of Jesus. It is, of course, true that the power of perception varies, and that there are views of the personality of Jesus which fall much below the theological conception. It must not be forgotten, however, that the theological conception is itself the outcome of a religious perception. It is here the same as it is in the case of Art. There may be many copies of the great masters in which the imaginative is more in evidence than the real, but the original itself is the result of a vision of reality, not of a mere creation of fancy.

In the modern conception of the Incarnation, therefore, it is the real humanity of Jesus which is the foundation upon which the doctrine must be constructed. An incarnation which does not result in a real man is a simulation and not a reality. The Church repudiated Docetism, but its repudiation was due rather to theological conceptions as to the work of Jesus than to any strong realisation of its contradiction of the very conception of incarnation. In almost all the controversies as to the person of Jesus, that which strikes the modern mind is the absoluteness of the distinction between Man and God which is the fundamental starting-point of orthodox and heterodox alike. That Jesus was a revelation of Divinity was accepted by both; that He was a revelation of humanity was accepted by neither. The Church held to the Divinity and the humanity of Jesus, but its conception of the absoluteness of the

gulf between the two was so pronounced that the mind, so long as it was perfectly free to think on the subject, hovered between the two, resting first on the one side and then on the other. If, however, such a gulf existed in fact as that imagined in thought, an incarnation would have been impossible. If the personality of Jesus reveals the human element in God, it also reveals the Divine element in humanity. If our conception of the nature of God is such as to exclude, not all, but any human element, and our conception of Man is such as to exclude any divine element, then an incarnation is an absolute contradiction in thought. God cannot become other than He is without ceasing to be God. If He becomes Man, it is, and indeed must be, because there is that in God which is human. If humanity is such that any Divinity is *ipso facto* excluded, then God has eternally excluded Himself from entering it.

Modern theology, however, is not chiefly concerned with such abstract reasoning. It turns to the actual facts revealed in the constitution of man and in the personality of Jesus. If our knowledge of God is to be something other than a creation of our own minds, it must be based on the manifestation of the Divine in the Universe and in ourselves. The only refuge from imposing our own conceptions of the Divine upon the Universe, which is a deification of it, is the

perception of the Divine in the Universe, and the formation of our theological conceptions out of those perceptions. There is an idolatry which consists in worshipping the creation of our own minds, just as there is an idolatry which consists in worshipping the creation of our own hands. It is the manifestation of the Divine as we perceive it in humanity which constitutes for us that highest perception of the Divine which is possible to us. To assert that that which we perceive in humanity as Divine is something essentially different, is to shut us off completely from any knowledge of God at all. To say that the love, justice, goodness and holiness we see manifested in human lives are essentially different in kind from what they are in God, is to falsify our perceptions by declaring that what we instinctively recognise as Divine is a pure illusion. Such a declaration, however, is incapable of proof, for we have no knowledge of these qualities as they may be supposed to exist in God. The only love of which we have any experience is the love which man shows to man. After formulating our conception of love we can extend it indefinitely and apply it to God. We must, however, have the conception to start with, and we only get this conception through our perception of its manifestation in man. The astronomer can deal with distances which utterly baffle all powers of perception, but he is dependent upon the three little

barleycorns which make the inch. The theologian may speak of the infinite love of God, may formulate a conception even of the Divine nature itself and declare that God is love, but he too is dependent upon the love that beams in the mother's face as she bends over her first-born. Man is the measure of all things with which he has to do, and even of God Himself so far as human thought is concerned, just as the little barleycorn is the measure by which alone we can represent those infinite distances which separate star from star and world from world.

It is the frank recognition of these facts, with all that they imply as to the constitution of man which explains the difference between the older and the newer method of approaching the question of the Incarnation. The older thought was dominated by conceptions of God which were divorced from the perception of God which had produced them. God was declared to be infinite love, but it was the adjective which dominated the thought rather than the substantive. Theologians were so taken up with the formulae by which they solved their problems connected with the Infinite and the Absolute, that they forgot the humble origin of the formulae. They were like astronomers working out their calculations of distance in infinite space, and unmindful of their entire dependence upon the humble little barleycorn whose size first furnished us with the

unit of length. Men were so intent on sounding the depths of the Divine nature that they forgot that their "fathoms" were after all nothing but outstretched human arms. They forgot that the Divine attributes of which they spoke with so much assurance were nothing more than the qualities they beheld in a Divine humanity. The charge of anthropomorphism to which this subjected them was a small thing compared with the effect it produced upon their conception of man and their formulation of a doctrine of the Incarnation. It placed a gulf between humanity and Divinity which was impassable from either side, and the bridges they attempted to construct in their endeavours to explain the personality of Jesus were attempts to build arches over distances which were unspannable. The modern mind sees in the personality of Jesus that the gulf has been bridged, but it also sees that the gulf is not the impassable gulf the older thought supposed. The two piers are much nearer together than we imagined.

The fundamental question with which we are here concerned is as to the relation of Jesus to humanity. Unless that is real the humanity is not a real humanity. The Virgin birth and the Nativity stories are matters upon which it is possible to lay far too much stress, either as regards their acceptance or rejection. The modern mind is undoubtedly sceptical as to their genuineness, while in most

cases it definitely rejects the accounts as quite unhistorical. It does this not simply as the result of historical criticism of the text, but chiefly because it does not feel the difficulty which the idea of a Virgin birth was intended to remove. Ordinary generation presents no obstacle to the idea of an Incarnation, except upon the assumption that human nature is essentially and necessarily sinful. We often forget the environment of the age in which the conception of the Virgin birth probably arose. Where man is not regarded as akin to God, the Divine kinship which is manifested in Jesus must be regarded as miraculous. Jesus can only be conceived of as Son of God from such a standpoint by the exclusion of the human father from any participation in His birth. If, as seems likely, the Nativity stories, or at least that part of them which refers to a Virgin birth, must be held to be theological creations, they were theological creations to account for psychological facts. The real humanity of Jesus, coupled with His ethical transcendence and unique God-consciousness, were the facts which had to be accounted for. To the mind of that age these facts necessitated such a presentation of His birth, whenever His birth became a subject of thought.

In Mark and John the subject of the birth is not an object of thought, and, therefore, there are no Nativity stories. Matthew, on the other hand,

is concerned with the relation of Jesus to the two great names in Jewish history and national life, Abraham and David. He, therefore, begins with a genealogy in which this relationship is satisfactorily shown, and he is therefore committed to some account of the Nativity. It must be confessed that there is an incongruity in tracing the descent through the male parent to Joseph, and then breaking the connection by the introduction of the words, "the husband of Mary who was the mother of Jesus." This incongruity would disappear if it were not for the story which follows, in which the paternity of Joseph is expressly denied. Standing alone the words might be justified on the ground that they introduced the more familiar name of the mother and would not necessarily imply that Joseph was not to be regarded as the father. The story which follows makes this, however, impossible. It is significant, however, that to Matthew the relation to David and Abraham is considered vital, and that this vital relation is traced through Joseph. Luke has evidently collected a number of Nativity stories which go back to the prediction of Elisabeth. A supernatural element is introduced even in the case of the birth of John the Baptist, and this element is still further emphasised in the case of the birth of Jesus. Both were great personalities, and the greatness is felt to demand some evidence of the extraordinary in their births. Luke's genealogy

equally traces the descent through Joseph, though it significantly carries it back to Adam, a son of God. A reconciliation of the two genealogies, upon which a great amount of ingenuity has been expended, must be regarded by an impartial mind as impossible.

Modern theology does not accept the accounts of a Virgin birth as in any true sense historical records of an actual event. Their origin, however, is not satisfactorily accounted for by assuming that they are pure myths due entirely to theological prepossessions. They are not mythical enough to be regarded as pure myths. In the mythical stories with which they are often compared, there is as much contrast as there is resemblance. There is a blending of the natural and the supernatural in the Nativity stories of the Gospels which is entirely wanting in the pure myth. The result is that the stories, though mythical, are yet destitute of the incongruous and the grotesque. The stories seem to point to something extraordinary in the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, but what that was it is impossible to say. To the age in which the conception of the Virgin birth arose Jesus seemed to be unaccountable apart from a virgin birth, and they found in the circumstances attending His birth material which suggested the account they gave of it. It must be remembered, however, that it is in the Gospels which give us the Nativity stories that we have the genealogies. These tables of

heredity show how the relation of Jesus to the family and race in which He was born was considered of prime importance. If the Virgin birth seems to separate Him from humanity, the genealogies link Him to humanity in the closest ties.

This real relation to humanity necessitates an entirely different conception of Incarnation from that which distinguishes the older thought. The difference may perhaps be best described as the difference between an ascent and a descent. The older thought regarded the Incarnation as a descent of the Divine into the human. The newer thought regards it as the ascent of the Divine through the human. There is an interesting difference between an ascent and a descent even in the Gospels. Matthew, the Jewish writer, starts his genealogical table with the great figure of Jewish history, Abraham, and brings it down step by step to Joseph, using the great word father to indicate the relationship. Luke, on the other hand, begins with Jesus Himself, and carries the relationship back step by step until he arrives at God Himself, using the great word son to indicate the kinship. The later thought of Luke is undoubtedly the richer, and its starting-point is the much more real figure of Jesus than the shadowy figure of Abraham. In much the same way the older theology, in its conception of the Incarnation, started with God and brought us down to Jesus

born of the Virgin Mary, with the result that the birth of Jesus was isolated from every other birth. The newer theology starts with a normal birth of Jesus, but carries us back even to the beginning of the vast and mighty cosmic process itself. In its thought the Incarnation is not a single miraculous event in time unconnected with and unrelated to all that has gone before. It is rather that mystery or hidden truth lying in the mind of God Who created all things with a view to the manifestation of that eternal purpose which finds its full expression in Jesus the Christ. *Incarnation, therefore, is not something which has* to be contrasted with evolution; it is evolution transfigured and glorified. Evolution is not an explanation of incarnation, but incarnation is rather the real explanation of evolution. The cosmic process, that is, is not a blind aimless movement; it is nothing less than a manifestation of the invisible God, a passing on from one glory to another, an unfolding of rich and ever richer beauty. It is the Word of God taking shape, Whose glory we behold reflected in the tiny dew-drop and the blade of grass, no less than in the firmament of glittering stars. This ascent of the Divine till it manifests itself in the glory of God in the face of Jesus, what is it but that the Divine first descended into the lowest depths that it might ascend through all the stages of the vast cosmic process to heights of glory which eye hath

not seen and which it hath not entered into the heart of man even to conceive? Long before evolution was discovered the theologian had come across the great principle and called it incarnation. As revealed in the personality of Jesus, however, the principle seemed so Divine that it was isolated and differentiated from all other manifestation of Divine activity. The vastness of the evolutionary process which modern Science has brought to light has broken down this barrier of separation, and the modern mind sees that through the process of the ages *one* increasing purpose runs, and that that one purpose is the manifestation of God. The process is, not an intrusion from without but, an evolution from within; it is not a descent from above but, an ascent from below.

