

THE CONCEPT OF TRANSCENDENCE.

7 SABAPATHY KULANDRAN

Bishop Kulandran has worked for ten years to complete this magnum opus—The Concept of Transcendence. The work surveys the four major religions—Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism—laying down their major tenets before discussing the Concept of Transcendence in each of them. The absolute precision and clarity in the survey and the logical development of thought must appeal to every layman, student and scholar. While some books on theological subjects are heavy and difficult to wade through, Bishop Kulandran makes his points in the most easy and readable manner without in any way compromising the depth of treatment. Transcendence is clearly the heart of any religion, and here we find an almost clinical and anatomical dissection which lays bare the heart of the matter. A book to read and cherish.

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The Concept of TRANSCENDENCE

(A Study of it in various World Religions)

SABAPATHY KULANDRAN

*(Formerly Bishop Jaffna Diocese,
Church of South India, Sri Lanka)*



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Dedicated

to

The Memory

of

My dear Friend, D. T. NILES, who

commissioned this book

(died 17th July, 1970)

and

My beloved wife, MATHURAM, who

helped me much during the early stages of this book

(died 8th March, 1974),

**To both of whom it would have been a great
joy to see this book come out.**



1875

1875

PREFACE

It may be remembered that some years ago there was a heated debate on what constituted the most suitable kind of religion for the present age. It was maintained by certain ardent champions that the acknowledgement of all that was around us, a recognition of its Oneness and the Spirit of this (resembling the spirit of Spring which inspires poets to sing) and a deference and reverence towards it was the most suitable kind of religion for this age.

When someone reported to Thomas Carlyle that a certain highly sophisticated lady had come to acknowledge the Universe, the sage replied with an oath 'She had better'. To do something for which there is no option, is of course, quite easy. In this case, the question is whether that is all that there is to religion. That this was so was ardently propounded in certain quarters in highly theological language and with an amplitude of quotations.

It was to counteract the tendency to think so, that the East Asia Christian Conference (now the Christian Conference of Asia) commissioned the present writer to write a book on 'The Concept of Transcendence in the Various Religions of the World'. The purpose was to show that no religion can exist without a recognition of something beyond the Universe. The debate at the time was confined to Europe, where Christianity was practically the one religion that was generally known. The E.A.C.C., which was in touch with a number of living, renascent religions, expected that by turning public attention to the variety of religions that existed in the world it could be shown that the view point taken by the champions of such a mode of thinking could not fundamentally explain what religion was.

The effort required for this had to be well-informed and, therefore, meant resort to many Libraries and other sources of books. During the first few months I made use of the Colombo Public Library, which gave me sufficient liberty under its rules, to draw the books I wanted. But my mainstay came to be the Jaffna College Library, the Library of the Jaffna

Institute for the Study of Religion & Society and the Jaffna Diocesan Library, the authorities of which gave me unlimited liberty, subjected me to no rules and allowed me to draw as many books as I liked and keep them as long as I wanted — a liberty of which I made full use. I also read for sometime in the Library of the United Theological College, Bangalore.

However, I was not expected merely to collate information, but to digest, analyse and reach conclusions on the basis of my analysis. This I hope I have done; and in the process, I trust, made a contribution to the study of the subject.

I am here dealing with four religions of the world. It may be thought that to deal with any one religion as a whole within the compass of a comparatively small book is itself not quite practicable; and for that reason to deal with four major ones within such space is nothing but sheer rashness. It may, however, be pointed out that it is because rash undertakings are often taken on that the world does get along.

However, I wish to say that the task is not as rash as it may look; for I am not here reviewing the four religions, as such, and giving an account of their history and tenets. I am dealing with the Concept of Transcendence in each of the religions; their history and tenets come in, only in so far as they bear on that Concept.

My method has been to present that concept as found in the orthodox and classical formulations of the religions concerned. In general, I have refrained from entering into subsequent or modern controversies in any of them. In Chapter Four I have dealt with some modern attacks on monotheism, because they were made not on a particular religion but a type of religion and, therefore, affected the over-all context of my treatment of all religions that belonged to that type. Only in regard to Islam have I thought it necessary to deal with writers subsequent to the classical formulations; not to have dealt with them would have been to leave the subject hanging in the air.

There are those who think that it is impossible to write about other peoples' religions, since one will be biased against them. By the same token, one ought not to write about one's own religion, since one will be biased in favour of it. If this is extended to other

fields besides religion it will end in a complete *reductio ad absurdum*. It is because intellectual detachment is possible, that knowledge is also possible. Bias is certainly a temptation ; but it is a temptation that can be guarded against. It is on that assumption that this work has been carried. It would be absurd to set up imaginary bogies to knock them down.

Apart from the fact that this book tries to take in four religions at the same time, it may be considered that the subject treated is in itself a difficult one. This is far from being the case. The main thesis here set forth, in its essence, is within the reach of every one's understanding ; but the issue may be made forbidding and impenetrable by being treated in a mistifying manner. To avoid such a situation, I have made a sustained effort to make my treatment attractive and readable ; for what is not read, need not have been written.

If therefore, a book is to be read it must be easy and pleasant ; but if it is to be worth reading, it must also be entirely accurate ; and if it is to be honest, it must also be fair beyond reproach. To achieve these ends to the utmost degree possible, this manuscript was generally hand-written thrice and went through the typewriter an equal number of times. If I have failed in my purpose, it certainly has not been through want of trying on my part.

At various stages during the progress of this work, all chapters were submitted to experts in the respective fields. I have derived great benefit from many of the suggestions made and been set right on some points. In fact, I have entirely re-written a section of Chapter I, because of the dissatisfaction of an expert. I am particularly grateful to an eminent Muslim gentleman with whom I was in constant touch when writing on Sunni Islam, for putting me wise on many points of Islamic lore which do not usually find their way into books. I have not, however, accepted every suggestion from experts ; because I found that in those cases I had better authority in my favour. Nevertheless, I am grateful to them all.

It remains for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to various organisations and individuals who made this book possible. The

Christian Conference of Asia invited me to undertake this work and made me an initial grant towards it. Later the United Church Board for World Mission, U.S.A. saw to it that I did not fall by the way side. To both these organisations I am deeply grateful. The Bishop J. E. L. Newbiggin gave me constant encouragement and buoyed me up during the progress of this work ; so did Dr. W. R. Holmes.

