is slowly but surely dissipated. India has been living for centuries on her religious capital, and, immense though that capital was, no one can fail to see that it is yearly becoming more and more inadequate to sustain the religious life of the people. It is this which makes the subject of reconstruction of paramount importance. However averse we may feel to attempting the task; however loth we may be to disturbing the existing order; when the question is one of life or death, we have no alternative but to brace ourselves for the task. This is no piece of special pleading with a view to urging the necessity of an acceptance of Christianity. No doubt Christianity is destined to have an immense influence on the future of religion in India, but it is equally true that Hindu religious thought and feeling will have an immense influence on the future of Christianity. The point, however,

which is here urged is one which must be obvious to the religious man, whether Hindu or Christian, namely, that if India is to be saved from becoming irreligious and unspiritual some reconstruction of religious belief is imperative. ° The best and brightest of India's manhood is finding itself orphaned of its old religious beliefs; and that which has taken place in the case of the few who have been brought into touch with modern thought is slowly but surely making itself felt amongst the masses. This necessity for religious reconstruction is being recognised by many, and the various religious and semi-religious movements in India to-day are all attempts in some form or other to supply the need. The nature of these various attempts, the success or failure with which they have met, are matters of small moment. Their true significance consists in their recognition of the need of the time and the determination to attempt to meet that need. Every one to whom religious life is of supreme value, and particular creeds only of secondary importance, must rejoice in these signs of a quickened religious nature in India, whatever may be his opinion of the value and sufficiency of the attempts which are being made.

It must, however, be confessed that the number of those who thus recognise the need of the time is depressingly small, and that the great majority are either utterly unconscious or totally indifferent.

Amongst these latter the chief place must be assigned to those so-called custodians of religion, the priestly classes. We look in vain throughout the length and breadth of India for a single religious authority who appears to recognise that the long reign of unquestioned ecclesiastical supremacy, demanding a blind obedience, has passed away, and that far more in the religious than in the political sphere the people are demanding their liberty. No one who is at all acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of the masses in India can fail to realise that a slow but real revolution has taken place in the attitude of the masses to organised and official Hinduism. The spread of education and the consequent diffusion of knowledge have created a mental environment in which the old religious ideas are slowly fading away. The ancient religious rites and ceremonies are still more or less perfunctorily performed, but the life has gone out of them. Their utility is being questioned, and the answers which are vouchsafed are far from satisfactory. The very form of the questions betrays a mental attitude which is foreign to that in which the old ideas grew up and developed. Under the old order the masses left all such questions to the religious authorities, whose wisdom was unquestioned and whose authority was implicitly obeyed. The old order, however, has changed, for the people are rapidly coming of age. When the child begins

to ask the why and the wherefore of things it is time to call in the aid of the schoolmaster, that the blind obedience of childhood may give place to the wise self-control of manhood. In the religious life of India the priest will have to give place to the prophet; priestly injunctions will have to be replaced by prophetic instruction, and the chief concern of the religious authorities will have to centre, not on what can be got out of the people but, on what can be got into them. It will be a solemn day of reckoning when the masses begin to ask, as ask they assuredly will, what equivalent they have received for the lavish contributions which they and their ancestors have made for the maintenance of religion in India. Cheques which can only be presented in a future birth are not likely much longer to be accepted as equivalents for the hard cash earned by the sweat and toil incident to this present birth. The time is coming when the people will demand an account of the vast revenues attached to the temples of India which are at present being squandered, while the religious life of the people, for whose nurture and culture this great wealth was given, is perishing of starvation. We hear a great deal, far too much in fact, about the drain on India due to the pensions of retired English civilians, but we hear nothing of that far greater drain due to the sums which are being spent on priests who cannot minister and *gurus* who will not teach. The

pensioner can at least claim that he has served India through the heat and burden of the day, but these religious parasites have nothing but their well-nourished bodies to show for all the contributions they have received and the vast revenue they have expended.

The demand for the reconstruction of religious belief, while emphasised by all these various signs of the times, rests primarily on a changed mental outlook which, it is not too much to say, marks a new era in the world's upward march. This changed mental outlook is not confined to any one country, nor is its influence limited to any one branch of human knowledge. It is universal both as regards its extension and its incidence. Every land is feeling it and every branch of knowledge is being affected by it. There are two chief causes which have produced, or are rapidly producing, this changed mental outlook. The one is the discovery of the great theory of evolution and the other is the realisation of what is called the solidarity of man. It may safely be said that no discovery has had such far-reaching results as those of the evolutionary theory, and it may be safely predicted that the growing realisation of the essential oneness of humanity is destined to revolutionise our social and religious conceptions. Both these discoveries mark the nineteenth century as an epoch-making one, while it will be the distinctive feature of the twentieth century to

reconstruct our thinking and our living in the light of them.

The evolution theory, it must be noted, is<sup>a</sup> very much greater conception than that which is usually associated with the term evolution. By evolution many people seem to mean nothing more than that crude caricature of what is called Darwinism, namely, that men have descended from monkeys. Even amongst people with some knowledge of science it is usually limited to a description of the origin of species, to which the term owes its birth. The result is that its true significance is entirely lost sight of and its true effect upon our outlook on the Universe is totally unappreciated. When rightly apprehended, however, it is seen that the great discovery which Wallace and Darwin made in the sphere of natural history is nothing less than the discovery of the one great principle which appears to pervade the whole cosmic process. Since their discovery the evolutionary hypothesis has been applied to every other branch of knowledge and it has been found to explain, as no other principle does, the facts and data upon which all science is based. In that remote field of investigation, where the phenomena dealt with are at distances from the observer which baffle all human conception, the remotest stars are seen to be under this universal law of evolution. At the other pole, where the phenomena are so minute as to defy utterly our unaided powers of

observation, we find the same great law in operation. Similarly when we search the records graven by the unerring hand of Nature, which stretch back into a past so remote as to be beyond computation, the geologist comes across the same great principle. In the investigation of phenomena passing under our own immediate observation we can watch the working of the same law. If we are amongst those who believe that "the proper study of mankind is man" and confine our attention to the field of human activity, behold the same law is there. Our special study may lead us to deal with the rise and fall of great empires and peoples, whose records carry us back to the dawn of history, or it may centre upon the events which constitute the history of our own times, but in both alike we shall come across the manifestation of this same law. If our interest is confined to the working of the human mind in the spheres of philosophy and religion, we are still within the scope of this all-embracing principle. It will readily be seen, therefore, that the birth of such a conception is destined to produce a mental outlook in which all our ideas are of necessity subjected to fresh scrutiny and come forth revised and reclothed.

In speaking of the evolution theory it must not be supposed that it is any longer a mere hypothesis, the truth of which has yet to be proved. Though the terms in which it may be stated are

subject to modification, it is practically unanimously accepted by all the great leaders of scientific thought. It is not too much to say that there<sup>o</sup> is not a single department of human knowledge which is not being revised and rewritten in the light of the evolutionary hypothesis. • Moreover, and most important of all, its terminology is rapidly becoming the current coin of common speech. It is this last fact which is slowly producing that changed standpoint which has issued in what has been here called a new mental outlook. Language is not merely dominated by thought; it also in turn dominates thought. The employment of new words, like the employment of new servants, means eventually the pensioning of old ones. The new servant is found to be quicker and more expeditious, and before long you prefer his services, employ him on duties for which he was not originally engaged, and eventually pension the older man, who is no longer equal to the demands you make upon him. The change, however, is not limited in its effects to the servant; the master also is affected. He is compelled to adapt himself to the new servant's ways. It is precisely the same with language. New terms, which our enlarged thought has compelled us to employ, cannot be restricted to the special work for which they were originally invented. They have a way of answering the call-bell more promptly than the older words and

of fulfilling our wishes more perfectly. We employ them more and more frequently and place the older terms on the retired list. Our mind, however, has at the same time to adapt itself to the ways of the new servant, and we frequently find, that however useful and valuable he may be, he will not allow us to take the same liberties with him as we were accustomed to take with the old. The terms which the theory of evolution has provided for our use, while rendering us splendid service in every department, are at the same time rigidly exacting conditions of service with which we are bound to comply. They are changing our mental outlook, and the changed mental outlook is demanding a reconstruction of many of our old and cherished beliefs. This demand is not restricted to any one religion, or to any particular phase of religious belief. It is being felt and recognised far more in the West than in the East, because the mental outlook has been more affected in the West than it has yet been in the East. Christian belief, no less than Hindu, Mahommedan and Buddhist belief, is in need of, and is indeed undergoing, reconstruction. Every faith has to be revised in the light of this changed mental outlook.