Attempts have recently been made to differentiate the Divine manifested in the Universe from the Divine manifested in the personality of Jesus, as though the difference were not one of degree but of kind. The first is spoken of as evidence of the immanence of God, while the second is spoken of as evidence of the transcendence of God. That there is a difference in the two manifestations is, of course, admitted. The real question is as to how the difference is to be defined. Immanence and transcendence are two terms which contrast the revealed nature of God from the unrevealed but

inferred nature of God. The contrast is made to prevent the inference being drawn that the fulness of God is exhausted in the manifestation He has made. It is based upon the recognition that the noumenal is, and ever must be, more than the phenomenal. The contrast, however, does not imply that the nature of God as it is revealed is different in kind from the nature which is unrevealed. It means that the God Who reveals Himself must be greater than the God Who is revealed. God, as He is in His infinite fulness of being, must transcend even the fulness of being which is manifested in the cosmic process. We do not, however, distinguish between the revealed and the unrevealed God as though the one were real and the other unreal, as Hindu thought distinguishes between a noumenal and a phenomenal Brahma. Such a distinction would effectually exclude us from any real knowledge of God at all. Nor do we, on the other hand, identify the revealed and the unrevealed God, as though the content of the one coincided with and equalled that of the other. Such a conception would issue in an essentially Pantheistic conception of God. We mean that the God Who transcends the manifestation of Himself which He has made is the same God Who is immanent in the manifestation. Our knowledge which is derived from the manifestation is not knowledge of illusory being and therefore unreal knowledge; it is the

perception of real being and, therefore, it is real knowledge.

A clear perception of this distinction makes it impossible to sanction any attempt to distinguish between the Divine revealed in the cosmic process and the Divine revealed in the Incarnation, which involves a difference of kind rather than of degree. A difference of kind would involve the repudiation of all our knowledge of God derived from the manifestation of God revealed in the cosmic process. To set up a difference of kind between the immanent and the transcendent God, which this attempted differentiation of evolution and incarnation implies, is to set up two Gods, the Immanent and the Transcendent, the One manifesting Himself in the cosmic process and the Other in the Incarnation. Moreover, it is a misuse of the term transcendent to apply it even to the nature of God as revealed in the personality of Jesus. If the manifestation in Jesus exhausts the fulness of God's being, then He is no longer transcendent. The difference between God in Jesus and God in Nature is a difference between two mediums of manifestation and not between two Gods. One cannot be described as the Transcendent God and the other as the Immanent God, except by implying that there are two and not one. The real difference between the two manifestations must be sought, not by any arbitrary distinction in the region of

mind but, in the place where it really exists, namely, in the difference between the personality of Jesus and that of other men. To express that difference in any other terms than a difference of degree is to contradict the very conception of incarnation. If the difference in the personality of Jesus from that of other men be a difference of kind, then to speak of His humanity at all is merely to confuse thought.

It is quite possible to make a distinction between the two terms God-man and Divine-man so as to imply a difference, not merely of degree but, of kind. Such a distinction, however, must be taken with all that it carries with it. In the term God-man there are two nouns, the first of which is used as an adjective or it is not. If it is used as an adjective it can do nothing more than qualify the noun, and in that case it is merely the equivalent of the true adjective, Divine. If it is used, however, not as an adjective but as a noun, then it means that the two, God and Man, exist as it were side by side, neither being essentially affected by the other, or else that the two together form a combination which is partly one and partly the other, but actually neither the one nor the other. If the two exist side by side, the result is a duality and not a unity. If the two form a combination, the result is a something which is neither Divine nor human, but half of one and half of the other. Both these are possible as

thought-conceptions, but what is not possible is to call either of them a true Incarnation. If the Incarnation means anything at all it means that God became man. A God-man, in either of the two senses above described, is not a man, whatever else it may be. A man riding on a horse may be called a horseman, but the word horse merely qualifies the other noun, man. The horse upon which the man rides might be called a man-horse, instead of a riding-horse, but the word man would in that case be nothing more than an adjective to describe the kind of horse. The two, that is, are not two nouns, but a noun and an adjective. A centaur, on the other hand, is a definite term applicable to the conception of a figure supposed to be half man and half horse. The difficulty in the case of such a term, however, is that it is a conception and not a perception. We can only judge of what the Incarnation really is by our perception of that which we see in the personality of Jesus. That personality is neither a duality nor a combination; it is a unity. The Divinity of Jesus involves a divinity of man as man, from which it differs in degree, but not in kind. To take away a Divinity from humanity is in the last resort to take away humanity from Jesus. If Man is in no real sense Divine, then Jesus was in no real sense human. If Jesus was in any real sense human, then Man is also in a real sense Divine. These conceptions of the

Incarnation are all involved in our perception of what is involved in the personality of Jesus.

Incarnation is a conception which is absolutely inconsistent with any Deistic conception of God. The older Unitarianism recognised this and definitely rejected the conception in the interests of a strict and consistent Deism. It rejected the Divinity of Jesus, not from any failure to recognise the Divine in Jesus, but because it felt that to attribute Divinity to Jesus was to take away His true humanity. The gulf between God and Man was regarded as impassable from either side. God could no more become Man than Man could become God. This gulf was just as absolute to the Trinitarian, who in this respect was as Deistic as the Unitarian. His conception of the Godhead, however, as a Trinity enabled him to feel that the gulf might be crossed from the Divine side by predicating an Incarnation of the second Person in the Trinity. He no more asserted, or thought of asserting, that the Godhead became Man, than the Unitarian thought of asserting that God became Man. The real distinction between the two was not in their recognition of the Divine in Jesus; it was fundamentally a distinction in their respective conceptions of God. They were both equally Deistic in their sense of the gulf between Man and God. They differed in their conception of the relation of Jesus to God, because in the Unitarian's conception of God there was no

room for a relation while in the Trinitarian's there was. Modern Unitarian and modern Trinitarian have both departed from the Deistic standpoint, and precisely for the same reason, that it is not consistent with facts. The absolute separation between God and the Universe which Deism implies makes any real connection between the two impossible. The creation of the Universe is as inconsistent with a Deistic conception of God as a providential and immanent control of the Universe. A truer perception of the facts has shown us that the whole cosmic process is inexplicable, save as we infer a something or some one working within the process which is at least equal to its production. This the religious nature recognises as God. It is no longer, however, the conception of a God Who is a *Deus ex machina*, but an immanent God, and the Universe is no longer a machine, but a body. This change in the conception of God is true both as regards Unitarian and Trinitarian, and it is the result of a clearer perception of the facts. The same thing is noticeable in regard to the personality of Jesus. In no direction has Unitarian thought shown a greater difference from the older thought than in the terms in which it now speaks of Jesus. It speaks of the Divinity of Jesus in a way which would have been fiercely repudiated by the older thought, and regarded as idolatrous. It does so, however, without in the slightest degree retracting

its declaration of belief in the correctness of its conception of the Divine nature to which it owes its name. The change is due to a clearer perception of the facts which meet us in a study of the personality of Jesus. There is that in Jesus which cannot be adequately described without using the word Divine. No *a priori* conception of the Divine nature can justify us in calling that human which we feel to be truly Divine. On the other hand, the Trinitarian has by no means stood still, either as regards his doctrine of the nature of God or of the person of Jesus. He recognises the immanence of God in a way which the older thought would have repudiated as Pantheistic. He does so without in the slightest degree admitting that he has departed from the true Theistic standpoint. Equally pronounced is the altered way in which he speaks of the real humanity of Jesus. His recognition of the real limitations of Jesus, of His participation in the incorrect and imperfect conceptions of His age and race; the repudiation of the conception of the impeccability of Jesus, and insistence on the real moral probation to which He was subjected; are matters which would have exposed him to the charge of rank heresy in the old days, and do not always keep him free from taint even in these modern days. His doctrine of the person of Jesus has been greatly modified by a study of the actual facts in the life of Jesus, as that life is presented under

the influence of a true historical criticism. Orthodox theology, however, has not yet been carefully and frankly revised. It has contented itself with making large annotations in the text, with the result that the annotations are often inconsistent with the text. This is especially the case with the chapter on the Incarnation. The text here is a Deistic text, while the annotations are all Theistic, and so pronouncedly Theistic that they contradict the text. Moreover, the annotations are so numerous, and based upon such entirely different readings, that an authorised recension of the text is the only thing that can save the orthodox position. So long as such a recension is delayed it necessitates the appearance of the many recensions of individuals which orthodoxy too often dismisses with the contemptuous remark that they are not only unauthorised, but unscientific. The latter charge may be as true as the former, but the far more excellent way is the production of a recension which is both.