To my typist Mrs. John Jesudason my indebtedness is exceedingly great. She was not merely willing to put up patiently with my constant revisions but managed to bring out every time a neat and exact copy. It is a pity that before the latter part of the last century printers had to deal with hand-written manuscripts and not typescripts.

Finally, it is my pleasant duty to thank the Christian Literature Society of Madras for undertaking to publish this book, the title of which would have daunted many other publishers. I hope its courage in undertaking this venture will be justified.

1981.

S. KULANDRAN,
Bishop.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I TRANSCENDENCE—A GENERAL EXAMINATION ..	1
II BUDDHISM AND TRANSCENDENCE	6
III TRANSCENDENCE IN HINDUISM	98
IV TRANSCENDENCE IN MONOTHEISM	157
V ISLAM	216
VI CHRISTIANITY	292
VII CONCLUSION	356
VIII INDEX	361

TRANSCENDENCE—A GENERAL EXAMINATION

Definitions and Introduction

The word 'Transcendence' is derived from the Latin word *scando*—I climb; when to this base is added such prepositions as *ad*, *de* and *trans* we get such words as 'ascend', 'descend' and 'transcend'; *ad* means 'towards', '*de*' means 'from' and '*trans*' 'across'. Though the words 'ascend' and 'descend' imply a point aimed at and a point of departure, the emphasis is on the process. 'Transcend' implies an achievement; something has climbed out of something.

This achievement presupposes two things: a difference between that which transcends and that which is transcended. It also presupposes a relationship or relevance. A thing cannot of course transcend itself; a person's patriotism at fifty does not transcend his patriotism at twenty; it is simply greater; but his patriotism can transcend his self-interest, because it is different. However, that which transcends must also have a relationship with that which it transcends. An algebraic equation cannot transcend a soccer match; they are not relevant to each other. They are not in the same universe of discourse. But we do speak of a person's patriotism transcending his self-interest; it implies a relationship between the two; the one was close to the other, but has risen out of it and above it.

The word 'Immanence' is derived from the Latin base '*manere*' =to stay or remain. The addition of the preposition '*in*' gives the meaning of 'staying in' or 'remaining within'. However, it is clear that what stays in something is distinct from that in which it stays; otherwise, it will merely be a part of the other. Therefore, if 'transcendence' has associations with Immanence, the latter also implies a certain degree of association with the former. For

this reason, J. R. Illingworth the great writer on Religious Philosophy, has said that both words are not alternatives but correlatives.¹

There is certainly enough in common between both terms to sustain a state of co-relationship; but there is also enough difference to make them, in certain circumstances, not merely alternative to each other but antithetical: what is immanent is certainly distinct from that in which it is immanent; but if it does not rise clearly and indubitably from its environment, it loses all claim to be transcendent. By the same token, what transcends may get so much out of touch with what it transcends that it may be impossible to associate it with any Immanence. We shall see later what happens when each gets too far away from the other. In the meantime, it is good for us to realise that, in spite of a common relationship there is also a definite and important difference between them.

The words 'Transcendence' and 'Immanence' are general terms and may be applied in various contexts. In this book we are concerned with Transcendence in Religion; we must, therefore, consider what the 'Transcendent' means in our particular context. In this context it is taken to mean what is beyond the senses. The world of the senses is the world in the midst of which we live. It was quite possible, therefore, for mankind not to have given any thought to what was beyond it. But, on the other hand, as far as we can stretch our knowledge, it seems to have been exercised by what has been called 'the durable fascination of Transcendence'.

That this should be so is strange; because it means that from the seen man has had a tendency to conclude that there is an unseen; that is, man seems to have arrived at the existence of the unseen from a premise that leads not towards it, but away from it. In his 'Origin and Growth of Religion', Max Müller speaks of the wonderment of the Polynesian sailor ages ago, as he surveyed the endless expanse of the sea and the jubilant outburst with which the early Aryans greeted the dawn breaking in the East.² It is not that man has been guilty of making a wild conjecture that there is possibly something that transcends the senses, when all that we

¹ J. R. Illingworth 'Divine Transcendence', (Macmillan), p. 72.

² F. Max Müller *Origin and Growth of Religion*, (Longmans), p. 46.

know is the world of senses ; it is that he responds to an inescapable pressure exercised on him by what is beyond the senses. This pressure has kept exerting itself on him in a multitude of ways ever since his life on earth began.

In our chapter on 'Transcendence in Monotheism' we shall be examining the various 'Proofs' which have been adduced for the existence of God. But we are not dealing now with any inference arrived at by any process of logic ; for our logic operates within the world of the senses. We are dealing with an unshakeable belief that has been forced upon mankind by the world above and beyond our systems of logic. 'Man is a believer by nature,' says Dean Mathews, 'and must be argued into atheism'; that is, disbelief goes against his ingrained nature, it conflicts with his fundamental philosophy ; and the fundamental philosophy of mankind living in the world of senses, is that there is a world beyond the senses. While this is not all that there is to Religion, even as axioms are not all there is to geometry, Religion is impossible without the unshakeable belief that this world of senses is not all that there is; that is, Religion is impossible without a belief in that which transcends the senses.

Theories that Refuse to go beyond the Senses

If mankind, on the whole, has believed that it can look beyond the boundaries imposed by the senses, it will be seen that the boundaries are admitted ; only mankind has mostly believed that they should be surmounted. It is, therefore, only natural that during the course of centuries certain Schools should have arisen that have considered the barriers insurmountable. Such Schools belong to varying eras and varying climates of thought. And if there are differences among those who think that they can go beyond the boundaries imposed by the senses and pronounce on what lies beyond them, then equally so there will be differences among those who insist on staying on this side of the boundaries and want to pronounce on the subject. The views of those who refuse to go beyond the senses will be found to belong to one of the four following Schools, whose positions we shall now proceed to consider.