The evolution theory means that the whole cosmic process is the gradual and ordered unfolding of that which is latent within. The theory may be variously stated as it is illustrated in the

different phenomena which we are investigating, but the general conception of an ordered development, the gradual coming to full fruition of powers and forces already held within,<sup>2</sup> never varies. The present is the fruit of the past and contains within it the seed of the future. Past, present and future, that is, are merely stages through which the evolution of all things passes as the Universe unfolds from the one into the many. The great cosmic process is, in a word, the evolution in time of that which was, and is and ever shall be. Such a statement is nothing more than an approximation to the truth, but it represents, in general terms, the idea which is involved in the evolutionary theory.

It has often been said that this theory has practically dealt the death blow to all religion, and that it is only a question of time before all men recognise that the fundamental idea at the base of all religion, the conception of God, is quite untenable. Such a statement, however, has itself long since become untenable. The trend of all the best scientific thought at the present is in quite the opposite direction. That the conception of God, current before the establishment of the evolution theory, has been rendered untenable, or rather proved inadequate, is quite true, but the same can be asserted of a great number of fundamental scientific conceptions as well. Conceptions are themselves under the same law of evolution, and consequently their expression needs constant

modification. They are, however, perceptions of realities which abide, not of mere illusions which the increasing light dissipates. The evolution theory is concerned with the answer of the human mind as to the How of things, but it has only brought into greater prominence the deeper question as to the Why of things. It is with that deeper question that philosophy and religion are concerned and so long as the human mind continues to ask it so long will they remain the supreme questions for whose answer the mind for ever seeks. While the theory of evolution is concerned with the answer to the question How, it has indirectly very greatly affected the answers we have given to the question Why. It has shown us that some of the answers we have given are inconsistent with the knowledge we now possess, as the result of the question as to the How of things. In confining our study to the nature of any work which we are investigating we are not primarily concerned with the nature of the worker. The result of our knowledge of the work, however, cannot fail to affect our conception of the worker. We may be conscious, for instance, that the old conception of the Universe as the manufactured work of One Whom we call Creator does not fit in with our modern conception of what we call a process rather than a work. The change of name, however, from work to process does not replace Creator with Nemo. The Unknown, about whom we hear, is merely

the algebraical symbol  $x$ , whose value is still the problem we need to solve. The values we have hitherto substituted may, in the light of our increased knowledge of His way rather than His work, have been proved to be incorrect. The  $x$  in the equation, however, is not thereby abolished; it still remains, and the problem has still to be solved. We may be far more correct in speaking of a great cosmic process and we may be able to describe with far greater accuracy the nature of that process, but our answer to the question How, has not, and never will, stop us from asking the question Why.

In the attempts we make to answer this question we can no more leave out the term God than our materialistic friends can leave out the term Matter. We may be told, and we accept the information, that we can no longer speak of the Universe as a work and of God as a worker, but must speak of it as a process. We agree, but we ask, as ask we must, why the process? Work means action and implied a worker. Process means movement and implies a mover. You can no more banish the person, the subject of the verb, than you can banish the thing, the object of the verb. So long as the verb remains, subject and object remain also. The theory of evolution does not banish the term God from modern speech, but it does necessitate an attempt to give to the conception a more adequate meaning. Whether we call the

One, God or Matter, or any other name, all of us alike have to invest it with sufficient meaning to square with that knowledge of the Many which is the possession of the modern mind. We are all working out the value of the algebraical symbol  $x$ , and, so far as the final result is concerned, it makes no difference what other symbols we may use in the process. When the equation is solved, the answer will be the same for all. In the meantime it behoves us all to correct our working in the light of every fresh manifestation of truth which comes to us. The vastness of the great cosmic process; the wonderful all-embracing law of orderly development; the majestic heights towards which "the whole creation moves"; all tend to invest whatever term we may use to express that conception of the One, manifested in and by means of the Many, with such a wealth of meaning that any lesser term than the highest known to us is inadequate for the purpose. Whatever our formulated creed may be, our deepest self is compelled to that awe and reverence which are at the foundation of every religion. A true conception of the evolution theory, far from banishing the conception of God, does but give it a deeper and vaster meaning. In the presence of the myriad forms in which the One reveals Himself to us, as the great panorama of the Universe passes before our wondering gaze, our souls are thrilled with that awe and amazement so feelingly pictured

in the *Bhagavadgita*, where Krishna is represented as showing his divine form to Arjuna, and Arjuna in a passionate burst of enthusiasm exclaims, as words fail him to express his meaning and all known titles are realised to be inadequate, "Thou All."

Evolution has not robbed us of God ; on the contrary, it has given us a greater and a grander God. It has abolished the God of Deism by revealing the God Who is at the back of Pantheistic thought, though lost in the Pantheistic system. The conception of God which modern thought demands is neither that of a transcendent Being apart from the Universe, nor yet that of an immanent Being Whose fulness is exhausted in the Universe to which He has given being, but of One Who, from everlasting to everlasting, is revealing Himself in the Universe, at once its soul and life, but Whose fulness must for ever transcend every manifestation. In the same way the conception of the Universe which is in harmony with modern thought is not that of a dead piece of mechanism, fearfully and wonderfully made, but distinct and separate from the God Who made it. It is essentially that of a living thing, developing along lines which are inherent within it and manifesting under the limitations of time and space a life which is one with the life of God. It must, of course, be understood that this is nothing more than a rough outline of the conception of God

which the modern mind demands. Every age erases some false line and adds some truer line to this great representation of the highest thought of humanity. The time is not far distant when we shall perceive that the two pictures which Theistic thought on the one hand, and Pantheistic thought on the other, have been painting through the ages are, after all, one and the same. There are lines in both pictures which will have to be erased, as well as others which will have to be filled in, before such a declaration can be truly made; but there are indications both in the East and in the West—the centres respectively of Pantheistic and Theistic thought—that such a consummation is proceeding. In the domain of religious thought East and West have been exchanging ideas and the exchange has been to the advantage of both. In this sphere, whatever may be true in other spheres, a *swadeshism*, or patriotism, whether Eastern or Western, is the greatest hindrance to true progress. Truth is found both in the East and in the West, but Truth herself is neither Eastern nor Western. In the economic and social spheres *swadeshism* may be the evidence of a patriotism deserving of all praise, though it is by no means always so. In the universal empire of Truth, however, *swadeshism*, whether Indian or British, is rank treason. To Truth we all owe the most absolute allegiance, and whenever we yield to any influence which is inimical to her

imperial and universal sway, we are guilty of betraying her sacred cause. Our minds are not to be dominated by either Eastern or Western perceptions of truth, but by Truth herself. We must listen to her voice whether she speaks to us in our own or another tongue; we must follow her guidance whether she leads us to the East or to the West.