Hindu religious thought has also the conception of Incarnation, and it is interesting to note the particular aspect of the doctrine which the Oriental mind has emphasised. Between the philosophical religious thought of India, as represented by Vedantism, and the spiritual religious thought which finds expression in worship of the incarnations of Vishnu, supreme amongst which is the Krishna cult, there is a contradiction which must

be regarded as absolute. Brahma, the One and Sole Reality, the One without a second, is so conceived that an incarnation is, strictly speaking, unthinkable. An incarnation of Brahma, as thus conceived, would be the establishment of relation on the part of One who is incapable of manifestation, a union between that which is alone real and that which is essentially unreal. In philosophic Hinduism, therefore, there is no incarnation of God at all, nor can there be from the nature of the conception of God characteristic of Hindu philosophic thought. The basis for any conception of incarnation is found in the idea of a phenomenal Brahma, Ishwara, the world-framer. This phenomenal Brahma is posited by Vedantic thought in order to account for the Universe, which its conception of Brahma compels it to regard as unreal. The relation of this phenomenal Brahma to the noumenal Brahma is the one and only thing which Vedantism admits to be incapable of explanation. In Vedantic thought the phenomenal Brahma is no more real than the Universe. It asserts that there are degrees of reality, one thing being more real than another, or one thing being less unreal than another. There is a contradiction here which is absolute, because if Brahma is the Sole Reality, to speak of degrees of reality or degrees of unreality is unintelligible. The contradiction is involved in the fundamental conception of a One which is

an absolute simplicity. Vedantic thought does not arrive at its conception of God by a perception of the Divine. It starts with an *a priori* conception which it is for ever imposing upon its perceptions. According to its *a priori* conception the Divine is absolutely distinct from the Universe. That which it perceives in the Universe as Divine, therefore, can be nothing more than illusory. This *a priori* conception is constantly vitiating every conclusion at which perception arrives. The Universe cannot be a manifestation of Brahma, says the Hindu philosopher, for Brahma does not manifest; Brahma simply is. The Universe, however, does reveal God, says Hindu religious thought, and it reveals nothing but God. Just so, replies the philosopher, but the God it reveals is not Brahma, the One and Sole Reality, but a phenomenal Brahma, knowing which you only know Avidya, Ignorance; perceiving which you only perceive Maya, Illusion.

Hindu philosophy allows the fullest liberty to the religious nature to formulate its perceptions derived from the relation the soul sustains with God and the Universe, but it insists that the conception of the mind as to the nature of the ultimate reality shall stamp as unreal every conclusion at which perception may arrive. The Hindu religious nature has assented to this domination of the intellect with a unanimity which is remarkable, and with a result which has been disastrous to the

religious nature. It has enthroned God, not as He is or as He has revealed Himself, but as the human mind has conceived He must be, in the supreme place, and it has robbed the manifestation of God in the Universe of all reality. It is necessary to bear this in mind in considering the Hindu idea of incarnation, because the Oriental conception, while having points of contact with the Occidental, is essentially different.

It must be understood in the construction of any theory of incarnation which will be applicable to Hindu religious thought, that the avatar (incarnation) is not an incarnation of God, as He really is, but solely of an unreal and illusory Brahma. Vishnu represents this phenomenal Brahma conceived of in that aspect of his illusory existence which is described as that of Preserver and Sustainer, while Siva is this phenomenal Brahma conceived of as Destroyer or Resolver. Creation, Preservation, and Resolution or Destruction thus constitute the Hindu Triad, which, however, is purely phenomenal and the activities are purely illusory. It is Vishnu who is conceived of as incarnating, though so-called incarnations of Brahma and of Siva are occasionally mentioned. The avatars of Vishnu, however, are the true incarnations of Hindu religious thought. It is remarkable that these incarnations reveal some sort of an ascending order, beginning with the fish, ascending to the tortoise, the boar,

the half-man and half-lion, to the dwarf, and finally to the human incarnations of Rama, Krishna, and Buddha. These lower forms of incarnation present no difficulty to Hindu thought, because the phenomenal Brahma is conceived of as pervading all things. The form of the avatar is merely a cloak which is used as a disguise. The true object is not to reveal, but to conceal the deity. In all the incarnations some object is aimed at for which it is necessary to assume a disguise, and the accomplishment of the special aim is the sole object of importance. A manifestation of the nature or character of God is apparently not even thought of, and the nature of the means adopted in accomplishing the object is equally unimportant. The religious ideas which are thus seeking to find expression in these stories of the incarnations are all vitiated and distorted by the underlying conception that the gods, and Vishnu as chief of them, are all purely phenomenal beings having no real existence. Actions and motives, therefore, which would be utterly unthinkable in connection with God, as conceived in the Western sense, are attributed to the avatars without even a suggestion of impropriety. The human avatars are more truly deifications than incarnations in the strict sense.

The contradiction between the philosophic and the religious thought of Hinduism is probably most pronounced and best illustrated in the

Krishna avatar. The Krishna of the Puranas and the Krishna of the *Bhagavadgita* are not only different figures; they are utterly inconsistent figures. The Puranic Krishna is an avatar quite after the popular Hindu conception; the Krishna of the *Gita* is a mere dramatic creation. The discourse between Krishna and Arjuna is essentially a philosophic discussion on the relation of the individual to the supreme soul. As such it is in harmony with the philosophic basis of all Hindu thought, and its prime object is the reconciliation of all the conflicting schools. The so-called historic circumstances, however, and its alleged place in the *Mahabharata* are utterly opposed to the philosophic basis on which the whole discussion rests. From the religious standpoint Krishna is an incarnation of the god Vishnu disguised as a charioteer, and he appears as the religious instructor of the Pandava warrior and hero, Arjuna, for the express purpose of showing him that salvation is attainable in the faithful discharge of the ordinary duties of life performed in whole-hearted devotion to God. This is the religious *motif* of the work, coloured with the religious ideas of Hindu Pantheism. It is this true religious *motif* which gives to the *Gita* its religious value, a value which it will never lose. From the philosophic standpoint, however, Krishna must be regarded as the Supreme Brahma, the Sole Reality, whose incarnation is unthinkable and whose

essence is pure undifferentiated Being. The whole aim of the discussion is to show the absolute identity of the individual and the Supreme Soul together with the utter unreality of the whole Universe. The philosophy and the religion, therefore, are here in hopeless contradiction. Krishna cannot both be and not be the noumenal Brahma. If he is an incarnation of Vishnu, as the religious standpoint demands, then all the references to himself must be interpreted as referring to the phenomenal Brahma, in which case they are a flat contradiction of the philosophic standpoint, and a refutation of the whole argument. On the other hand, if Krishna is the Supreme Being, as the philosophic standpoint demands, he cannot be an incarnation of Vishnu, and the whole religious purpose of the *Gita* is destroyed. It is this dilemma which is constantly presented to Hindu thought. Either the philosophy or the religion has to be abandoned, for the one is irreconcilable with the other. The Indian mind has had to choose between these two alternatives all through its history, and the effect of the choice is seen both in the past and in the present history. In the religious evolution of India a subtle metaphysical mind has contended with a sensitive religious nature, with the result that philosophy and religion have both in turn dominated rather than assisted each other. The rise of Buddhism was a revolt of the religious nature against the tyranny of Brahminical meta-

physics quite as much as against the pretensions of Brahminical priestcraft. Its so-called atheistical teaching was a protest against the value of a purely metaphysical conception of God. Buddha felt that the fundamental conception upon which the metaphysical Brahmin based religion was incapable of ministering to the religious nature. The real Brahma was a mere metaphysical conception, while the gods of the Vedas were but phenomenal and not real. Like a modern Pragmatist he turned away from mere metaphysical subtleties to a consideration of the things which had real value as a means of escaping the constant revolutions of the wheel of life. With his simple creed and his beautiful life Buddha incarnated in his own person the religious ideal of his people and, before the absolute sincerity and whole-hearted devotion of his followers, Brahmanism retreated discredited and discomfited.

For a time the religious nature of the Hindu had the field to itself, and the rapid spread of Buddhism abroad shows how strong and vigorous that nature can be when it is fed and nourished. What Brahmin metaphysical subtlety could not do, Brahmin ingenuity accomplished, and Buddhism was subjugated not by force of arms, but by diplomatic art. Buddha was incorporated in the Hindu pantheon, and represented as an incarnation of Vishnu. It is extremely probable that it was to this astute policy of Brahmanism that

Hinduism owes its elaboration of the doctrine of incarnation. Be this as it may, it is certain that the conception of incarnation is a contradiction of the conception of Brahma which underlies Hindu metaphysic. The *Bhagavadgita* was an attempt at a reconciliation of the metaphysical mind and the intensely religious nature of India. It was evidently written by one who was as intensely religious as he was subtly metaphysical. Its success, as a work of consummate art, may be judged by the fact that it is admired by all the sects, however diverse in opinion. Each sect finds in it the strongest confirmation of its own most cherished opinions and the truest refutation of the opinions of others. The dilemma, however, remains exactly where it was, and, in fact, is most pronounced in the very book which was to resolve it. Religious India takes one or other of the two alternatives offered to its choice, and divides into a metaphysical India with its *Gnyana marga* and a spiritual India with its *Bhakti marga*. The two ways, however, are not converging lines meeting at a common centre; they are parallel lines which never meet.