Materialism

Those who say that there is nothing beyond the senses and that Matter is all that there is are appropriately enough called 'Materialists'. The standpoint adopted by this School is reminiscent of the dictum humorously attributed by his students to Dr. Jowett, the famous Master of Balliol College, Oxford, in the 19th century. According to them, he is supposed to have said, 'What I don't know is not knowledge'. Such a statement, if made innocently, is mere self-contradiction; if made deliberately, it is also sheer presumption. It is assumed always that knowledge should be the basis of our assertions or denials; so to make non-knowledge their basis is to equate non-knowledge with knowledge and would be an obvious self-contradiction. Nobody, for instance, will deny the existence of peacocks in Madagascar, without having gone there or having read up the subject; if he does so, he will be laughed at for making a statement without knowing anything of the subject. Therefore, deliberately to make an assertion or denial on the ground of ignorance is highly presumptuous; it is to question the basis of thought. Anybody who says, 'Michelangelo is not a great artist, because I know nothing about him', is stretching his authority a little too far. Thomas Carlyle, once making a derogatory remark about Titian, the painter, simply on the ground that he knew nothing about him, was well and truly snubbed by W. M. Thackeray, the novelist, who said that, in that case, he was talking about himself and not about Titian. It is, therefore, obvious that to substitute ignorance for knowledge as the basis of statements is certainly self-contradictory and may be presumptuous; in fact, it is both.

In spite of the self-contradiction or the presumption involved in its position, the appeal of Materialism can scarcely be gainsaid. Nothing is easier than to magnify the importance of the obvious, the present, and the immediate, and to think that it is all that matters and then by easy and imperceptible stages to go on to think that what does not matter need not exist; and in fact, does not exist. A School holding this opinion had arisen in India before Buddhism, *i.e.*, before the 6th century B.C. It was named after its founder, Charvaka, but was also called by the generic name of Lokāyata (*loka*=world) literally meaning Materialism. The School held that there was nothing beyond the four elements: earth, fire, water and air. Though it has found little literary expression it seems

to have existed all along, as we see various polemical attacks launched on it from time to time. The great Vedāntic teacher Madhva of the 13th century A.D. confessed that the great majority of mankind espoused the cause of Materialism.¹ Another late Indian teacher Sadananda, author of *Vedāntasāra*, speaks of four Materialistic Schools. Materialism might have been a latent creed in India and might have been articulated by certain obscure Schools ; but it has never been a powerful force in Indian thought.

The beginning of Materialism in the West as a recognised trend has a curious history ; because Parmenides (6th-5th B.C.), who is considered the father of Materialism, is also the acknowledged father of the opposite School, that of Idealism. His association with the School of Idealism is indisputable ; his association with Materialism is accidental. He is considered the father of Idealism, because while declaring Being to be the ultimate Reality, he equated Thought with Being. He happened accidentally to be the originator of Materialism, by seeking to give Being a definite habitation ; since Being was all that there was, its only place of residence, he thought, was Space. As what filled Space, according to him, was Being and what did, in fact, seem to fill it was Matter, it appeared that his philosophy suggested that Matter alone existed. It was, however, utterly untenable to hold that all Matter was just one solid block ; it was found to consist of parts ; but how many parts ? So it was soon concluded that the atom, the smallest imaginable particle of matter was its basis. The Atomic theory grew in strength under Leucippus (circa 450 B.C.) and Democritus (circa 460-360 B.C.), but gained its fullest expression in the celebrated work of the Roman poet Lucretius (98-54 B.C.) called, '*De Rerum Natura*'.

Then Christianity arrived on the scene ; and once the Roman Catholic Church, which spoke for Christianity, gained sufficient authority to prescribe for every area of life and thought, Materialism receded into the background. It was only at the Renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages that the field was cleared for the emergence of any sort of theory not sanctioned by the Church. But oddly enough, this freedom was actually initiated not with

¹ R. Garbe, *Philosophy of Ancient India*, p. 26.

the teaching that any sort of theory could be true, but with the teaching that no sort of theory could be true. The charter for such teaching was contained in the translation of a book of Sextus Empericus on the concepts of the Greek thinker Pyrrho of Elis (circa 365-275 B.C.). Pyrrho had taught that you could not affirm or deny anything about any subject.

In spite, however, of the new era of freedom that had dawned, the long adherence of Europe to the thought of Aristotle who had come to be patronised by the Roman Catholic Church made it impossible for either Materialism or any other sort of reasoned-out skepticism to make any head-way for a long time. Even by the middle of the 18th century, David Hume and Edward Gibbon, themselves with little claim to Christian orthodoxy, were surprised that Henry Holbach had gathered round himself a group of fifteen atheists, professing Materialistic doctrines ; (three, we are told were of an undecided mind).¹ Hume and Gibbon had not till then realised that there could be so many atheists in the world.

It was in the 19th century that Materialism began to spread. It may be imagined that this was due to the great strides made by the Physical Sciences. It may perhaps be thought that it was the great Scientists of the period who had themselves launched this attack on Religion. But the spread of Materialism was not due to the Scientists themselves, but largely to cheap pamphleteers and popular orators who considered themselves competent to draw their own conclusions from the discoveries made. Charles Darwin was perhaps the greatest creative Scientist of the 19th century ; his book 'Origin of Species' (pub. 1859) revolutionised Scientific thinking, as few books before or since have done. Yet when asked by the poet Tennyson whether the book had any anti-Christian implication, he denied it categorically.² He knew the limits of Science. Perhaps Darwin's niece put the matter in its proper perspective, when she explained the matter to her son, who asked her why everybody was constantly talking of great-uncle Charles ; and she replied 'The Bible says God created the world in six days ; uncle Charles says it took somewhat longer'.

¹ J. Collins *God in Modern Philosophy*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. 151.

² Sir Alfred Lyall *Life of Tennyson*, (English Men of Letters, Series), p. 28.

Darwin's attitude was not peculiar to him. Even persons of lesser standing, whose writings may have had a tendency to promote Materialism showed great reluctance to be labelled 'Materialists'. Thus L. A. Feuerbach who maintained that 'A man is what he eats' was not willing to be regarded as a Materialist, and Ernest Haeckel, who perhaps did more than anyone in the late 19th century to popularise an anti-religious tendency, preferred to be called a 'Monist' to being called a 'Materialist'. The most outspoken champions of Materialism were Carl Vogt, Jacob Moleschott and Ludwig Bushnell, little remembered names now. Mr. Joseph McCabe, who was very active in the field at the turn of the century, is perhaps best remembered today, because of G. K. Chesterton's suggestion that the only alternative left for those who did not want to celebrate Christmas was to celebrate Mr. McCabe's birthday.