In the West this is being increasingly realised, and in the reconstruction of religious belief which is now taking place in the West there is a growing recognition of the value of every contribution. India has made very great contributions to the religious thought and life of the world and she is destined to make still more. It must, however, be recognised that the contribution now demanded must be a living and not a dead one, the result of present thinking and not the mere accumulations which are the legacy of her past thinking. India has a mission to the world now, even as she had in the past; but she can only discharge her mission in the present, as she did it in the past, namely, by vigorous and independent thinking and earnest and whole-hearted living. There is no market in the West for the old clothes of the East; but there is a market for that wonderful weaving for which the East has always been famous, and India in particular. It is true that there are antiquarians in the West who will go into raptures over the specimens of ancient weaving displayed before

their eyes, but let not India be deceived into believing that such people represent the great buyers of the West. The demand for such goods is very limited and the market is already showing signs of being overstocked. If India wants to traffic in earnest with the West she must revive her old weaving industry and supply cloth for present use. The Indian mind is a splendid loom for the weaving of religious thought, but it has been standing unused for centuries. The world wants those fine silk and muslin garments of religious thought for which India is famous, but they must be woven in the modern loom and the threads must be the product of the present generation. India has to realise that the world has not slept while her looms have stood idle. If she wishes to take her place in the religious life and thought of the world she must weave again and produce thought which lives and moves forward.

The evolution theory has not only modified our conception of God; it has revolutionised our conception of the method in which God reveals Himself to the children of men. Nowhere has the great conception of evolution had a greater influence upon religious thought than in that branch which deals with the method of revelation. Here we are concerned, not with answers to the question Why so much as with answers to the question How. The scientific method, to which

we owe the theory of evolution, is, therefore, on its own special ground. Setting aside all pre-conceived theories as to how God reveals Himself, it sets to work to examine and compare everything which lays claim to the title of revelation, assured that if any scripture is a revelation it will prove its claim by actually revealing something of God. The careful comparison and examination which the scientific method has applied to man's various religious beliefs has brought to light the working of the same great law of evolution which confronts us in the physical realm. Man's knowledge of God has been a gradual evolution from the lowest depths to the highest heights. The revelation of God, that is, has advanced step by step with the development of man. A witty Frenchman once said that in the beginning God created man in His own image and ever since man has been returning the compliment by creating God in his. If by creating God we mean conceiving of God, the witticism is strict truth. The image of man has been, and indeed for ever must be, the true revelation of God. In the development of man God has been, and still is, effecting a true revelation of Himself. There is no higher revelation possible than the revelation by means of incarnation. God must be manifest in the flesh or He remains for humanity the Unknowable. We must see Him in humanity or we shall never see Him at all. The God Who remains outside the Universe

is beyond the possibility of human apprehension. It is the God Who manifests Himself in all the great cosmic process, Who is the life and soul of the Universe and the Father of our spirits, Who is alone within the reach of our minds. In the physical universe we may hear His breathing and feel, as it were, His pulse, but in humanity and human history we read His thoughts and know something of His mind. We cannot identify Him with either the Universe or humanity, for in both there is that which we recognise as Divine, and that which we are compelled to recognise as not Divine. It is the recognition of this antithesis which constitutes for us the true way of knowledge. Deny the antithesis and you shut the gate to all true knowledge.

There is a very profound truth in two verses of the Telugu poet Vemana, which contain a warning peculiarly appropriate to the Hindu religious mind. In the first the poet asks the question which is at the heart of all religion. He says :

When man to Thee his eyes doth raise  
 The self-forgotten lies ;  
 On self when next he turns his gaze,  
 Thy vision droops and dies.  
 Then tell me how to man can be  
 Knowledge of both himself and Thee ?

In the second verse he proceeds to answer the question he has here asked. He says :

When man to Thee his eyes doth raise,  
 Then truth full-orbed doth rise ;  
 They're lost in vain delusion's ways  
 Who fix on self their eyes.  
 To that man only can there be  
 Knowledge of self, who first knows Thee.

There is a sense in which it is true that we have to identify ourselves with God, but the true way to such an identification is, not by denying the existence of difference but, by recognising it and mortifying that within us which we see to be not Divine. To identify ourselves with God by denying difference is to follow a road which can only lead to the loss of any true knowledge of either self or God. It is not by a process of deification of the human that we arrive at a knowledge of God ; it is by a recognition of the incarnation of the Divine in humanity, and its eternal distinction from all human error and sin, that we learn to know Him Who is the All-Father. The only knowledge of God we possess has come to us through humanity and that knowledge has been directly proportioned to the extent to which man has been Godlike. Knowledge of God has progressed, and is progressing, with the progress of humanity. This is the story which the application of the scientific method in the study of religion makes clear to our gaze and it is the revelation of this same great law of evolution which operates throughout the Universe. Search the scriptures of all nations and you will find the same law in

operation. Each generation and each individual only truly knows so much of God as it incarnates in thought and life and character. Our knowledge of God can never transcend the manifestation of God and that manifestation is limited by development Godwards. It is the recognition of this truth of the evolution of man's knowledge of God which enables us to give to all scripture its true place, a place determined by no arbitrary rule, but by the simple principle of the measure in which it reveals God. We apply this principle to the scriptures of all nations, to the sacred writings of all religions. When once we have grasped this truth, that the manifestation of God advances step by step with the Godward progress of humanity, all ideas of limitation of revelation to any particular race or to any special religious system are discarded, and we are prepared to listen to any man, in any tongue, who can tell us anything which adds to our knowledge of the great God and Father of us all.

It is difficult to over-emphasise the importance of realising that our knowledge of God is conditioned by the manifestation of God under the limitations of human thought and life. And yet, when we deeply ponder the subject, it becomes plain that in this respect the knowledge of God is in harmony with all other knowledge. No law or principle is ever discovered by the human mind until it has first manifested itself in the phenomenal, that is, until it has entered the area within

the limits of which we ourselves live and move and think. The planet Neptune was unknown until it came within the range of man's telescope. It had been there all through the ages, but until man's power of thought first inferred its existence and man's power of device manufactured the necessary aid to his natural vision to enable him to see it, it was absolutely unknown. First the manifestation, then the knowledge. This is the great law of all knowledge and our knowledge of God conforms to it. We should have known nothing of God unless He had first manifested Himself to us by coming under the conditions and limitations of human thought and life. If there had been no incarnation of any kind there would have been no knowledge of God of any kind either. The measure in which we really know God is the measure in which we have seen God under the conditions and limitations of humanity.

It is this great truth which makes the supreme incarnation of God in Christ the very centre of Christianity. Without Christ, and the doctrine of incarnation which the appearance of Christ necessitates, Christianity has little to contribute to man's knowledge of God. Having Christ, it has a manifestation of the Father, which is unique amongst the religions of the world. The time has gone by for that attitude of contemptuous indifference to Christianity and its message to the world which has been so characteristic of the religious

Hindu hitherto. The time has come for him to ask, with the earnestness of soul and eagerness of spirit, which are the marks of the truly religious soul, whether the Great Father has not revealed Himself to other minds and manifested Himself in an incarnation which is not mythological, but historic? There is no need for the Hindu to turn his back upon the knowledge of God which has been vouchsafed to him in his own land and amongst his own people. There is need, however, for him to add to and correct that knowledge by the manifestation of God in the person and work of Christ. Let him look with unprejudiced eyes and say for himself how much of God he sees in Jesus the Christ.