East and West have been confronted with the same great religious problem,—the construction of a worthy and adequate conception of God. In their manner of treating the problem there are many similarities and some striking differences. In both we see the same dominance of the mind

over the spirit, with the result that a conception of the mind has tended over and over again to nullify the perception of the spirit. In the West the Deistic *a priori* conception of God dominated religious thought and rendered the perception of the Divine in the Universe and in Man null and void. In the East the Vedantic *a priori* conception of a metaphysical Brahma has dominated the religious thought of India, rendering any perception of the Divine in the Universe impossible. There is, however, a remarkable contrast which is worth noticing. The Deistic conception of the West affected the relation of God to the Universe and to Man. The Vedantic conception of the East affected the relation of God to the Universe only. In Vedantic thought the Universe is a mere appearance, while the soul of Man is identified not with the phenomenal Brahma, but with the noumenal Brahma. In both East and West appears the conception of incarnation as distinct from mere deification. There is also a similar tendency both in the East and in the West to represent incarnation as a mere assumption of a human body, rather than as the real presence of the Divine within the limits of human personality. In the East, incarnation is the descent of the Divine with a view to the accomplishment of some object, and for that purpose the Divine is concealed and disguised. In the West, the Incarnation is with a view to the manifestation of the Divine nature

within the limits of human personality. The dominance of Vedantic thought makes the Hindu conception of incarnation to be that of the work of the phenomenal Brahma, and in no true sense a revelation of God as understood in the West.

The great aim of the human mind has been to conceive God, while the great aim of the human spirit has been to perceive God. Conception, however, has been unwilling to wait on perception. The *a priori* assumption is more attractive than the *a posteriori* conclusion. In modern religious thought, however, a true conception is the result of a real perception. God can be recognised long before He can be described. We can indicate what is Divine long before we can predicate what the Divine is. The soul erects its altar to the unknown God long before apostle or prophet arises to tell it who the unknown God is. The Incarnation of God in Jesus furnishes us with the highest manifestation of the Divine which has been made. By means of it we may hope to formulate a conception of God which is at once worthy and adequate. That Incarnation, however, is not an isolated event having no connection with anything which has preceded it. It is not a contradiction, but a confirmation of that unfolding of the Divine which evolution, rightly interpreted, reveals. It is at once a revelation both of Divinity and of humanity. No man has seen God at any time, but we have seen in the personality of Jesus,

the Divine in a measure and in a pureness which we have seen nowhere else. If the Theism of the West is to complete its emancipation from the old Deistic conception, it can only do so as it interprets the relation between the Divine and the human as that relation is revealed in the person of Jesus.

The Incarnation is not merely the manifestation of God; it is equally the revelation of ideal humanity. If as we gaze upon the glory revealed in the face of Jesus we exclaim that this must be the Son of God, it is equally true that as we look upon His perfect humanity no less revealed in His deeds and life, we are forced to exclaim that this must be the Brother for whom we have waited so long. If God is the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, He must also be the Our Father to Whom our Brother taught us to pray. If there is a humanity indissolubly joined to the Divinity in the person of Jesus, then there is a Divinity indissolubly joined to humanity in our personality too. Whatever alterations in our conception of the Divine nature these perceptions involve must be made, for it is not by confining ourselves to that which we have already comprehended that true knowledge grows, but by admitting every fresh apprehension of the truth. In the same way, if Vedantism is to complete its explanation it must emancipate itself from the true illusion created by its own mind of an unreal Universe standing over against a Brahma, who is the Sole Reality, but

with which the Universe has absolutely no relation. It can only do this as it recognises an Incarnation which reveals in an ethical radiance and a mystic consciousness which are unique the glory of the true and real God. It is in the Divine Incarnation in Jesus the Christ that the Hindu religious nature will find its true satisfaction. It is in the interpretation of that Divine Incarnation that the Hindu philosophical mind will achieve its greatest triumph and render its highest service to the world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

CHRISTIANITY is not merely the religion of The Christ; it is the religion of The Christ Who was crucified. The Cross is as essential to the religion as the Christ. It is easy to regard both as mere myths, but the religion which emerges as the result of the process is a mythical Christianity having no real connection with historic Christianity. To find a Christ and a Cross in the solar myth is not at all difficult; the difficulty is to evolve a Christianity from the solar myth which bears any resemblance to the Christianity of history. Historic Christianity may be made mythical, but mythical Christianity cannot be made historic. In the same way it is possible to represent Christianity as the religion of Jesus, the Ideal Man, and to forget the grim fact that the Ideal Man was crucified. The result may be the production of an ideal religion perfectly adapted to ideal men, but it will bear little resemblance to that historic Christianity which

exercised its wonderful influence on actual men. It is the Cross, whatever interpretation we may put upon it, which has been the distinctive feature of historic Christianity. The Cross has affected The Christ quite as much as The Christ has affected the Cross. For the explanation of the Christianity of history, a Christ without a Cross would be as inadequate as a Cross without a Christ. The death of Jesus, that is, is as significant as His life. Both mutually interpret each other, and the religion which arises as the result of the perception of the significance of the revelation, not only includes both factors but, interprets them in the light they each throw upon the other. The crucified Christ is of necessity an entirely different conception from The Christ. It must be remembered, however, that it was not the mere conception of The Christ which produced Christianity; it was essentially the conception of The Christ Who had been crucified.

The religious significance of the death of Jesus is, and must be, the result, not of any *a priori* conceptions deduced from other religious ideas but, of the interpretation of the actual facts. Theology must not impose its ideas on the historic facts; it must first perceive the real significance in the facts, and from that perception formulate its theological conception. Many theories of the Atonement are perfectly logical deductions from their premisses, but they are anything but theo-

logical inductions from the facts. They are entirely mythical, in the sense that the principles they enunciate are not found in the facts, but imposed upon them. If the death of Jesus has any religious significance, it will doubtless exhibit certain correspondencies with others to be found both in Jewish and in Gentile religions. The true significance, however, must be found in the facts and not in the correspondencies. If, for instance, there is anything more than a merely superficial resemblance between the slaying of the Paschal lamb and the crucifixion, due to the date of the crucifixion synchronising with the Passover festival, it must be sought for in the facts which led to the death, interpreted in the light of their own true significance. To explain the death of Jesus by parallels drawn from the Jewish conception of the Atonement is to impose a religious meaning on an event rather than to see the religious significance in an event.

If the religious significance in the death of Jesus is so great that it has abolished for all time the slaying of the Paschal lamb, it must itself present such distinct and different elements as will account for the effect it has undoubtedly produced. The religious thought and feeling which find expression in the sentiment that "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin," is something much deeper than a mere renunciation of animal sacrifices; it

represents an entirely different conception of sacrifice itself. The Jewish sacrificial system is the embodiment of religious conceptions in ceremonial rites which are framed with a view to illustrate these conceptions. The conceptions, that is, are primary; the sacrificial rites are secondary. The lamb is sacrificed with the consciousness on the part of the sacrificer of the symbolical character of the act. However much this symbolism may be lost sight of in later ages, it was undoubtedly present in the institution of the ceremony. In the sacrificial act, when instituted, the religious significance was not perceived as contained in the act; the religious significance was expressly put into the act. The slaying of the lamb, therefore, was no longer a mere slaughter; it became a sacrifice.

Christian theology has not infrequently treated the death of Jesus as though it were ceremonial rather than actual. This is to give an entirely fictitious character to the death and to make the whole theology based upon it utterly unreal. The death of Jesus was no more a sacrificial ceremony than the Cross was a sacrificial altar. Theology must build on an historic crucifixion, and that crucifixion was a brutal murder concealed under the disguise of a judicial execution. Religious thought and reflection may transfigure, but they must not transpose. The priests were not there to make an offering to God; they

were there to wreak their vengeance upon their victim. The victim is not the victim of an angry God; He is the victim of angry men. The Cross is not an altar; it is a scaffold. If we find in these events a deep religious significance, it must be because we see it in the facts, not because we either transpose the facts or impose religious ideas on the facts.

While it is necessary to insist that the death of Jesus must be looked at as an historic event connected with the passions and motives of the various actors in the scene, it is equally necessary to insist that it possesses unique elements which lift it above the local and temporary, and give it a significance which is universal and permanent. The true nature of any event is determined, not by the time and place in which it occurs but, by the nature of the forces whose action it discloses. John Hampden's refusal to pay ship-money cannot be understood or appreciated apart from the great struggle between King and Parliament which followed it and gave it its significance. Luther's burning of the Papal Bull cannot be estimated aright apart from the long conflict between Pope and People which issued in the Reformation. Hampden and Luther in the respective political and religious spheres were not mere individuals; they were in a very real sense incarnations of the two great nations, England and Germany. Their acts, therefore, were not

mere personal actions of a temporary and local character; they were embodiments of national movements, and as such possess national significance. The defiance of the King by the subject and of the Pope by the priest are totally misconceived unless the personal and local are subordinated to the national and universal, as seen from the wider standpoint which the subsequent history shows to be the true viewpoint.

In the same way the death of Jesus cannot be interpreted aright unless we perceive those larger issues which the unique personality of Jesus and the conflict of different ideals present. The Cross of Jesus must be seen in perspective and viewed in the light which history throws upon it. When so seen, the scaffold becomes something more than a scaffold; the execution is seen to be something more than the expiation of a political offence. The offence which the Cross presented to the religious mind is not merely removed; it is entirely transformed into a ground of glorying. The public execution has not only been redeemed from the infamy attached to it; it has been entirely altered in character, so that instead of being regarded as the exhibition of human hatred it has come to be regarded as the supreme manifestation of Divine love. To attribute all this to the alchemy of religious faith is either to deny that the change has been really effected, or else

it is merely to transfer the wonder which confronts us at the end of the process to the beginning, where it is a greater wonder still. If alchemy is the correct word, then the transmutation is not real but imaginary. In that case, however, we are confronted with the extraordinary fact that the verdict of history is on the side of the imaginary, for it shows us that the effect of the imaginary is more permanent than the effect of reality. If, on the other hand, the transmutation is admitted, then religious faith is a veritable philosopher's stone of priceless value. Is it not, however, a much more reasonable explanation to assume that instead of any transmutation we have the results of Time's assay, which shows us that what was regarded as a mere piece of rock was in reality a nugget of pure gold?