Apart from individuals, there were certain Schools which preached Materialism. But it was perhaps just a coincidence that they arose in the last century. They were Schools which could have arisen at any time, because their pre-suppositions are philosophical and not scientific. The chief of these Schools was that of Positivism founded by Auguste Comte (1798-1857). It may be seen that the founder had died before the 'Origin of Species' was published. His position was that nothing can transcend the universe of sense-events and their laws, and that consequently the only Absolute was this finite world of ours. But since mankind needed a religion, Comte was willing to oblige; he set up collective humanity as a substitute for a transcendent Deity. Another Materialist School took root in America, through the influence of George Santayana, John Dewey, Woodbridge and Cohen.¹

Dr. James Collins sums up the chief argument of the Materialists in the following words. 'They insist that their *horror supernaturae* is not motivated by any emotional animus against theism but by the lack of empirical evidence showing God's existence or His relevance to our world.'² The word 'empirical' is derived from a Greek root 'peira' = trial or test. In other words, they do not believe in the supernatural because it is not natural and cannot be tested. In the first place, it would have been well

¹ J. Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, p. 269.

² *Ibid.*, p. 277.

for them to realise, as philosophers, that they were in a field where tenets are not subject to empirical tests. In the second place, as critics and opponents of the Transcendent, it would have been well for them to have realised that the Transcendent is by definition that which transcends the senses and, therefore, beyond the tests which belong to the world of senses. Their demand would be equivalent to the people of the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean dismissing as untrue anything that happened in America on the ground that it did not take place in their own Islands.

While those believing in the Transcendent may often be subject to doubt and may wonder whether after all they may not be on the wrong track, it is reassuring to be told by one who had himself once been a Materialist that the Materialists themselves are in no better position. 'The atheist too has his moments of shuddering misgiving of all but irresistible suspicion that the old tales may after all be true, that something or someone may break into his neat and explicable mechanical Universe. We are all always haunted by the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, the news of a country we have not visited'.¹ Robert Browning in 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' echoes the same thought about the predicament of the unbeliever :

How can we guard our unbelief,
 Make it bear fruit to us ? the problem here.
 Just when we are safest there's a sunset-touch
 A fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death,
 A chorus ending from Euripides—
 That is enough for fifty hopes and fears
 As old and new at once as Nature's self,
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul.²

It would look as if so confident (and conceited) a creed as Materialism is not, after all, held with confidence always.

It also appears that Materialism is not merely subject to occasional misgivings but is also liable to end in total disillusionment. I wonder if anything in recent literature has as much poignancy as the following confession of G. Bernard Shaw, written almost at

¹ Quoted from W. L. White's *Image of Man in C. S. Lewis*, (Abingdon).

² R. Browning *Men and Women*, (Chatto and Windus), pp. 214, 215.

the end of his life. Speaking of the 'counsels of Science which should have established the millenium but led directly to the guillotine of Europe', he says, 'I believed them once. In their name I helped destroy the faith of millions of worshippers in the temples of a thousand creeds. And now they look at me and witness the tragedy of an atheist who has lost his faith.'¹

On the question of Materialism, Karl Marx (1818-1883) occupies an ambiguous position. There is no doubt that he believed that the finite is all that there is ; but, on the other hand, his whole aim was to show that his philosophy was in accord with a law binding on all history and against which man could not fight. That law was the Law of Dialectical Materialism. What this law means is that history is governed by the necessity of a conflict between opposing social forces, the older giving way to the new and leading on to a grand finale which is the triumph of the proletariat. If there is a Law governing all history, then it cannot be something from within history, but something from outside. If it asserts that there is a principle so strong and irresistible that all history through the ages must obey it, and that the affairs of men must be subject to it, it is evident that Marx's system cannot be classed as pure Materialism. Says Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr :

It is, in fact, impossible to interpret history at all without a principle of interpretation which history, as such, does not yield. The various principles current in modern culture, such as the idea of progress in the Marxist concept of an historical dialectic, are all principles of historical interpretation introduced by faith.²

Elsewhere, he has said, 'A dialectical process becomes a surrogate for an absent God'.³ In his classes at Union Seminary, New York, he used constantly to refer to Marxism as a secularised version of Christianity (Judaism). Archbishop William Temple put the matter neatly when he said that the 'dialectics' in Marxist theory destroyed its materialism. We need not think that Marx was unaware of what he was doing ; he knew that his theory could

¹ G. B. Shaw, *Too True to be Good*, quoted in 'Ceylon Churchman', (Feb.-March 1974).

² *Nature and Destiny of Man*, (Charles Scribners), Vol. L, p. 141.

³ *Faith and History*, (Charles Scribners), p. 210.

not be validated except by his issuing a cheque on the bank that belonged to those of the opposite camp ; but nor was Marx willing to be classed as a mechanistic materialist.

Agnosticism

We have just noticed a School that denied the existence of anything beyond the senses, simply because it knew nothing about it. There is another School, especially famous in the 19th century, that is much humbler in its pretensions and is merely concerned with asserting its ignorance about the matter. The term by which those who belong to this School have liked to call themselves is derived from the negative of the Greek word 'gnosko' = I know. They wished to be called 'Agnostics' ; *i.e.*, simply, 'those who do not know'. Materialism or Agnosticism may be the implicit creed of many of those who are just too indifferent to anything outside their immediate sphere ; but they may also be the explicit or deliberate creeds of those who have tried to think things out and arrived at their position with due care. Those who are indifferent about the matter do not usually call themselves by any particular name, but act on the implication of that name. Those who deliberately called themselves 'Agnostics' in the last century have usually given their reasons at length as to why they wanted to say, 'We do not know'. They were Agnostics, simply because they were willing to use only the senses as their instruments of knowledge and were not willing to go beyond the point to which their instruments led them.