The second great truth, which has entirely changed our mental outlook and helped to produce that wider view which we call modern thought, is the conception of the solidarity of man. This conception does not mean that all men are one in the sense of being of one kin, true though that is, but that all men form together one body, so articulated together, that the movement Godward is delayed or furthered by the general condition of the whole. Humanity, that is, is not a mere aggregate of individuals, but a body of innumerable members, with a life which circulates through all its parts. Eastern cannot say to Western, nor Western to Eastern, I have no need of thee; for they are, and always will be, members of one

body, whose individual well-being is bound up with the well-being of the whole. The moment we have fully grasped this conception we perceive that the struggles and conflicts between races and individuals, however much they may have temporarily strengthened the parts, have not given, and never can give, permanent strength to the parts, and always issue in debility to the body as a whole. In the early stages of evolution, before the body is highly organised, such conflicts are by no means fatal, but as organisation proceeds and the division of labour amongst the parts becomes more pronounced, conflict and strife become more and more injurious both to the separate members and also to the body as a whole. War at the present time is far more serious to the particular nations engaged and has a far more injurious effect upon the world as a whole than it ever had in the past. A century ago the war in Japan would have been confined to the nations concerned; to-day it affects in more or less degree every nation in the world. Similarly plague, and cholera and famine radiate influences which are felt, not merely at the centre affected but, right up to the circumference. It is not merely the evils of life, however, which reveal the great truth of the solidarity of the race; the boons and blessings reveal the same truth. Every nation shares more or less in the blessing which comes to each. Famine-stricken India feels the effect of England's generosity and America's

large-heartedness. Jamaica, staggering under the blow of earthquake and devastation is conscious of sympathy and help from lands she has never seen and from people she has never known. Every land participates in the benefits of those great discoveries of science obtained by the vast expenditure of men and money undertaken by the few. The heroic deed, the sublime self-sacrifice, exhibited in any part of the world, send a glow of enthusiasm into the breasts of men and women in the most distant country. Lowell has well expressed this sense of solidarity in his poem, "The Present Crisis"—

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's  
aching breast  
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west.

For mankind are one in spirit, and in instinct bears along,  
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right or  
wrong ;

Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity's vast frame  
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush of joy or  
shame ;—

In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim.

This great conception, felt in the breasts of a few in the past, has come to the birth and is growing in stature day by day. It is making its voice heard in every land, though its cry at present is but that of an infant. It will, however, grow ; slowly it may be, but none the less surely, and when it speaks with the man's voice it will be heard by all

and heard in order that it may be obeyed. This conception has already changed the mental outlook, and under its influence we are reconstructing both our religious and our social beliefs and remodelling our life and conduct. The priest in every land has received notice to quit; the prophet, if he be a prophet indeed, is everywhere welcomed with enthusiasm. The proselytist, whose supreme concern is to increase the number of those who think as he thinks, believe as he believes, and speak as he speaks, is yielding place to the true evangelist, whose mission it is to stimulate thought, inspire belief, and call forth speech, leaving it, as it always must be left, to the Spirit of Truth to guide men into the full truth. In India, groaning under a social tyranny, in comparison with which the political subjection of which we hear so much is but the restraining and governing hand of a mother, the conception of the solidarity of man has a great work to do and a great blessing to confer. One of the beliefs which urgently needs reconstructing is that of caste, which is hopelessly out of harmony with the modern outlook. That the four castes have sprung from different parts of Brahma's body is no longer believed by any educated Hindu, at least in its literalness. Most would regard it as a myth designed to set forth a certain truth, and would interpret it in various ways. Regarded as a myth there is a great truth in it, well worthy of belief. That truth is that there is something

Divine in every man, be he Brahmin or Pariah, and the only superiority of one over another which is of any real consequence is solely concerned with how much of the Divine there is in him. Modern thought, however, would slightly modify the myth and say that the four great classes into which it is possible to group men have not sprung from Brahma's body, but verily constitute his body, being severally members one of another; so that the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee, because, though the members vary both in form and function, they share a common life and contribute to a common welfare. This alteration of an old myth may seem a very slight one and some may rejoice to think how near the old myth approaches to the actual fact. Let us make no mistake however. The slight alteration in past mythology involves a mighty revolution in present history. The slight deviation from eternal verity noticeable in the old myth was not a parallel line but a curve, which, prolonged through the centuries, has resulted in a difference between the actual and the ideal which is almost as far asunder as the poles. Compare the respective positions of Brahmin and Pariah which have resulted from the acceptance of that ancient myth and ask whether the relation between belief and conduct is of no consequence and the correction of the one is as easy as the correction of the other? When we hear the modern Brahmin giving his new interpretation to old beliefs

and setting them forth revised and rewritten in the language of to-day, it is very necessary to turn aside from his paper-corrections to the effects of those beliefs in the life and conduct of the masses and ask ourselves what that same Brahmin would say if he had to live in the Pariah's hut? We can rewrite a myth, but we cannot rewrite the history of the myth. History cannot be rewritten; it has to be remade. Ink and a pen will correct a myth; blood and the sword are often needed to correct the effects of a myth. Theoretically you can put the Pariah into his true place by rewriting the myth; but to reinstate him in the position from which he has been cast out means self-sacrifice and service. The West has no such myth to rewrite, but it has none the less to atone for old errors of belief and reconstruct its social system. Both East and West, therefore, can help each other to reconstruct belief in the light of the changed modern outlook and reorganise life and conduct in harmony with the reconstructed belief.

New occasions teach new duties ; Time makes ancient good uncouth ;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires ! we ourselves must Pilgrims be,

Launch our *Mayflower* and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPTION OF GOD

JUST as Man is aware of the Universe long before he is able to formulate any true conception of the Universe, so he is aware of God long before he is able to formulate any adequate conception of God. The two conceptions are the result of his awareness, and not *vice versa*. He is first of all conscious of a touch long before he is able to discover who or what it is that touches him. The difference between Theistic and atheistic systems is not due to the accuracy or inaccuracy of the reasoning process; it is due to the recognition or failure to recognise a distinction in what may be called this primitive awareness. The real divergence, that is, is not at the end of a process of reasoning; it is at the beginning and consists in the different estimate we form of the contents of our consciousness. If we once recognise in the other-than-self of our consciousness something which stands over against our own mind and our own will we are bound to make room in our

systems for some conception or other of God. Our system may not be strictly Theistic, but it cannot be atheistic. Fundamentally the conception we form of ourselves determines the conception we form of the other-than-self. Let the self be conceived of as nothing more than corporeal and the system is bound to be Materialism. Let the self be conceived of as essentially mental and the system is bound to issue in Idealism. In the same way, if, in the conception of the self there is no recognition of a will standing over against another Will, a mind standing over against another Mind whose conceptions it is able to perceive, the system which is built up must issue in such a conception of the Universe as finds no room for a conception of God of any kind. The point which is here emphasised is, not the correctness of the conclusions but, the adequacy of the premisses. To say that Reason leads us to this or that conclusion is an entirely misleading statement which has done incalculable harm. Reason does nothing more than evolve what is already involved. The conclusion of the syllogism proves nothing; it merely demonstrates the nature of the premisses. The balancing of your accounts does not make you a bankrupt; it merely reveals that you are one by showing you that your expenditure has exceeded your income. If you are dissatisfied with the state of the balance you can only alter it by adding to your income, or decreas-

ing your expenditure. In the same way if the conclusions of the Reason are unsatisfactory, it is no use complaining of Reason ; you must examine your premisses. In a very real sense, no system of thought is unreasonable, because to be a system at all it must be reasonable. It is satisfactory or unsatisfactory to the mind, as it includes, or does not include all the facts in a harmonious whole. If there are facts which are omitted, or which are inconsistent with the system, it means, not that the conclusion has been incorrectly drawn but, that the premisses were inadequately stated.