There are two points of view from which the death of Jesus, regarded as an historical event, must be looked at if we are to arrive at any correct interpretation of its meaning. We must look at it from the point of view of the actors in the scene, and also from the wider standpoint of the principles which were involved. If there is no religious significance in the actual event, then none can be got out of it. The death of Jesus was a grim and terrible tragedy, and any explanation which ignores the essential parts played in it by the real actors is artificial and unreal. The tragedy was not the tragedy of drama, in which

the actors assume parts; it was the tragedy of real life in which those who took part in it worked out their destinies. From the wider standpoint in which the scene comes before us as the conflict of principles, the dramatic element of necessity comes in, and those taking part in the actual tragedy of real life are seen to be at the same time representing a scene in the greater tragedy of universal life. Their real part in this larger tragedy, however, is determined by the actual part they played in the smaller, and not *vice versa*. The true test as to the correctness of the representation in the drama, therefore, is its agreement with the presentation made in the actual tragedy. Theology has by no means observed this essential distinction, with the result that it has imposed its dramatic readings on to its historical reading, thus converting history into drama, and drama into history. There is both drama and history, but the drama must be constructed out of the history, and not imposed upon it.

It is clear from the narratives that the leaders of the two great religious parties, Pharisees and Sadducees, in temporary alliance, were directly responsible for the death of Jesus. It is also equally clear that the people were accessories. The motives which swayed these different actors were varied, but they must at least have found some common ground of agreement. It seems

also clear from the narratives that their action was partly religious and partly political. The political, however, arose out of the religious. If we bear these facts in mind, it is not difficult to see that the common hostility, exhibited by these diverse parties amongst the actors, is founded upon a general agreement that Jesus was dangerous to the aims and purposes of each. It was not that His aims and purposes differed from those of either of the two great parties, which caused them to combine together for His destruction; it was rather because they saw in Him something which was dangerous to their own positions and to the safety and security of the existing order His uncompromising opposition to the religious ideals they represented was sufficient to arouse their animosity, but it was evidently the fear which His acceptance by the people as the Messiah engendered in their minds which led to their combining against Him. He was a Messiah whom none could accept with any hope of furthering their particular aims, while His own aims were of such a character as not only to be unacceptable, but in their opinion to be doomed to failure. From His success they realised they had nothing to gain, while from His failure they had everything to fear.

The political charge which was formulated against Jesus, when the case was transferred to Pilate's court, was not a mere device for securing

His death. Between the blasphemy for which the religious tribunal condemned Him, and the speaking against Caesar with which He was charged in the Roman court, there is a distinct connection. He claimed to be the Messiah, a claim which the religious leaders repudiated. He was, therefore, according to the only conception of Messiahship possible to them, a rebel against Caesar. Though the political crime of sedition would have been a merit in their eyes if He had been an acceptable and acknowledged Messiah, their repudiation of His claim made it possible for them to fall back on the political offence as a means of securing that condemnation which they had themselves pronounced on the religious offence. A non-political Messiah was from the standpoint of both Pharisee and Sadducee an impossible conception. Moreover, in the state of Jewish national life at the time, the Messianic claim could not be made without a realisation of the danger it involved. The religious idea was no doubt fundamental, but the political idea was dominant in the minds of leaders and people.

The political danger could only be avoided by the acceptance of the religious idea. It was this consideration which compelled Jesus to declare Himself. On His acceptance or rejection depended the fate of the nation itself. The political conception was a standing danger, deliverance from which could only be obtained by the acceptance

of the religious ideal for which Jesus stood. He foresaw the disaster which the political conception prognosticated. To Jesus both Pharisee and Sadducee were *blind leaders of the blind*, not merely as regards their religious guidance, but also as regards their political leadership. His assumption, therefore, of the rôle of Messiah was not the result of a desperate bid for personal advantage; it was a deliberate attempt to save the nation from the ruin He foresaw, a ruin which so soon followed His own death. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem is meaningless, unless we see that it was of the nature of a forlorn hope forced upon Him by the conception of Messiahship which the leaders of His nation were fomenting in the minds of the people. To both parties Jesus was a man Who had undertaken a part for which He was not fitted and which He did not at all understand. As a religious teacher and healer He was probably obnoxious to them, but He was in no sense dangerous to them. It was the political aspect of the case, which His public entry into Jerusalem and His popularity with the masses had emphasised, which turned their dislike into hatred and their contempt into violent opposition.

In their capacity as religious leaders and teachers both parties had been discredited in the public eye by every encounter they had had with Him. His open assumption of the character of

Messiah had given a political turn to events of which the two great parties did not fail to take full advantage. Their first act was to try and alienate popular sympathy which had so emphatically pronounced in His favour on the occasion of His public entry. The question as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar was designed with the greatest astuteness. It was put forward with the object of securing a definite pronouncement on the political question of the day which would resolve any doubt there might be in the minds of a few of the leaders who were inclined to think that the mission of Jesus had no political significance. Men of the stamp of Nicodemus and the young Ruler make it clear that, however few in number, there were such even amongst the leaders. The speech of Caiaphas, with its contemptuous dismissal of the scruples of conscience, makes this quite clear. The chief object of the deputation, however, was to alienate popular sympathy. The whole of His public life and teaching made it pretty certain that Jesus would not declare against the paying of tribute. They felt, therefore, that there was little risk that His popularity would be increased as the result of the deputation. While His answer covered them with confusion, it effected its main object in at least damping the enthusiasm of the people. The admiration for the answer was momentary. The fact that He had not declared against the obnoxious

Roman tribute, however, could not fail to alienate popular sympathy.

The effect amongst the leaders themselves was, doubtless, to remove the hesitation of any who shrank from taking definite action against Jesus. It emphasised the conviction that He was assuming a part for which He was quite unequal, and that nothing but trouble and possible disaster were to be expected if matters were left alone. The speech of Caiaphas is that of one who knows his audience thoroughly, and is a revelation of a good deal of the previous discussion. Its abrupt and impatient commencement—"Ye know nothing at all"—shows us how, in his opinion, the real question for which they had met together had been shirked by those who had spoken, and indicates also that many in the Council had been averse to taking any strong action in the matter. Some had, doubtless, expressed the opinion that Jesus was a negligible factor in the political sphere Whom they could easily afford to despise. Others had sought to emphasise the heretical character of His teaching with a view to showing that He ought at least to be reprimanded. A few had probably urged that not only was He harmless from the political standpoint, but that He was a good and kindly soul, Whose deeds of healing had made Him popular, and that there was no need to proceed to extreme measures in dealing with Him. Caiaphas breaks in upon these discussions in fierce

impatience at their irrelevancy. What is the use of discussing the person when it is the position He occupies which constitutes the real danger? He may be either the harmless fool some have represented Him, or the misguided heretic others have asserted, or even the kindly benefactor a few have tried to make out. What, however, has all this to do with the plain fact which stares them in the face,—that to the people He is a political figure and nothing else? Whether He has taken this position Himself, or simply been thrust into it by events makes absolutely no difference. He is not the Messiah. Of that there is no question, and no one has even suggested that He is. He can be nothing but a Messianic Pretender, therefore, in fact, whether He regards Himself as Messiah or not. From a Messianic Pretender nothing but disaster to themselves and ruin to the nation can come. Why hesitate, therefore, in the course to be taken, through scruples as to the guilt or innocence of the person who occupies the position? It is the position which is the danger, and any one occupying it, whether innocent or guilty, must bear the consequences. The alternative before them is not a question of the life or death of this man, Jesus; it is the alternative of the life and death of thousands, the ruin of an individual or the destruction of the nation.

The force of such an appeal is in the vividness with which it concentrates attention on the actual,

and the carefulness with which it studiously avoids any discussion of the ideal. It concedes every opposed claim, while making it evident that its own claim must have the preference. It is not merely a skilful appeal to self-interest; it invests self-interest with the sacredness of a duty forced upon us by the course of events. What-we-must is represented as but another form of what-we-ought, while what-we-would is courteously promised a future interview. The death of Jesus was represented as a sacrifice which political necessity imperiously demanded. Jesus was the victim Whom Fate clearly demanded; they were the priests whom Fate as clearly marked out to officiate at the sacrifice. The deed which the whole world repudiates as execrable was made to assume the guise of a sacred duty. The event which history shows to have involved the destruction of Jerusalem and of Jewish national life was represented as certain to issue in the salvation of the nation. The death of Jesus was due neither to the malice of His enemies alone, nor to the apathy of His friends alone, but to both together. It was not the result of religious bigotry alone, nor of political jealousy alone, but of both. The line of policy which the acute intellect of Caiaphas marked out was the resultant of all the forces, religious and political, which were represented in the Sanhedrin and in the nation. Jesus was rejected as the Messiah by the

nation, because He was not the Messiah for the nation. He was rejected by all parties, because He was acceptable to no party.

Important though it is to understand the motives and aims which were operative amongst those who were responsible for the crucifixion, it is of still greater importance to discover, if possible, what were the motives which led Jesus to take the path that ended at Calvary. Apart from all theological prepossessions, it is quite clear from the Synoptic narratives that, up to the time of the arrest itself, escape was perfectly easy. His nightly withdrawal from Jerusalem, coupled with the fact that His enemies had to invoke the aid of a disciple to betray Him, shows that while Jesus did not shrink from encountering His enemies, He took ordinary precautions to avoid any clandestine attempt upon His life. It is also equally clear from His teaching and public utterances during the last week of His life that He anticipated a fatal termination to His career, and that He willingly faced it.