The strange thing, however, about most of these famous Agnostics is not that they asserted that they could not know what was beyond their own circumscribed knowledge but they asserted even more emphatically that, though they could not know what was beyond their knowledge, it certainly did exist. T. H. Huxley, who coined the term 'Agnostic', has said, 'I understand the main tenet of Materialism to be that there is nothing in the Universe but matter and force, and all phenomena are explicable by deduction from the properties assignable to these primitive factors. But all this I heartily disbelieve'.¹ He is faced with consciousness and mind, which are outside the purview of the senses and he says,

¹ 'Essays on Controverted Questions', quoted in H. Sheldon (Robert Culley), 'Unbelief in the 19th Century', p. 56.

‘If I were forced to choose between Materialism and Idealism, I should certainly elect for the latter’. Prof. John Tyndall, whose address at Belfast in 1874 was anticipated to be the most categorical declaration of the Materialistic faith ever made, wound up with an unexpected climax : ‘Believing, as I do, in the continuity of Nature, I cannot stop abruptly where our microscopes cease to be of use. By an intellectual necessity I cross the boundary of experimental evidence and discern in that matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life.’¹ On the subject of doubt in his preface to his address he says, ‘I have noticed during years of self-observation that it is not in hours of clearness and vigour that this anti-religious doctrine commends itself to my mind ; that in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell and of which we form a part’.

But the chief literary and philosophic spokesman for Agnosticism was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). He has said that ‘The assertion that the Universe is self-existent does not carry us one step beyond the cognition of its present existence. . . . self-creation would mean there was a potential Universe. But whence this potential Universe?’ He adds, ‘Hence if knowledge cannot monopolise consciousness, if it must always continue possible for the mind to dwell upon that which transcends knowledge, then there can never cease to be a place for something in the nature of Religion’.² And though not an adherent of any religion, he felt it his duty to write so voluminously about the ‘Unknowable’, that F. H. Bradley declares that Spencer had said more about the Unknowable than the rashest theologian had ever ventured to say about God ; and A. J. (later Lord) Balfour quipped that Spencer knew nothing but the Unknowable. Spencer was typical of all outstanding Agnostics of the 19th century, who though they felt that they could not go beyond what they had set up as the bounds of knowledge, yet were not rash enough to deny the existence of anything beyond them.

These eminent men were no doubt very sincere ; but those who do not fall in with their views may ask whether what they regarded

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57 & 58.

² H. Spencer *First Principles*, (Williams and Norgate), p. 23.

as the instruments of knowledge were the only possible instruments, and whether the boundaries they set up were the final boundaries.

The School of Hamilton and Mansel

A third School, while it sprang from a motive directly opposed to that of the ones we have already mentioned, may give the appearance of going as much as the first against a recognition of the existence of the Transcendent and going much further than the second against any attempt to know it. This School is associated with the names of Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) and H. L. Mansel (1820-1871).

The School took its cue from the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant had said that one can never come into contact with the 'Thing as Such' or Ultimate Reality, because the mind is so made that everything reaching it is processed by the 'Categories' (which he grouped under four main trends: the Quantitative, Qualitative, Relational and Modal). If Pure Reason tries to grasp 'The thing in Itself', it will get tied up in knots because of the intermediate processing that takes place. The approach to Ultimate Reality, he said, can, therefore, only be through Practical Reason; in effect, through the implications of the fact of Morality. G. F. Hegel (1770-1831) knocked out the distinction between Pure Reason and Practical Reason and left the field clear for further tilts against Ultimate Reality.

In arguing against the possibility of Pure Reason to reach Ultimate Reality, Kant was not making a case for atheism. He was trying to explode the pretensions of the 18th century, which prided itself on being the 'Age of Reason' and actually believed that it had solved everything that there was to solve with the power of Reason.

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night.
God said, 'Let Newton be and all was light',

sang Alexander Pope. It was believed that Newton had revealed all that there was to reveal about the Universe, so that there was nothing further to be done; man had discovered everything that could be discovered and proved everything that required a proof. It was this spirit of arrogance that Kant wanted to debunk;

for if anybody thought he could prove God, somebody else might take it into his head to think that he could disprove Him.

Hamilton and Mansel were orthodox Christians and were actuated by an even more definite religious purpose than Kant, and they wanted to carry Kant's argument as far as it could go in the service of religion. So in his famous Bampton Lectures delivered in 1858 Mansel made a strong attack on Reason.

He declared :

The conception of the Absolute and Infinite, from whichever side we view it, appears encompassed with contradictions. There is a contradiction in supposing such an object to exist, alone or in conjunction with others ; there is a contradiction in supposing it not to exist. There is a contradiction in supposing it to be one. There is a contradiction in supposing it to be many. There is a contradiction in conceiving it as personal and there is a contradiction in conceiving it as impersonal. It cannot without contradiction be represented as active nor without equal contradiction be represented as inactive. It cannot be conceived as the sum of all existence nor can it be conceived as part of that sum.¹

Mansel hammers away on the topic with relentless vigour : If all thought is limitation—if whatever we conceive is by that very act regarded as finite . . . the infinite is from a human point of view a name for the absence of those conditions under which thought is possible.²

Mansel's method of argument produced great alarm and provoked an angry reply from F. D. Maurice, a great Churchman and Social worker ; it was also severely criticised by J. S. Mill. J. M. (later Lord) Keynes tells us of the disastrous effect it had on the Economist, Alfred Marshall.³ Considered apart from its purpose, Mansel's argument was certainly likely to cause alarm ; but against the background of his purpose he was looked upon as a champion of orthodoxy. That background was that since Reason was

¹ Quoted *Op. cit.*, 36.

² Quoted *Op. cit.*, 64.

³ J. M. Keynes, *Essays and Sketches in Biography*, p. 45.

unable to reach the Truth or make any pronouncement on it, the Church was the only body that could do it. The Church understood and gave him due credit for it ; for some years later he was promoted to the Deanery of St. Paul's, London.

Whatever might have been Mansel's purpose, we must realise what his position was. It was not that Ultimate Reality was unknowable to human reason. That it is finally unknowable by human reason is the attitude of all Religion. His position was that it was intrinsically unthinkable. Therefore, we are entitled to ask certain questions in the matter.

(1) If the thought of it is riddled with contradictions, how does it shed them when the Church teaches it ?