Religion is not based upon the conception of God ; it is based upon our perception of Him. Man is not aware of God because he has conceived of Him ; he conceives of Him because he is aware of Him. To the modern mind, therefore, religion is man's experience of his relation to God, just as what we call common sense is man's experience of his relation to the Universe. Religion stands in no more need of proofs of the existence of God than common sense stands in need of proofs of the existence of the Universe. Common sense may be very defective ; it may be very unreasonable and incorrect ; but it is the result of Man's experience of the Universe, varies with his growing experience and is constantly undergoing revision. Religion in the same way may be very defective, very unreasonable and very incorrect, but it is none the less the result of

Man's awareness of God, varies with his growing experience, and needs constant revision. It is based on experience, built out of experience, corrected by experience. We may deny the reality of God just as we may deny the reality of the external universe, but our denial makes absolutely no difference to the reality of the experience. That experience must be explained; it cannot be explained away. Religion, therefore, to the modern mind occupies a distinct place in every system of thought. It is human experience, and whether it be regarded as perception of reality or a pure hallucination it is a real experience which cannot be ignored.

This modern standpoint has entirely altered our attitude to the various religions and religious beliefs of the world. All of them, from the crudest to the most refined, are a part of that consciousness of the Divine, out of which Man is evolving the true conception of God. Man's various and opposed conceptions of the Divine may be multitudinous, but they are all the result of the perception of the Divine, and this perception is as universal as Man. It is not the variety of the conceptions of God which is the significant thing; it is the uniformity of the perception of the Divine. The true nature of that which answers to Man's perception can only be ascertained by the fullest examination of his experience, as that has been expressed in the various conceptions

of what he has called the Divine. Religious beliefs are the result of religious experience; religious experience is not the result of religious belief. We must perceive the Divine before we can conceive God. The question, therefore, of whether there is or is not a God has receded into the background, and with it the importance of all those arguments which were once regarded as vital to religion. Man's experience brings him into touch with something which he calls Divine. Whether that something is a reality or an unreality cannot be decided on any *a priori* grounds; it must be examined. To rule out all religious experience as merely the result of hallucination is to prejudice the question.

It is characteristic of modern thought, therefore, to turn away from all attempts to elaborate proofs for the existence of God, and to centre the attention upon the religious experience of the race. That experience has been formulated into the beliefs which we find expressed in the various religions and religious observances of mankind. This is not to assert that Man's religious experience, any more than his experience of the Universe, has been free from mistake and illusion. It is simply to insist that apart from an examination of his experience it is impossible to tell whether that which he has perceived is a reality or unreality. You do not prove that an experience is an hallucination by simply denying the reality

of the experience of the person who has been subject to the hallucination. The experience of the subject is the great reality. Your proof that it is an hallucination depends upon giving a satisfactory explanation of his very real experience. The traveller in the desert may mistake a mirage for a pool of water, but he would never be convinced that it was a mirage by mere argument that from the very nature of the case there could be no water. If, further, he found that the mirage satisfied his thirst, it would be absolutely impossible to convince him that it was a mirage and not water. *Religious experience may be a mirage*, but it can only be proved to be so by examining it fully in its aspirations and in its satisfactions. No argument for or against the existence of God can have any validity in itself. Argument has never established religion and it can never abolish it. What we want is an explanation of our experience of the Divine. What Man has called the Divine may be but another name for the Universe, but, if so, such a Universe which yields an explanation of religious experience, needs another name. A conception of the Universe which leaves no room and gives no explanation of our perception of the Divine is quite as faulty as a conception of the Divine which yields no explanation of our perception of the Universe. Whatever system we adopt must be harmonious and take in all the facts of our experience.

The age-long conflict between religion and science is by no means at an end, but to the modern mind the term "conflict" in the sense of antagonism is a misnomer. There are still, and are likely to be, differences between the two, but the conviction is growing on both sides that the differences are due to differences in the standpoints of the observers. All our knowledge is but partial, and the time has not yet come when either the scientist or the theologian can declare that his survey is complete. As each party, however, moves onward to its goal the results of its observations become more and more harmonious. The old antagonism is largely passing away from both. Both are more and more willing to modify their respective creeds in the interests of a common loyalty to Truth. The modification is by no means on one side, but on both, and there is a growing recognition that both the survey-parties are under allegiance to a common sovereign, whose empire includes both the countries that are being explored. If in the past there has been theological dogmatism there has been scientific dogmatism also. If in recent years the theologian has retreated from positions which have become untenable, the modern scientist has done the same. Such a modification of creed is in truest harmony with the scientific spirit. Our knowledge grows with the development of our faculties for acquiring knowledge, and fresh

information modifies old statements just as a fuller survey corrects old maps. We are often tyrannised over by figures of speech, and we suffer a good deal from the tyranny. In the end, however, the tyranny becomes unbearable and we throw off the yoke, only to discover that the suffering was needless and indeed for the most part self-inflicted. The symbols of war have been used to describe the differences between religion and science, and we have got accustomed to the use of such terms as "attack" and "defeat," "advance" and "retreat," with the result that people have been thrown into a panic of fear due to a purely imaginary invasion. The time has surely come for us to recognise that we are all engaged in the common search for truth, not in mortal combat for the defence of our own opinions.

A modern writer has sought to avoid the conflict between religion and science by urging the advisability of adopting a different terminology in which to express the results arrived at in their respective spheres. He would reserve the term "knowledge" for scientific truth, and the term "faith" for religious truth. He does not for a moment allow that religious truth is inferior to scientific truth, but because the subject-matter, method, and function of theology differ so considerably from those of natural science, he would designate the results in the one case as knowledge, and the results

in the other case as faith. It is difficult to see what would be gained by such a use of terms, and it is easy to see that it would lead to a disparagement of religious truth as essentially inferior to scientific truth. Our knowledge of both is equally valid or equally invalid. The history of philosophic thought in the East shows that the reality of the existence of God is regarded by the Eastern mind with just that validity which the reality of the Universe secures amongst the Western people. Whether you call this faith or knowledge is of little moment, but whatever you call it in the one case, you must call it the same in the other. The real controversy, in fact, is not between knowledge on the one hand and faith on the other; it is as to whether religious truth can rightly be called truth at all.

If you speak of truth in the religious sphere, you do so because you recognise that the true in the religious sphere is of the same nature as the true in the scientific sphere. Without going the length of attempting a definition of truth we can at least recognise that one of its essential characteristics is absolute harmony. Our thought to be true must be self-consistent; it must harmonise with everything else which we have recognised to be true. We do not arrive at religious truth in the same way as we arrive at scientific truth, but having arrived at religious truth, we feel that it must be in harmony with all other truth. From

the nature of the case every religious or scientific truth must be regarded as provisional. A new fact in either may be inconsistent with the statement of truth already formulated and the required harmony can only be secured by a restatement.

Modern thought is in sympathy with both religion and science. It recognises two poles of thought, for both of which there is equal validity. It is in this respect frankly dualistic, though it believes that a unity is the goal at which it will eventually arrive. It regards the investigations of religion and science as expeditions in the Northern or Southern hemispheres, is prepared to accept the established results of both expeditions as they come in and to modify each by the other wherever such modification is seen to be necessary.

The conception of God, therefore, with which the modern mind starts is that from which all *a priori* ideas as to nature and attributes have been rigidly excluded. All we are conscious of to start with is some One with Whom or with which the human mind is in relation, just as all we are conscious of in the other direction is some One, which we call the Universe, with which we are in relation by means of our sensations. It is the business of what we call science on the one hand and of religion on the other, to fill in the contents of these two equally unknowns, God and the Universe. Science must make use of everything within its reach in order that we may know what

that something is, which we feel to be not ourselves and to which we give the name, the Universe. Religion, in like manner, must make use of everything within its reach in order that it may reveal to us that other something, which also is not ourselves and to which we give the name God.