The Johannine Gospel represents the whole of His life and work which culminated in His tragic death as the conscious carrying out of a settled programme. The Synoptic Gospels, however, make it evident that His mission and work underwent modification in conformity with the gradual development of His inner life. An impartial examination of the records forces the conclusion

that His realisation of being the fulfilment of the Messianic idea came to Him gradually as He became more and more conscious of Himself. The Messianic idea did not mould His life and character; His character as it developed moulded in His own mind the Messianic idea. The completely different interpretation He gave to the idea is only accountable as the result of a growing conviction on His part that the consciousness of harmony with the mind and will of God which He possessed was the true authoritative exponent of the idea. Just as He interpreted the Scriptures of His people by the inner light of His own spiritual nature and did not hesitate to put His own authoritative statement side by side with, and even above, the declarations of the Law and the teaching of the Prophets, so He did not hesitate to interpret the Messianic idea by the light of that manifestation of the mind and will of the Father which He found in His own nature and character as the Son.

This conviction, however, that He was the Messiah could only be the result of long meditation and deep heart-searching. The secrecy He enjoined upon the few enthusiastic admirers who had benefited by His marvellous healing, and hailed Him as the Messiah, was due, not simply to the fact that He knew their declarations would be misinterpreted but, to the desire that His recognition should be the result of an inner conviction

born as the result of an experience of His true character as that was revealed in His words and work. This true conception of the Messiah could only be obtained by the nation in the same way as He Himself had obtained it, through the realisation that He was actually doing the true work of the Messiah. His answer to the disciples whom John the Baptist sent from his prison in the perplexity of mind which his captivity had produced is a strong confirmation of this view. He makes no categoric declaration, but appeals to His public ministry for the confirmation of His claim to the title. His careful interrogation of His disciples at Caesarea Philippi indicates His solicitude to know how far His definite resolution to prove His claim to the title by doing the Messiah's work had been successful. His unfeigned joy at Peter's emphatic statement, and the significant declaration that such a confession was the rock upon which His church would be built, show us the importance He attached to the change He was quietly effecting in the popular Messianic conception.

The public entry into Jerusalem undoubtedly marks a change in the plans of Jesus which is in striking contrast with that which had preceded it. The true reason for this change is not far to seek. His popularity amongst the masses had begun to wane, owing to the increasing bitterness and hostility of the religious leaders. The influence which His quiet ministry had produced in Galilee

was being undermined by forces which had their seat in the capital. The true success of His work depended not on a partial acceptance of a spiritual Messiah by the Galilean peasantry (while the leaders of the nation as represented in Jerusalem, and their followers constituting the bulk of the nation, still clung to a political Messiah, and directed the course of events with a view to a political crisis), but on the replacement of the political by the religious ideal. A kingdom divided against itself could not stand. The two ideals were so completely antagonistic that any compromise was impossible. The real salvation which the nation needed was moral and spiritual, while that which the leaders stood for was entirely political. Jesus never appears to have entered into the politics of the nation at all. He judged the political goal which the leaders of His people set before themselves, not by their arguments, but by their characters. Pharisees and Sadducees were not religious sects because they were political parties; they were political parties because they were religious sects. As political parties they had no interest for Jesus. His interest centred on their moral and spiritual ideas. He judged of the aims they set before themselves by the motives He saw inspiring them. A corrupt tree could not bring forth good fruit. Low motives could not inspire lofty aims. The character of the nation's leaders, being such as He perceived, presaged disaster and ruin to the nation.

Blind leadership of the blind could only issue in both falling into the ditch.

There was only one way which offered the slightest chance of saving the nation from the ruin towards which its rulers were hurrying it. The time had come for the appearance of the true Messiah, whose acceptance would, not only avert the political ruin which was looming on the horizon but, effect that moral and spiritual regeneration which the people needed. The course of events was hurrying the nation towards its fatal goal at a pace which rendered His quiet work of preparation, hindered as it was by the opposition of the national leaders, hopeless. The poison worked with greater celerity than the antidote. Jesus saw that the issue turned upon the acceptance of Himself as the nation's Messiah, in place of the leaders who were conducting it to ruin. The work of preparation was very imperfectly and very inadequately done, but the night was coming when He could no longer work. A change of plan, therefore, was absolutely necessary. He must come forth as the Messiah and risk the possibility of rejection.

The change in His plan was followed by a very deliberate and carefully conceived change in the place where His work was to be done. His work in Galilee, only partially done, must be relinquished, for acceptance to be of any value must be in the capital itself. There is the same careful

choice as to the time when the declaration must be made. He fixes on the Feast when the capital would contain numbers from His own province of Galilee, whose influence and presence would give the undertaking, desperate though indeed it was, the greatest chance of success. It was without doubt an undertaking which was hazardous in the extreme, but it was not a counsel of despair. It was a forlorn hope, but it was a hope nevertheless. Jesus Himself fully realised all that was involved in the undertaking, both for Himself and for His cause. His lament over Jerusalem on coming in sight of the city at the very time that He was making His public entry reveals the reality of His forebodings and the slenderness of His expectations. The acclamations with which He was greeted by the fickle populace might deceive the disciples, but the Master estimated them at their true worth as nothing but leaves on a barren fig tree. The disciples might admire the wonderful buildings and call His attention to them, but He could not banish from His inner vision the ruin and devastation which should not leave one stone upon another. In the loving act of the woman who was a sinner He saw the anointing of His body for the burial. He had no misconceptions as to what failure to find acceptance might mean. He realised to the full that His life was the forfeit of failure.

While all this may explain His readiness to lay

down His life for His cause, it does not explain the consciousness of final success which underlay His decision, nor does it explain those references to His death in which it is evident that He regards that death as the culmination and completion of His life's work. These references cannot be explained as after-reflections on the part of the disciples, for they are necessary to explain the remarkable fact that, after it was plain that His acceptance as Messiah was out of the question, He still remained in Jerusalem and made not the slightest attempt to escape. The leader of a forlorn hope who, after the attempt has failed, stays merely to be killed, betrays either mental or moral defect. We must look deeper for the true explanation. It is evident that there was a strong conviction on the part of Jesus that His acceptance as Messiah was not the only way in which He could save His people. It was one way, and the way which, while saving them, also absolved them from guilt. There was, however, another way, the last resort. It was the way of the Cross. They could prevent His living for them, but they could not prevent His dying for them. His dying for them would accomplish that which He would fain have effected by living for them. It was the bitter cup, however, from which His soul shrank.

The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, so vividly described in the Synoptists and omitted in the Johannine Gospel, is inexplicable when

interpreted as the mere shrinking of a particularly sensitive nature from physical death. The agony of Gethsemane is an agony of soul for which an adequate cause must be sought. The mere fear of death is quite insufficient to account for that terrible agony of the Garden. It was evidently something from which His soul recoiled in horror, as from a participation in actual moral evil. The only thing which seems at all adequate to call forth such intense suffering is the realisation that the path which the Father was pointing out for Him to tread was one which involved Him in bringing upon His people that final event which culminated in rebellion against God and the slaying of the Lord's Anointed. That He Who had come to bring the blessing to Israel should end in bringing a curse; that He Who had come to save should finish His life's work by involving His nation in ruin and the perpetration of a crime against God without parallel in their history, was something from which His soul shrank with an agony which we can but faintly imagine. Well might He pray, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from Me."

It may be safely asserted that if the dominating factor in this final appeal to the nation is the desire for their national salvation in order that they may fulfil their destiny amongst the nations of the world, yet it is clear that the mind of Jesus passed beyond the national to the universal, and in that

larger survey He saw that His work, hindered and thwarted by His own people, was yet destined to accomplish the supreme purpose of a moral and spiritual regeneration. The parables uttered during this last week of His life show that the mind of Jesus was occupied with the probable rejection by His own people, a rejection that was each hour becoming more certain. He anticipates the passing away of the kingdom of God from Israel to others who shall bring forth the fruits of it. He looks forward to that turning away to the Gentiles (which His true interpreter, Paul, was later on to carry out), when in the parable of the marriage feast He represents the servants as being sent into the highways and hedges to gather in the outcasts to fill the places which the elect had refused. The account of the Greeks who came to see Him during the Feast, though only found in the Johannine Gospel, is inherently probable, and may be regarded as resting on a well-founded tradition. At the Feast a good number of such Greek proselytes would undoubtedly be present, and it is extremely unlikely that they would betray no interest in one Who, without doubt, created a great stir at the Festival. The incident is chiefly remarkable for the evident impression it made upon the mind of Jesus. It is this, and not the mere fact that the visit of these Greeks foreshadowed the accession of Gentile converts, which secures for the incident a place in the Johannine Gospel. It suggests to

Jesus, with His mind already anticipating a fatal termination to His mission, that the Father's will may involve larger issues than the salvation of the Jewish nation and, that in the carrying out of that greater purpose His own death may find a justification which it was impossible to discover from the narrower standpoint. The pregnant saying of the grain of wheat falling into the earth to die in order that it may produce much fruit is extremely suggestive as an indication of the working of the mind of Jesus as the prospect of death became more and more assured. So far as we can see, Jesus had no narrow Jewish prejudices to overcome, and He was singularly free from that national pride which caused the Jew to look down with contempt upon the whole Gentile world. From the first He centred His thought, not upon political but, on moral and spiritual salvation. The transition, therefore, from the conception of the salvation of the Jew to that of the salvation of Man as man, though a distinct advance in His thought, involved no revolution.

The distinct references which Jesus makes to His death are inexplicable from the political standpoint, because they are accompanied by the most explicit declarations as to the impending national calamity. His acceptance as Messiah might have averted this calamity, but His death by so much the more rendered it inevitable. The institution of the Lord's Supper, and the position this rite

subsequently occupied in the mind of the Church, point unmistakably to a realisation on the part of Jesus that His death would have a unique place in the spiritual regeneration of men, which was to Him the supreme work of His life. It was no mere accident that this rite, as simple in its character as it is profound in its meaning, was placed by Jesus in the position it occupies as a part of the Paschal supper. Just as He chose the Feast for His public entry into Jerusalem because it afforded the best time for an appeal to the people, so He chose the Paschal supper, with the same clear foresight as to its suitability for the purpose He had in view in instituting His own memorial service.