(2) Is not Mansel loading the dice, before the game, by putting unthinkability into very definition of the Absolute, by contending that the Absolute cannot be thought ? Is he not doing this when he lays it down that the Absolute is that which is un-conditioned and that to think is to condition it, thus making it impossible to think the absolute ? Is he, therefore, not unfolding a definition and not expounding an argument ?

Therefore, we may say not that the Absolute itself is beyond thought, but that the Absolute of Hamilton and Mansel is. However, the argument used by them certainly illustrates the feeling of overwhelming littleness that comes over the human mind when it stands before the Ultimate and tries to size it up. In all their argument what we see is the helplessness of the finite, when it tries to measure the Infinite by its own standards.

Linguistic Analysis

The Schools we have considered so far are Schools which may have arisen anytime. In fact, we hear in them echoes of earlier voices. But there is a School which has sprung up in this century about which this cannot be said, in spite of its protestations that it is simply a continuation of the British School of Empiricism, which had flourished in the 18th century but which has been a living tradition in British thought since then. For, this School is saying something new in the entire field of thought. This School actually sprang up in Vienna in 1924; but made its way into

Britain and has chiefly found its home there, largely because of its claim to be a continuation of a British tradition. If it is a continuation of the School of British Empiricists it has taken their thought far beyond the limit to which they would ever have done, a point which may be clearly seen from the utter bewilderment of Dean Inge, when he first ran into it in 1950.¹ During its comparatively short career for a School of Philosophy it has been known by various names, such as 'Logical Positivism', 'Logical Empiricism', and 'Scientific Empiricism'; but it has gone now for sometime under the name of Linguistic Analysis, though even this has had to be changed recently.

According to this School, what Religion and Metaphysics are trying to talk about is beyond the scope of Language, which is meant to function only within the bounds of sense experience; when therefore, it goes beyond these bounds, it ceases to have any meaning. 'The essential business of Language', says Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) one of the early precursors of the School, 'is to assert or deny facts'; and by 'facts' he means what could be ascertained by the senses. The tests, therefore, of the validity of any assertion or denial is whether it can be verified by the senses. If to prove the existence of God, a man were to say, 'I prayed to Him and it rained', all that could be verified was that it rained. The leap from the fact of rain, which is in the realm of sense experience to the existence of a God who is beyond that experience was entirely unwarranted for the one could be verified and the other not.

According to this School, verifiability requires three conditions: First, *Specificity*; which means that the test must explain certain things and not others. A light coming from a candle through holes in two intermediate walls and falling on a third wall in a dark room is a phenomenon, the explanation of which refers only to itself. Secondly, *Expansibility*, which means the guarantee of its recurrence in similar circumstances; *i.e.*, in similar cases, light will behave in just the same manner. Thirdly, *Subsumability*; which means that explanations of like phenomena can be subsumed under a general law; *e.g.*, that light always travels in a

¹ Adam Fox *Dean Inge*, (John Murray), p. 264.

straight line.¹ It is evident that the School has laid down the criteria that apply to the Physical sciences and made them binding on all thought.

Perhaps, the Materialists were somewhat more charitable, to the Transcendent. They denied its existence, no doubt, on grounds we deem inadequate or curious, *viz.*, their ignorance. But people could at least talk about the Transcendent; only, it was said almost with sympathy, that it just did not exist. The School of Linguistic Analysis is not willing to extend any such sympathy. All talk of the Transcendent, *i.e.*, all Religion or Metaphysics, is nonsense, because the Transcendent cannot satisfy the conditions that the School has laid down. Therefore, any talk about the Transcendent may, says the School, be equated with such a sentence as, 'Boojums are inflabulated'. The sentence does not make one any the wiser or unwiser; it is, and is meant to be, plain, unmitigated nonsense.

Two attempts have been made to cushion off what was supposed to be the devastating impact of this attitude on Religion and Philosophy. The first is that represented by R. M. Hare. His contribution consists in the term 'bliks' and the content he puts into it. 'Bliks', according to him, represent attitudes logically prior to facts. Facts are particular and relative; bliks are ultimate and independent of facts. He admits that 'bliks' may be illusions but the point is that they are held. In effect, he says 'I hold certain opinions; I do not care what you may say about them'. Hare passes no judgment on the validity or otherwise of the criteria fixed by the Linguistic School or the justifiability of the views of Transcendence that it holds on Religion or Metaphysics. He merely declares, 'This is what I think; I may be right or wrong but it is none of your business to tell me whether I am the one or the other'. We are not even sure if this kind of an attitude to any opinion would have been taken up, even when men lived in caves, and before civilisation had begun; much less can it be taken up in a modern philosophical dispute. The stand taken up by the School of Linguistic Analysis is clear and unequivocal. It says that all religious and metaphysical talk is 'boojum', that is,

¹ F. Ferré *Language Logic and God*, (Harpers), pp. 23 & 24. (Illustration Author's).

nonsense. But is it? Hare does not face the issue ; he merely contributes a new word.

The other effort to reduce the impact of the School on Religion and Philosophy is made by R. B. Braithwaite. Braithwaite says that the purpose of a religious assertion is to describe a moral intention. If, for instance, a man says Jesus Christ is the Son of God, all that you can get out of that statement is that he intends to live, as if it is true that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. One may ask whether a Linguistic analyst cares how the man intends to live ; all that he is interested in proving is that the statement that Jesus is the Son of God is not valid as an assertion of truth. The point at issue, therefore, is whether it is true or false as an assertion. If Hare's intended solution was not clear and unequivocal, Braithwaite's intended solution is irrelevant.

In their rather apologetic efforts to defend Religion and Philosophy in the face of Linguistic Analysis, both champions display an obvious deference to the criteria imposed by that School as a test of the validity of any proposition. Though what is now called 'Science' has always existed in some form, the systematic attempt to pursue investigations through observation, experiment and verification began its career as a regular intellectual discipline and a respectable practical pursuit only in 17th century Europe. Life, thought and civilisation have however existed in the world for a much longer period. Scientific studies were slow to gain recognition in schools and Universities ; and even the term 'Science' for this particular discipline is of recent origin. Some have gone to the extent of saying that it is not merely of recent origin but that its career is bound to be short lived. The Harvard Biologist and Historian, Everett Mendelsohn, says 'Science as we know it has outlived its usefulness'.¹ That during its fairly short career Physical Science has proved of immense service to humanity is beyond doubt ; but it must be realised that what we call 'service to humanity' is service within a certain sphere, the sphere of physical comfort and convenience or well-being.