Many people, especially in the West, are accustomed to think that the physical realm is one with which the scientist is in direct communication, while the spiritual realm is one in which there is no direct communication. This is due to the fact that we forget that we never get out of ourselves in scientific investigation, any more than we do in mental processes. In each case we are all along dealing with our own sensations and perceptions. We recognise the touch of the Universe upon us far more readily than we recognise the touch of God. Evolution shows us that we have been in touch with the Universe for countless ages, while we have only come into touch with God, as it were, yesterday. Man, that is, has been in touch with the Universe through his evolution upward to conscious manhood. It is only on arrival at self-conscious manhood that he became conscious of the touch of God.

The field of investigation for science is easily recognised and well defined, but what about the field of investigation for religion? Here it seems as though we were at the outset met with a condition in which investigation in any real sense

were impossible. On the one hand we have a cosmos of order for our investigation; on the other a chaos of confused human thought, wild speculation, and vague feeling. This is doubtless true, and yet did not the cosmos itself arise out of chaos; and who shall say, as he studies the slow evolution of religious thought and feeling, that we are not watching a cosmos evolving out of chaos? The cosmos of law and order which the scientist to-day investigates was no less present in that far-off beginning when everything was without form and void. In the same way the full and perfect conception of God is no less present in the confused thought and wild speculation of humanity, and is none the less surely evolving into its perfect expression. We must recognise the two distinct fields of investigation, the material and the mental, using the words matter and mind provisionally as terms suited to that double relation in which we stand to God on the one hand, and to the Universe on the other. Whatever comes to us through our sensations we hand over to science to investigate; whatever comes to us through perception on the other hand, we hand over to religion and philosophy for similar investigation. Everything, that is, which functions on the material plane is subjected to science for investigation; everything which functions on what we may call the spiritual plane must be handed over to religion for investigation.

Scientific thoughts and theories are the judgments delivered in a lower Court on the evidence submitted, and they have to be confirmed in the higher Court of Reason. The higher Court, however, does not and cannot deal with questions of evidence; it can only deal with the judgment based upon the evidence. The appeal, to use a legal phrase, must be on a point of law, not on a point of fact. If the evidence is insufficient, the High Court remits the case for fresh investigation. In the same way religious truth is first of all religious experience formulated into a judgment. It comes up for appeal to the High Court of Reason, just as scientific truth does, and the High Court must confirm or reverse the judgments of the lower Court; it is not its province, however, to deal with the evidence of religious experience. The appeal to Reason, that is, can only be on a point of law. If the judgment based on religious experience seems to go beyond the evidence offered, it must refer the matter back for fresh inquiry.

This distinction seems to be lost sight of both by scientist and theologian. You will find the scientist pouring contempt on metaphysics and the theologian inveighing against reason or rationalism. Each, that is, regards the judgments pronounced in his own Court as infallible and resents any appeal to a higher tribunal. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the higher

Court has not always confined itself to its proper sphere of deciding a point of law, but has arbitrarily ruled out evidence which has been thoroughly established. Reason is the Supreme Court of Appeal both for the scientist and the theologian, but its decisions are only valid when they deal with the judgments formulated by science on the basis of the evidence of fact, and by religion on the basis of the evidence of religious experience.

In India it is particularly important that the distinction between religion and science, as well as their mutual relation to the Supreme Court of Reason, should be clearly perceived. It is no unfair representation to say that India has only recognised a Supreme Court of Reason, and has never had either a subordinate Court for the formulation of judgments based on religious experience on the one hand, or a subordinate Court for the formulation of judgments based on scientific fact on the other. This does not mean that there has been no religious experience or scientific investigation, for there have been both. There has, however, been no recognition of the true spheres of either the one or the other and no proper limitation of the true work of Reason. To continue the metaphor already employed, the High Court has not been a Court of Appeal to which the judgments arrived at by an unfettered religious experience and a free scientific inquiry could be sent. It has

rather been a Legislative Council whose decisions have been binding in the spheres of religious experience and of scientific inquiry. It has formulated judgments for both spheres and set men to work to find evidence to support its judgments. It has never asked for facts upon which to base a judgment as to what our relation to the Universe is; it has asserted what that relation is and told men to realise it. It has never asked for evidence upon which to base a judgment as to what our relation to God is; it has asserted a relation and set men the task of realising it. It has told the religious man that God is alone the great reality, and that his religious experience must conform to that statement, and has set him the task of trying to identify the self and God. It has told the investigator of the phenomena presented in the Universe the same thing, and bidden him regard all such phenomena as unreal appearance. It has resolutely refused any appeal from such a decision on the ground that there can be no appeal from its decisions. It has ignored all evidence which conflicted with such a decision, because it has held that the proper sphere of evidence was to confirm and not to question its decision.

If this is a true description of the Hindu mental standpoint it shows how entirely opposed such a standpoint is to that of the modern mind.

**There** is sure to be unrest when the modern

Hindu, educated in Western science and influenced by the scientific spirit, brings his modern education to bear upon his religious beliefs. By far the majority seek a refuge from this unrest in trying to trace a boundary between religious and secular knowledge. A similar attempt is often made in the West, but there the boundary is between faith and knowledge. No such boundary, however, is ever anything more than an imaginary line. It never prevents, but always invites conflict between the two realms. In India the conflict is having very serious results to her religious life and thought. Religion has never been regarded by the Hindu mind as something distinct from knowledge, which might be called faith. It has ever been regarded as the triumph of Reason. The conflict, therefore, between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* method, which is now going on, is fraught with far more serious consequences. The triumph of the *a posteriori* method means the calling in question of all that has been handed down from the past as the result of the *a priori* or ancient method. The general statements arrived at independently of the facts are being seen to be opposed to the facts upon which the modern mind concentrates its attention. The newer generation has parted company with the old method of denying reality to the facts in the interests of the authoritative statement. The whole of its education has been based upon the

reality of facts, and the general statements to which it has grown accustomed are all based upon a summary of the facts. In the school and in the college, the modern standpoint is supreme, and young India is brought up a firm believer in the *a posteriori* method. Its religion, however, is based upon the *a priori* method, and at every turn it is confronted with theories which are opposed to facts. However unwilling the modern Hindu may be to cut himself off from the religion of his land and his people, he cannot help the gradual severance which takes place in the recesses of his own mind between his actual and his professed beliefs.

As regards the conception of God, the identification of the One with the Many, which is the essence of the Pantheistic creed, is an illustration of the *a priori* method which has dominated Hindu thought. Modern Materialistic Monism, however, is, on the other hand, an illustration of the *a posteriori* method, limited, however, to a survey of the universe of matter only. Pantheism, though Monistic, is not Monism, and Monism, though Pantheistic, is not Pantheism. The Monos, at which the Monistic philosopher arrives by the *a posteriori* method, is not the Theos with which the Pantheistic philosopher starts on his *a priori* method. Similarly the Many from which the Monist starts in his search for the One, is not the Many at which the Pantheist arrives as the

result of his analysis of the One. The One of the Monist lacks the Theistic quality of the Pantheist's One and the Many of the Pantheist lacks the realistic quality of the Many of the Monist. To the Monist there is nothing Divine; to the Pantheist there is nothing which is not Divine. The Supreme Court of Appeal, Reason, cannot declare that either of these two judgments is in agreement with the truth. To the Pantheist it says, your duty is not to assert a One and explain away a Many, but to explain a Many by means of a One. To the Monist it says, your duty is not to exclude a part of the Many and bring forward a One which explains the rest, but to include all and bring forward a One which embraces all.