This distinct choice on the part of Jesus is of far more importance than any theological implications which the narrative may be thought to suggest. As a matter of fact the accounts are singularly free from such implications. It is the institution, and not the words of the institution, which is of first importance. It is the position in which Jesus placed the act, rather than any position to which the Church has elevated it, which gives it its true significance. The differences in the accounts in the Synoptists are of very slight importance, even from a theological point of view, and may be left out of account so far as the purpose which immediately concerns us is concerned.

The Lord's Supper was the last Passover and the first Eucharist. Jesus was evidently conscious that the old order was changing and that His death would entirely alter the relation in which His nation stood to God. That Old Covenant, made at the beginning of their national history, had issued in the rejection of the Lord's Anointed and was soon to culminate in His destruction. The killing of the Paschal Lamb commemorated the deliverance of the nation from the bondage of Egypt and its emergence as a political factor in the history of the world. Now, however, the very nation which had been called into existence that it might fulfil its high destiny of being a blessing to all nations is dyeing its hands in the blood of its own Messiah. With a hardness of heart far surpassing that of Pharaoh, the leaders and guides of the nation were setting themselves in opposition to the purposes of God, and the Angel of Destruction was already hovering over Jerusalem as over a doomed city. Israel was no longer the oppressed; she had become the oppressor. Her star was not rising, but setting, and setting as it had risen, in blood.

On the little band of disciples gathered in the upper room had devolved that task which the nation had rejected. They and not the Nation would go forth to found that Divine kingdom of which the Davidic kingdom had been but the symbol. A New Covenant and a New Passover were being

instituted in which the Nation, as a nation, had no part or lot. The little band of disciples would have to flee for its life, but His own death would avert from them the destruction which would overtake the city and the nation. A new lamb was about to be slain, whose blood would be the blood of a New Covenant. The connection between Himself and the Paschal lamb was too realistic to be merely fanciful. Jesus, however, was in no sense creating a new ceremony to typify spiritual realities; He was taking actual facts and using them to commemorate the spiritual realities which a true understanding of them reveals. The sacrifice which He wishes His disciples to remember is the sacrifice which He is Himself offering. The bread and the wine are not to be a new ceremony to take the place of the flesh and blood of the older ceremony; they are a memorial of the real sacrifice of His own flesh and blood which He is Himself offering. His disciples are not to be priests with a new ritual; they are to be partakers with Him in the work and cause for which He is laying down His life. They are so to identify themselves with Him in that cause, that they are to eat as it were His body, and drink as it were His blood.

Jesus had to deal with men who were slow to grasp spiritual truth and who were too much under the influence of Jewish religious and national ideas to sympathise at that time with His deeper

conceptions. The only thing He could count upon was their love and confidence in Himself. This, however, was about to be tried in a way it had never been tried before. His death threatened to stamp out the last spark of faith in His mission and to turn their love into a merely piteous lament over His fate. We cannot but be amazed at the superlative confidence with which Jesus proceeded to turn this fatal obstacle to the success of His cause into a means for its final triumph. History and our theological conceptions tend to obscure this wonderful confidence and this extraordinary foresight on the part of Jesus. History has transformed the accursed tree into a symbol which calls forth the admiring wonder of the world, and theology has turned His shameful death into a Divine sacrifice before which we bend in lowliest reverence. To Jesus, however, they stood forth in all their hideousness, threatening, not merely the triumph of His enemies but, the utter destruction of His cause. Yet, as Paul significantly remarks, "it was in the same night in which He was betrayed," that Jesus instituted a simple rite which looked forward to a triumph without parallel in human history.

Jesus made no attempt to explain the religious significance of the rite He instituted. Their minds were not open to His influence. Their hearts alone were accessible, and by this simple memorial He bound those hearts to Him, feeling

confident that they themselves would be able later on to interpret all that His death signified. By placing the rite at the end of the Paschal supper He made it evident that it possessed a religious significance, but He left it to a later and richer experience to interpret what that significance was. The one essential thing for them to understand was that His death was a sacrifice which He Himself freely offered on their behalf and that, instead of separating Him from them it united them to Him and to His cause. He gave them the bread and the wine in confident expectation that they themselves would partake of that which the symbols signified and identify themselves with Him in the fulfilment of the Father's will, to accomplish which He Himself was laying down His life. It is the religious experience which Jesus here anticipates which all theories of the Atonement are but imperfect attempts to set forth. The true nature of the sacrifice Jesus made must not be interpreted by the rite which He instituted, but by the religious experience which the rite anticipates. Jesus felt that, if His work was to go on after He had passed away, His spirit must pass into His disciples, and they must realise that His death, far from being the great obstacle to His success, was destined to be the chief means of its accomplishment.

A careful examination of the references to His death to be found in the Synoptists forces us

to the conclusion that in the thought of Jesus there is absolutely no connection between His own conception of what His death meant and the theological conceptions connected with the Jewish sacrificial system. If we are to take the thought of Jesus as our guide in the interpretation of the religious significance of the death of Jesus, we must leave out of account, as He apparently did, all reference to Jewish theological speculation as to the meaning of sacrifice. In the institution of the Last Supper there is undoubtedly a reference to Himself as occupying a place similar to that of the Paschal lamb. The New Covenant in His blood to which Jesus refers, however, shows us that the thought in His mind is historical rather than theological. The reference is to the flight from Egypt and the sprinkling of the blood upon the doorposts rather than to the much later sacrificial ideas connected with the day of atonement. Just as the night of the hurried flight from Egypt marked the beginning of Jewish national life and was signalised by the establishment of a Covenant, so the night in which He was betrayed marked a new epoch in the relation between God and the larger Israel of faith in Himself, and it is accordingly signalised by the establishment of a New Covenant. His own death, at the hands of the nation whose Messiah He was, cancelled the Old Covenant with the nation and inaugurated a New Covenant ratified in His blood. It was essential

for the establishment of that larger kingdom of God which He had striven to introduce, that His disciples should be at one with Him in the carrying on of the work He was compelled to lay aside. Jesus felt that His death would be at one and the same time the condemnation of the old order represented in the gross materialism and selfish nationalism of the Jew, and the justification of the new order of moral and spiritual regeneration represented by Himself. He seems to have anticipated that the disciples, when they had recovered from the shock of His death, would inevitably regard that death as a barrier cutting them off for ever from the false ideals of official Judaism, while at the same time it drew them to Himself in a whole-hearted loyalty. In their minds the old order would be for ever associated with His death; the new order with His self-sacrificing love. The simple rite which He instituted would be a constant reminder of the passing away of the old and the inauguration of the new order.

Thus far we have examined the aims and motives of the various actors in the world's greatest tragedy in order that we may understand what the death of Jesus actually was. We have to remember, however, that these motives and aims are representative of principles of universal application. The unique figure of Jesus changes what would otherwise have been a mere incident in an obscure part of the world into a dramatic

tragedy to which humanity turns its gaze with an interest and fascination which increase from age to age. That which gives to this scene its universal and eternal significance is not that Jesus stands here as the incarnation of Divinity, but that He stands as the incarnation of Humanity. As we gaze upon this scene we feel that we are not beholding the tragedy of a single human life; we are watching the tragedy of human life itself. Jesus is not simply a man among men; He is the Man in men. He is not one among many; He is the Many in the One. The history, therefore, presents itself to us, not as mere history but, as drama, and the greatest drama the world has ever seen. It is drama, however, just because it is history. Any treatment which lessens the historical element lessens the dramatic element. Regard the event as primarily dramatic and only secondarily as historic, and the real significance of the scene is lost. In a very real sense it may be said that the more theology you put into it, the less religious significance you get out of it. The more it is regarded as a sacrificial ceremony, the less does it become that one supreme sacrifice which abolishes the ceremonial. To make the religious significance of the event turn upon its supposed correspondences with ceremonial sacrifice is to elevate the rite above the reality which the rite does but faintly symbolise. If the death of Jesus merely replaces the slaying of

the Paschal lamb, then, however august the ceremony may be, it is ceremony only, and the reality symbolised remains greater still. If, on the other hand, the death of Jesus is the reality which human heed has symbolised in its varied sacrificial systems, then the reality must be found in the actual fact, and not in any fancied resemblances.

When we have put on one side all theological presuppositions and have looked at the actual event itself, what is it that makes this conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities of His day possess universal significance? Is it not that we have here represented in concrete form and to a degree found nowhere else, that eternal conflict between the ideal and the actual which is the very essence of that struggle for richer and fuller life out of which comes the tragedy of human life both in the individual and in society? Whatever theological implications may be contained in such a fact, surely the fact itself is the supreme reality. It is, indeed, this fact, perceived according to the moral and spiritual evolution attained in each successive age, and expressed according to the varied theological conceptions of the great thinkers of each age, which gives to this local and temporary scene its universal and permanent significance. Sublime and beautiful though the life of Jesus is, it is its tragic ending which fascinates the mind and captivates the heart of humanity. His ethical

transcendence and His spiritual attainments reveal to us those inaccessible heights to which our aspiration so constantly soars, but which we always fail to reach. It is in His agony in the Garden, when He resists temptation even unto blood and tears, and in the mortal anguish of Calvary, when He yields back into the Father's hands the life which He has preserved unsullied and undefiled, that we feel we have One Who is fighting our battle for us, and vanquishing the enemy before whom we have so often bitten the dust and bent the knee. It is not the revelation of the ideal which has any saving power; it is the manifestation of the suffering inflicted by the actual on the ideal which saves. It is possible to admire the ideal while we fraternise with the actual. It is no longer possible the moment we have realised that the actual is the destroyer of the ideal. Tragedy has been humanity's greatest and most effective teacher. An evil will be tolerated and even entertained for years in spite of its demonstrated character as an evil. It is only when the evil has culminated in some great tragedy that humanity rises up in its Divine might and resolves on its banishment. The Cross of Jesus derives its force from the fact that it makes its appeal to the Divine heart of humanity and enlists its sympathies on the side of the ideal as against the actual. It is not an exalted Christ of theology enthroned in the heavens, but the Jesus of history lifted

up on the Cross of Calvary Who draws all men unto Him.