It will be an illegitimate exploitation of the service that Science is performing in its own field, to say that because of it Science has

¹ *Time Magazine*, April 23, 1973.

acquired the right to dictate procedure to every branch of human knowledge. We are told that the majority of the brilliant galaxy of mathematicians who were the glory of Cambridge between 1870 and 1880 were all orthodox in their religious belief ;¹ that is, though they knew that they were doing great things in their own field, they felt they had no business to impose the tests of their own science on all life and thought. On the whole, it may be found that Scientists themselves are quite humble about the contribution they make towards the advancement of knowledge ; it is their camp-followers, who develop the mentality of being more 'royalist than the king'. An utter disclaimer towards such deference to Science has recently been put forward by a practitioner of Science of considerable standing, Richard H. Bube, Professor of Material Science and Engineering at Stanford University, U.S.A. Says he : 'One of the most pernicious falsehoods ever to be universally accepted is that the scientific method is the only reliable way to truth.'² 'Truth is the ground of Science', said Sir Philip Sidney the great Elizabethan. It will be an utter perversion of his dictum to make Science the ground of truth.

Yet the chief criticism against the School of Linguistic Analysis is not the general charge that it wants to apply the test of Scientific verification to all thought, but the particular charge that it has never thought of applying the test to itself. Is the tenet that unless a proposition is scientifically verifiable it cannot be valid itself scientifically verifiable? If not, is it not just another metaphysical theory, which of course is unverifiable, because Metaphysics is beyond Physics (from Greek *meta*+*physika*+after Physics). We therefore, come across the stark fact that on the basis of what is itself a metaphysical theory, rather arbitrarily adopted, this School wants to rule out all metaphysics. What it wants to do, in fact, is to demonetise the very currency with which it had itself set up in business.

We have seen that the School we have been considering has during the last fifty years gone under various names. Though the name 'Linguistic Analysis' has not yet been altogether given up, the tendency is now to say that the business of Linguistic Analysis

¹ Chas Gore 'Reconstruction of Belief', (J. Murray), p. 41.

² *Time Magazine*, 23rd April, 1973.

is 'functional'. This indicates a more chastened frame of mind. Wittgenstein, the Cambridge Professor, who was the leader of the Verificational School in Britain some years ago, himself began to see in his later life that he had been too rigorous and himself paved the way for the new outlook. The School has now come to realise that Language is a complex social product with many uses ; and the meaning of Language is found in its use. When a lady protested to H. R. Luce, the founder of the *Time Magazine*, against a particular use he had made of the phrase 'News Magazine', his reply was, 'Madam, I invented the term and can give it any meaning I like'.

Words cannot be used arbitrarily ; but they are of man's invention and are used for his purpose, whatever it be. He may give them different meanings, as time changes. The people of Athens seeing Socrates would often say, 'There goes the atheist, who believes in only one God'; and today the word 'atheist' is used of anyone who denies that there is one God. Dr. Eric Mascall, a great Anglo Catholic theologian of the present time, having accepted the invitation to deliver the Boyle lectures in 1965 was shocked to discover that he had to confute 'all Theists'; he got over the shock only when he discovered that when Boyle used the word in the 17th Century it had meant 'Deists'.¹ The Authorised Version of the English Bible produced in 1611 had to be put into modern English because the language of the 17th century had ceased to be intelligible to the modern Englishman.² The meaning of words in the same language may not merely vary from time to time but from country to country. We have been told by Sir Winston Churchill that the phrase 'tabling papers' caused a good deal of trouble between the British and the Americans in their initial Conferences during the War, because it had opposite meanings in the two different countries represented. Words are of man's creation and he uses them as it suits him ; he may change the rules of use from age to age and from country to country and he is entitled

¹ Now 'Theism' means the belief that God not merely created the world, but continues to govern it ; and 'Deism' means the belief that though God is the cause of the world, He has no immediate relation to or interest in it.

² When James II wanted to compliment Sir Christopher Wren on St. Paul's Cathedral, he called the building, 'Amusing, awful and artificial'; what he had meant, in modern terminology, was, 'Amazing, awesome and artistic'.

to do so. They are his creatures he is not their creature. No School of Philosophy has the right to deprive him of this lordship.

The Status of the Senses in Knowledge

In all the Schools we have noted above we have found the assumption that the senses formed the bounds of knowledge. One was brash enough to say that because knowledge could not go beyond the senses, nothing outside of them existed, another was merely content to say that knowledge could not go beyond them, a third that we could not reason beyond them, because reason was meant to function only within the senses, and the fourth said you could not even speak of what was beyond the senses, because language applied only to what was within the senses.

What do the senses actually do? They provide us with a series of impressions or sensations. Lord Balfour has pointed out that nine tenths of our immediate experiences are visual and that according to Science all visual experiences are without exception erroneous; colour is not a property of the thing seen, it is a sensation produced by the thing. Whatever other sensations we experience, they are unrelated, unless we related them.¹ It is one of the ironies of European Philosophy that it was the very man who had previously knocked out the logical validity of all Science, by challenging the Law of Causality in Nature, who thereafter proceeded to lay down the tenet that Science was the only source of all knowledge that can be acquired. David Hume (1711-1776) had said that there was no Law in Nature; and that a law was something we read into it from invariable associations of impressions formed by us. Then from the premise he had disproved Hume builds up the very doctrine about Science that he wants to prove. But says Balfour, using Hume's argument against him, 'If scientific observers had observed that all that they were observing were their own feelings and ideas they would never have taken the trouble to invent Nature'; (i.e., an independent system of things).² Nature, therefore, while certainly not an illusion is obviously a deduction. If Nature is a boundary, it is a boundary we ourselves have set up.