Modern Christian thought in the West is Theistic and not Pantheistic. It is rigidly so as regards the acceptance of the facts of that self-determination of the individual which we call the freedom of the will, and of that moral evil which is the present outcome of such freedom. It refuses absolutely to regard these facts as mere illusion and, therefore, it rejects every purely Pantheistic system. It differs, however, from the older Theism in its attitude to Pantheistic feeling, as distinguished from Pantheistic thought. It admits that this feeling is not only distinctly religious, but that it is part of that religious experience of the race out of which the full conception of God has to be formulated. The older Theism

was based upon a limited religious experience, coupled with a treatment of the religious experience of Jesus which regarded it as abnormal rather than the true norm for a perfect humanity. The newer thought draws its material from the religious experience of humanity as a whole, and treats the experience of Jesus, not as superhuman, in the sense of being abnormal, but as truly human, in the sense of being normal to an ideal humanity. The older thought, when it listened to the declaration, "I and the Father are one," interpreted it not as the conscious experience of the self of Jesus, but as the utterance of what they called His Divine nature in contradistinction to what they called His human nature. The newer thought recognises it as the utterance of a perfect and ideal humanity, a single self in perfect harmony with God. It regards the declaration, that is, not as the experience of God apart from humanity, but as the experience of God in humanity. There was not a human Jesus which was silent and a Divine Jesus Who spoke, but one perfect Divine man, conscious of perfect harmony between His Ego and the Father.

This illustration will perhaps enable us to see the difference between the older and the newer thought in their respective attitudes to what has been here described as Pantheistic feeling. The older thought heard the Pantheist's identification of the self and God with feelings which were outraged

at what it regarded as blasphemy. The newer thought, while refusing to accept the declaration as true, realises that it is not blasphemy, but a misstatement due to imperfect apprehension both of the self and of God. It is based upon a relation between the soul and God which explains, though it does not justify, the statement. Such an identification as the Pantheist asserts demands a perfection in humanity which we do not find ; it ignores a distinction which is only too apparent. Let any one impartially put the Pantheist's declaration of identity side by side with Christ's statement of oneness with the Father and ask, why the one is rejected as a misstatement while the other is accepted as sublime but yet true ? The simple answer is, that the known character of Jesus justifies the second statement, while no known character is able to establish the first. The Pantheistic declaration is a mere logical conclusion drawn from a given premiss. The statement of Jesus is the expression of a conscious experience of the soul. The Pantheistic statement is made in spite of the knowledge we possess both of the individual soul and of God. The declaration of Jesus is in perfect harmony with all we know both of Jesus and of God. The one is the affirmation of identity between two terms which by mistake have been regarded as distinct. The other is the declaration of a conscious unity between Son and Father. The modern Theist regards Christ's

statement, not as the utterance of the Divine apart from the human but, as the utterance of an ideal humanity which is *ipso facto* Divine. He can, therefore, understand the feeling which finds expression in Pantheistic thought. Humanity ought to be able to say, I and the Father are one, but it has never been able to say it as the expression of a conscious unity, save as it said it through the lips of Jesus. This consciousness was not an isolated experience with Jesus; it represents His normal condition. He was no Pantheist, but He has given expression to Pantheistic feeling as no one else has done, because in doing so He did not violate His self-consciousness, but correctly expressed it.

In the conception of God which is arrived at as the result of religious experience in ourselves, and in the race, the idea of personality is one which is essential to the religious life. Man can in no sense worship that which is beneath him. In the lowest forms of religious belief as well as in the highest it is always to that which is superior to himself that Man bows down. An inanimate object may be chosen as the symbol of this highest, but the worshipper at once invests it in his own mind with the very essence of his own being, personality. It is suggestive that, in Hindu thought, the process of abstraction as applied to the conception of God issues finally in a Brahma who is never worshipped. Take away the conception of personality from the

idea of God, and you may retain the word, but you have lost the thought, which called forth the word.

The touch of God upon the soul, recognisable in the universal instinct to worship, abides even when a purely logical process of abstraction has robbed the object of worship of every single quality which is worshipable. Hindu thought, having divested the conception of God of all attributes and all relations, and left the word Brahma (neuter) standing destitute of all meaning, realised that its ratiocination had destroyed religion. It had set out to find God ; it returned with the discovery that He was undiscoverable. It set out to know God ; it returned with the knowledge that He was unknowable. The impulse, however, which had set the Hindu thinker to his task was essentially a religious one. He went forth with the conviction that the greatest discovery he could make would be the discovery of God ; that the greatest knowledge he could attain to was the knowledge of God. He came back, therefore, with the feeling that he had been deluded and that such delusion was an essential part of the constitution of all phenomenal existence, his own included. He himself, however, by the pure force of reasoning had made this tremendous discovery, a discovery which he believed was not a delusion, which was, in fact, the sole thing which could be called knowledge in any real sense. This surely meant, not that he was related to Brahma,

for he had already proved that Brahma could have no relation, but that he, in the very essence of his being, must be that very Brahma itself. His consciousness of separateness was a part of the universal delusion inseparable from all phenomenal existence. This great discovery was knowledge, and the only real knowledge by means of which man attains that salvation which is the universal object of search. To keep the mind fixed on this one and only knowledge; to be freed from the sense of separateness; this was the great object of attainment.

It was soon recognised, however, that this *Gnyana marga*, or way of knowledge, was one which was possible for the elect few alone, and that for the mass of mankind a knowledge of the phenomenal was alone possible. Moreover the phenomenal had still to be explained, if not in its relation to a Brahma destitute of all relations, at least in its mutual relations as presented to consciousness. An explanation was already present in the great discovery already made and merely required unfolding in detail. The thinker himself, who by the process of pure thinking had arrived at this knowledge of his identity with Brahma, had a double existence, noumenal and phenomenal. He was persuaded that the noumenal Ego was identical with the noumenal Brahma. There was, however, a phenomenal Ego related to a phenomenal universe. The conclusion, therefore, was inevitable,—there must be a phenomenal Brahma, distinguished by the

masculine form of the word, who was identical with the phenomenal universe. The God, therefore, Whom he had set out to find, and had lost in the mere word Brahma (neuter), was found again in the word Brahma (masculine) and could be invested with all the qualities and attributes from which Brahma (neuter) had been divested. Religion, therefore, which philosophy had banished, was restored, and a theology became possible.

This slight and imperfect sketch is an attempt to set forth sympathetically the distinctive feature of that religious thought-movement of India, the effect of which is discernible in every Hindu system, however much they may vary in detail. It is the warp of Hindu religious thought, across which the Hindu mind has thrown a woof of many colours. It suggests a striking similarity and a striking difference as compared with the philosophic thought-movement of the West. In the West the movement was distinctly a philosophic one, free to proceed in two directions, towards the two poles of thought, those two unknowns—God and the Universe. The result was that Idealism never had the field to itself, but had to encounter a resolute opponent in those who felt the attraction of the opposite pole and whose system we call Realism. In India, on the other hand, the movement was essentially a religious one, and the religious conception has always dominated it. The goal at which Hindu religious thought arrived is the only

goal at which we can arrive by a purely logical process of thought. Confine yourself to the working of your own mind and of necessity you can never get to anything beyond. The idea with which you start, if your logic is correct, will be the idea with which you finish. Take the conception Brahma (neuter) destitute of all qualities and freed from all relations, the great discovery of the Hindu religious thinker, the goal at which he has arrived by pure thinking. How has he obtained such a conception? He cannot have obtained it by synthesis, for the idea cannot be described by its positive contents. He must have arrived at it by a process of abstraction, that is, by removing from it everything which he regarded as foreign to it. The principle, however, upon which the removal was effected was that of agreement with a purely negative conception of the supreme and ultimate reality. But where has this conception come from? He has it to start with. All that he has done is to make a conception, which was indefinite at the beginning, clear and definite at the end. Whether this is a real gain depends entirely on what is left at the end. To know that an indefinite idea we have at the start turns out to be no idea at all, may be preferable to thinking that it means something; but to call it a gain is very much like suggesting that the knowledge that our supposed balance at the Bank is a delusion is a most valuable asset. It may prevent us drawing cheques,

but it will hardly help us to pay our bills. To have proved that the supreme reality is utterly unknowable is doubtless a great achievement, but its chief significance lies, as Kant pointed out, in demonstrating that the path we have chosen does not lead to the goal we expected. That goal was knowledge of the unknown. To have demonstrated that so long as we confine ourselves to pure thinking the unknown is the unknowable merely tells us that we have chosen a wrong path and must try another. The Hindu religious thinker, however, would not admit this. He had limited knowledge as to the result of the operations of the Pure Reason, and he therefore insisted that the process of abstraction, to which he had submitted his conception of the supreme reality, had not resulted in a mere cipher, whose actual thought-value was blank nothingness, but that the cipher represented the only reality. When he attempted to describe the reality, he could only do so by calling it the unknowable, and adding a number of negations to specify what it was not. To say that the supreme reality is Brahma is simply to say that  $x$  equals  $x$ . Such a result would have ended in absolute scepticism in the East but for the religious nature of the Hindu and his realisation that to predicate an unknowable at all was to assert some knowledge of it. He was compelled to violate his own dictum when he made those very negations by which he sought to describe the indescribable Brahma, and he still further violated it

when he asserted a still further knowledge, namely, that he and Brahma were one.