From the judgment of His nation Jesus appealed to the judgment of humanity, and humanity has responded to His appeal by reversing His nation's decision, transmuting His crown of thorns into a diadem of glory and transforming His Cross of shame into a throne of dominion and power. The temporary defeat which He suffered as the result of forcing the issue between the actual and the ideal upon His nation and upon His age has been turned into a permanent and ever-increasing victory for the ideal. Ideal Man Himself, He appealed to the ideal in Man, and history has abundantly justified His reliance. Under the influence that radiates from the Cross of Calvary men consign the actual which they have realised to the Cross, and identify themselves with the ideal they see realised in Jesus the Christ. This is no mere theological dogma ; it is psychological fact, established by the verdict of history and confirmed by the testimony of experience. Conceptions of the religious significance of the Cross of Jesus vary in their expression from age to age, but the perception of the moral and spiritual influences which come from the Cross is the one saving and redeeming power in the world.

It is because this struggle between the ideal and the actual is so clearly and vividly presented in the conflict between Jesus and the leaders of

His nation that the scene is not only history but drama, and the greatest drama of the world. The presentation which meets us in the historical record is a representation of the conflict between the higher and the lower, the man from above and the man from below, which constitutes the real history of humanity. When we have once perceived this essential character of the history we are in a position to understand the cosmic significance of the drama. In the drama Jesus stands as the representative of humanity, just because in the history He is humanity incarnated. The humanity, however, in both cases is an ideal humanity—Man, not as he conceives of himself, but as God conceives of him. This representative character of Jesus which meets us in its tragic form in the death is equally present in the life. In the lowly birth, the gradual development, and the quiet ministry of Jesus we perceive the emergence of those higher ideals of individual and social life in the few elect souls; the gradual development by means of which they reach maturity; their quiet diffusion amongst the people; all of which meet us in the pages of universal history. In the transition from the Galilean ministry to the stormy scenes in the streets of Jerusalem, when the ideal comes into conflict with the prejudices and vested interests of constituted authority, a conflict culminating in the tragedy of the Cross, we are looking at a vivid

representation of those great world-movements which mark the upward progress of the race through the struggle between the actual attainment and the ideal aspiration. Nor is this representative character less pronounced as we see the actual, for which Scribes and Pharisees contended, finally yielding place to the ideal which Jesus represented, as this is presented to us in the historic replacement of the Jewish by the Christian faith. The Jewish Messiah, rejected, crucified, and apparently destroyed, gives place to the Risen Jesus, the exalted and all-conquering Christ. Finally, we see the Christ, the incarnation of the ideal, becoming incarnate in the many, and that hidden secret of the ages is at last manifested as the Christ in us, the hope of glory. This is not myth, in which principles and ideas are imagined, clothed in fictitious habiliments and characters, and placed in the midst of painted scenes; it is actual history in which ideals are incarnated, appear in real flesh and blood, and work out their destiny amidst the actualities of common life.

It is not merely and not chiefly, however, as a representation of the larger history of humanity that this conflict is of supreme importance. It is rather that it brings out into the light of day the secret struggle that has, over and over again, taken place in the recesses of our souls. At the Cross of Jesus we see a representation of the tragedy of

our own lives as we never saw it before. It is the figure of the crucified Christ which arrests our attention and makes us conscious, sometimes for the first time, of the inner history of our own lives. Our memory goes back to those birth-pangs which we suffered when, in the dissatisfaction with ourselves and the disgust of our attainments, we first felt the stirring of the ideal life within us, and cried out of the depths of our souls :—

> And oh, that the man might arise in me—
> That the man I am might cease to be!

We recall the growth of the ideal as it increased in stature, its earnest questionings and its striking answers within the inner shrine of our own breasts. The quiet Galilean ministry reminds us of the still small voice with which it wooed us to a higher life and a deeper purpose. The Jerusalem conflict and controversies bring home to us the opposition we offered and the objections we urged against the growing insistence with which the ideal within us pressed its claims upon our loyalty and devotion. We remember our own lonely vigil in the garden, and how the better nature within us wrestled in agony and bloody sweat. We recall, too, with shame and contrition how we ourselves played the traitor's part and betrayed the ideal with a kiss. From our Gethsemane we pass to our Calvary, and in the pierced hands and riven side of the Christ, we behold the Man we might

have been but for the Pharisee we have become. It is this startling revelation of the tragedy of our own lives, which thus objectified divides the seeming unity of our personality into a duality of the actual and the ideal, the what-we-are from the what-we-might-have-been, which constitutes the redeeming message of the Cross. Unconsciously we take down the crucified ideal from the cross upon which we have nailed it, and put in its place the actual which crucified it. We can do no other, for what we have become fills us with shame, and our only hope is in what we may become through the spirit of the Christ. God forbid that we should glory save in the Cross of Jesus our Lord; upon which the world is hence-*forth crucified unto us and we unto the world.*

It is the crucified, dead and buried ideal life within us which the spirit of the risen Christ quickens into life again. Christianity is not the religion of a Jesus Who was crucified; it is the religion of a crucified but risen Christ. It recognises, that is, that in Jesus there was the perfect manifestation of that Divine life to which we give the name of The Christ. It is this same Divine life which quickens us into life. A crucified Jesus could give us no help. He would call forth men's pity, but He could render no help. It is the fact that Jesus is the Christ—Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God—which gives us hope. That in God which was mani-

fested in Jesus the Christ is the ground, too, of our Christ-life. We are not, therefore, united in the mere bonds of sympathy with a dead Jesus, but with the risen and exalted Christ, with Whom we also are raised up from the dead past in order that we may live in newness of life. That hidden life in man which is a constituent of the nature of God Himself, and of which we are ourselves conscious in the struggle of the ideal with the actual, has been manifested in its full glory and strength in Jesus the Christ. It is that mystery of the ages to which Paul refers, and which he describes as "Christ in you the hope of glory." Dead through our trespasses and sins, that hidden Christ-life within us is quickened by the spirit of the crucified Christ, in Whom we recognise the ideal we have striven for and yet failed to reach —the Christ Who has attained to that to which we have only aspired. This Christ, however, does not stand isolated from humanity in lonely grandeur; He is one with us, the firstborn, but the firstborn among many brethren. His blood is, as it were, in our veins; His life is the ground of our life. Because He lives we also shall live. Having been crucified with the Christ, we shall also rise with Him. Having suffered with Him, we shall also reign with Him. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF SALVATION

THE conception of salvation which is present in various religions, and in the Christian religion at different epochs, varies according to the measure in which religious thought conceives of Man's highest good and of the hindrances in the way of its attainment. The word "salvation" is peculiarly appropriate to the Christian conception, because its root meaning is consistent with that optimistic conception of life which distinguishes Christianity from other Eastern religions. The fundamental idea of health or wholeness, which is the root meaning of the word, has often been obscured by an exaggerated emphasis on other aspects of the subject, but the dominant note in any truly Christian conception of salvation must always be the positive idea of the possession of life, fuller and more abounding, rather than a negative conception of escape from the penal consequences of sin. The negative conception is by no means absent, but unless the positive idea is prominent

and dominant, the distinctively Christian feature of salvation is lost sight of.

The importance of this is seen when we contrast it with the fundamental idea expressed in Hindu thought. The true word to express this religious thought of Hinduism is not salvation but deliverance, a deliverance from life rather than the possession of healthy life. To Hindu religious thought life is not a blessing but a curse, not a good but an ill. This is the fundamental starting-point of all Hindu thought, and the whole of its religious thinking is coloured with this conception of the evil of life. Only after it has emptied life of all its contents and degraded it to mere existence will it predicate being of God and assert that Brahma *is*. It has no conception of life apart from some form of evil, and, therefore, if man is to be delivered from all evil, it can only be by ceasing to live. Salvation, therefore, as the possession of fuller and richer life, is entirely contrary to the Hindu conception of Man's highest good.

In the idea of salvation as deliverance from evil there are doubtless points of contact between Hindu and Christian thought, but it is necessary to bear in mind that fundamentally the goals which Hinduism on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, set before themselves are, not only differently, but, in some respects, antithetically conceived. The *Nirvana* of Hindu and Buddhist

thought, even though regarded as more positive than negative, is essentially different from the Eternal Life to which Christian thought and feeling aspire. It is probably true that Hindu and Christian aspiration are one and the same desire for the satisfaction of the religious nature, but it is useless to assert that they both mean the same thing when they speak of salvation. When the Pessimist speaks of the pangs of hunger and the Optimist speaks of a splendid appetite, they are no doubt both referring to the same thing, but no one can say that the thought to which they are giving expression is the same. The reason for the different terms employed is to be found in a fundamental difference of standpoint. The *summum bonum* to the Pessimist is the cessation of desire apart from its satisfaction, while that of the Optimist is its cessation through satisfaction. Nothing but confusion can come from a failure to discriminate between ideas which are essentially different. There is a growing tendency to make use of Christian terminology to express Hindu thought and then to assert that the similarity of language means a similarity of thought. This is not to bring about an understanding between Hindu and Christian, but a misunderstanding. It is not by misunderstanding one another nor by slurring over differences that we shall arrive at that higher conception of truth in which a true harmony is to be found; but it is in understanding