Hindu thought has never advanced beyond the point then reached, for the simple reason that there is no beyond. The goal along the road of Pure Reason had been reached and the Hindu refused to recognise that there could be any other road. Hindu thought stops where Western thought would have stopped, if Kant had never written anything more than his *Kritik of Pure Reason* and that had been regarded as the last word of philosophy. The Hindu movement, however, being essentially religious, would not recognise the failure of the search, but proceeded to turn the result, which was purely negative from the philosophic standpoint, into a result which it made positive from the religious standpoint. The thinker who had failed to attain knowledge was regarded as having attained release from ignorance. The Brahma who had been discovered to be beyond consciousness is identified with the thinker's self. The complete failure of philosophy became the supreme triumph of religion. Such a manifest contradiction would never have survived a day but for the fact that it ministered to intellectual pride by asserting a transcendent knowledge as the goal of the *Gnyana marga*, while at the same time it appealed to the religious nature by its declaration of the oneness of God and Man as the final blessedness of the perfected saint.

One cannot but admire the strength of the religious conviction which enabled the Hindu thinker boldly to declare that the whole Universe might be unreal, but that God must be the supreme Reality. There is something magnificent in Faith thus turning the most crushing defeat which Reason has inflicted on Religion into an apparently perfect victory. It was a triumph of Faith over Reason, but it was not the victory of Truth. The defeat had been due to entrusting to Pure Reason a task for which she was incapable, and real victory could only be secured by realising this and seeking other aid. Later Hindu religious thought has attempted something in this direction in introducing the idea of the *Bhakti marga* (the way of Faith), but it has never acknowledged the failure of the *Gnyana marga*, and has always regarded the *Bhakti marga* as inferior. The effect of this upon the religious life of India has been injurious in the highest degree. It has tended to elevate knowledge above virtue ; to divorce morals from religion ; and to place the self on that throne which God alone can rightly occupy.

If the Hindu religious thought-movement is to advance it will have to recognise the insufficiency of the Pure Reason to arrive at a true knowledge of God, renounce its fictitious criterion of reality, and begin with that initial knowledge of God given to us in what Kant calls the Categorical Imperative. The mind acquires knowledge by

additions to that with which it starts. It erects a system of thought by building stone on stone, but the whole edifice rests, and for ever must rest, upon the foundation which is not made by us, but given to us. Every building rests, not upon what we call its foundations which we ourselves lay but, upon the solid earth. All true knowledge similarly rests upon that fundamental and initial knowledge given in self-consciousness. It is there that we feel the touch of the Universe on the one hand and the touch of God on the other. In the consciousness of a something which is not ourselves, and of that other something which is ourselves, with the relation between the two, we have the foundation for the erection of that knowledge of the Universe which it is the province of science to rear. In the consciousness of a Will which is not our own, and of another will which is our own, living and active, with the relation between the two, we have the foundation for the erection of that knowledge of God which it is the province of religion to rear. If we cannot trust this fundamental knowledge; if this is pure illusion, then there is no foundation for any superstructure of any kind, for we have nowhere to begin. Your building may reach the clouds, but it cannot begin there. You may build so high that you even pass through the clouds and leave the solid earth completely out of sight. You can only do so, however, by building true, and to build true you must

use the plumb-line which always connects you with that solid earth which is your foundation, and for ever keeps your centre of gravity within the area covered by your base. Let your centre of gravity, however, once fall without this area, and though you have reached the clouds, you will be quickly brought back again to the solid earth, and your building will be in ruins. You may speak about a transcendental knowledge in which all thought of earth is left behind and the soul dwells far above the clouds in a glory which is indescribable. Such a transcendental knowledge is without doubt the goal of a true *Gnyana marga*. It must be a superstructure of knowledge, however, resting on the solid fact of self-consciousness, or it is merely a daring flight of the imagination which carries you to some unknown point in space and leaves you unconnected with the earth you have left, or the heaven to which you have soared. If your transcendental knowledge is a true superstructure, built with the plumb line, the force of gravity is in its favour. If it is a mere flight into space, the force of gravity will, slowly at first, but with ever increasing speed, bring you down to earth again, with results far from pleasant to contemplate.

The conception of God which is in harmony with the modern standpoint, is not that of a Brahma, who is merely the negation of all reality knowable by us and who stands out of all relation

to us, but of One Who while He transcends all our conceptions of reality, yet includes them in a fulness of reality inconceivable and inexpressible. It is the conception of One Who while He transcends all known and knowable selves, is for ever that Self or Soul in Whom we all live and move and have our being, and between Whom and ourselves there is a relationship which abides for all time. There seems to be only one term which has sufficient wealth of content to stand as a suitable predicate for that Being, in Whom all live and Who yet lives in all; Who while transcending all human knowledge is yet immanent in human thought; Who while transcending our conceptions of personality is still not impersonal. That one term is the definite and yet indefinite word, Love; definite, in that it expresses a reality of which we are all conscious, and yet indefinite, in that it suggests depths we have not yet fathomed, and heights we have not yet scaled. God is Love, is a predicate which at one and the same time gives us the idea of One Who transcends even His own self-expression, but Who is yet immanent in that self-expression. It also suggests that conception of a Self between Whom and, ourselves there is a relation due to an essential unity, which, while it surpasses the mind's power to express, does not lie beyond the soul's power to feel. There is another term which expresses this relation between ourselves and God in as full and as rich a manner as

seems possible for us. It is the term Father; It unites us to that One Supreme Reality, Whose life is the life of all, and Whose love proceeding from Him to us, and returning from us to Him, is the systole and diastole movement of the vast cosmic process. All our expressions and all our thoughts prove defective so long as we seek to establish an identity between God and our perception of Him, for He must for ever transcend finite perception. God is our Father, and our Father is Love, are two predicates which formulate in the wealthiest terms which are available, our apprehension of that Self Who is not our self, but without Whom we should have no consciousness even of ourselves.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VEDANTIC CONCEPTION OF GOD

OF all the schools of philosophical religious thought in India the Vedantic is the one which is most characteristic of the Hindu religious thought-movement. No one who is at all acquainted with its tenets but must be struck with its acute thinking and its logical consistency. It is rightly regarded as the supreme triumph of Hindu religious thinking. It represents the goal beyond which Hindu thought cannot go, so long as it proceeds along the road which has been characteristic of every true Hindu thought-movement. If there is to be any progress at all it can only be by taking another path, for Vedantism has exhausted all the possibilities of the path which the Hindu mind has consistently followed through the whole course of its development. India has given birth to other systems, but Vedantism is in a very special sense distinctive of Hindu thought. We cannot but have a profound admiration for its absolute fidelity to the path it has chosen, and we must