¹ A. J. Balfour, *Foundations of Belief*, p. 111.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Considering the humble function of the senses, viz., the provision of impressions and sensations, we may therefore, well ask whether they are entitled to the overwhelming respect with which they have been treated in certain quarters. Men had to deduce Nature, that is, a world outside of him, otherwise he would have had to live merely in the midst of his impressions and sensations, unable to make anything of them. But because he deduced such a world from the senses, is it an argument that there is nothing beyond that world which he has deduced from a particular set of data? Animals have been content to live in such a world and have never tried to go beyond it. Man, in general, has been driven to look beyond this limit; and man is what he is, because of this drive. The highest stages reached by the literature and culture of the world have all been achieved because he was willing to reach out beyond the senses.

Philosophy and Religion

Their Roles

We have said that the overwhelming mass of mankind has through the ages believed in the existence of something that transcends the senses; but two branches of human thought and activity make it their special business to speak on what so transcends: Philosophy and Religion. Though philosophical activity is not confined to any special part of the world, in this chapter we shall be dealing only with Western Philosophy, for the reason that it is only in the West that Philosophy has had an independent status. As we go along, we shall find that in the East, philosophical activity has mainly been conducted within the frame-work of religion. It is not that there were no attempts whatever outside it; but such attempts have been few and far between and even they had to get a religious imprimatur if they wanted to 'make the grade'.

The reason for this phenomenon is that, whereas in the East philosophising was done chiefly by those associated with religions, in Greece, where Western philosophical activity started, it took place among a totally different class of people and so developed as an independent pursuit. Therefore when differences arose, as they were bound to arise, in the East they became embodied

either in different religions or in different Schools within the same religion, whereas in the West they became embodied in different Philosophical Schools. This will make it clear why we should be first be concerned with Western Philosophy. With Eastern Philosophy we shall deal when we are dealing with the particular religions with which it may be associated.

Even though Philosophy is to be regarded as an independent activity, it is as much the business of Philosophy to speak about the Transcendent as it is the business of Religion. The term 'Philosophy' by derivation means 'love of wisdom' and, therefore, at one time covered a much wider range of reference than now, as may be seen by the practice of Universities conferring the degree of 'Doctor of Philosophy' on anyone who has reached a high standard of proficiency in any branch of knowledge. As against such branches of knowledge, however, a course in Philosophy itself has now been widened to cover such subjects as Ethics, Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology and Logic. But Philosophy proper consists of two branches: Metaphysics and Epistemology. Of these, the first deals with Ultimate Reality and the second with the general theories and principles of Knowledge. As grammar is bound to be of later origin than literature, Epistemology is of later origin than Metaphysics. As Epistemology, Philosophy may hesitate or even refuse to enter the field of the Transcendent; but as Metaphysics, it is committed to it. But since in this book we shall be dealing largely with the Metaphysical branch, when speaking of Philosophy—unless otherwise indicated—we shall be referring mainly to Metaphysics.¹

Though committed to dealing with the Transcendent, the approach of Philosophy to the task is more disinterested than that of Religion. Pythagoras (C 570-500 B.C.), who is traditionally considered to have used the word 'Philosopher' first, used it to denote those who went to the games not to take part in them, but to arrive at certain general conclusions about them; they would 'arrive at the truth by contemplation'. It is obvious that the attitude involved is quite free of any urgency.

¹ Aristotle's title for his treatises on Metaphysics might have simply meant a 'treatise placed after those of Physics'; but the subject matter actually deals with what lies beyond physics.

The approach of Religion to the task is different ; urgency is of the essence of it. Its belief about the Transcendent is not something it can keep to itself ; there is a kind of compulsiveness behind it. There have been many religions in the past ; and there are many religions now. They have not said, and do not say, the same things ; but they will all agree that to deal with the Transcendent is their primary purpose. They may do a number of other things in the world ; lay down codes of ethics, engage themselves in education or intervene in various social and political activities. But all such activities will be found to be dictated by the particular kind of belief they have in regard to the Transcendent ; they are carried out because it is felt that they should be.

Though both Philosophy and Religion are concerned with the Transcendent, why one should approach its task with a sense of ease and detachment, and the other should adopt the opposite attitude brings into focus the underlying difference in aims and the consequent differences in the methods and character of each.

On the part of Philosophy, the underlying difference lies in the fact, that it is a Quest. Whose quest ? Anybody's. It is assumed to be the intrinsic and automatic right of the human mind, as such, to seek the Truth. It need not follow any particular line, nor defend any particular tenet (except that which it has discovered on its own). That there are schools of Philosophy is due to two reasons : the sheer accident of a certain number of people thinking alike or to the long dominance exercised by certain outstanding thinkers like Sankara (788-820 A.D.) in the East and Plato (C 428-348 B.C.) in the West.

Whatever be the reason that caused people to belong to these schools, it certainly does not take away their right either to differ from one another or from protesting against their masters. Aristotle broke away from Plato ; and Kant, in later life, had to disown a number of his professed followers. No man forfeits his right to think for himself, because he belongs or has belonged to a school.

Because the aim of Philosophy is to engage in a quest, its method is speculative. There are no rules laid down as to how it should be carried on, nor any rule as to what conclusion it should arrive at.

The one who makes an assertion, the one who denies it and the one who, like Pyrrho, refuses to say either 'yes' or 'no' on the subject are occupying equally valid standpoints in Philosophy. Every Philosopher can be a controversial figure later, or even in his lifetime ; there is no obligation that what he says should be accepted. When Fichte (1762-1814) said that the universe was his idea, his students rather irreverently asked among themselves what his wife thought about the matter. This suggests that he might be a controversial figure even in his own home. Since an opinion he has arrived at need not accord with anybody else's opinion, Bergson, the French philosopher (1857-1941) has said that the time spent on refutation in philosophy is wasted time.

And because the method of Philosophy is speculative its conclusions are always tentative. It is beyond its power ever to claim certainty. There is always a right to challenge an opinion however venerable and a right to discard it altogether. Kant's views, still regarded with veneration by many, were seriously challenged by Hegel; and all Existentialism is a protest against Hegel, not toward Kant, but away from both.

On all these points it might be said that Religion differs from Philosophy. If the purpose of Philosophy is a Quest, the purpose of Religion (certainly of the major religions) is the announcement of a discovery. Philosophy wants to go out in search of Truth ; Religion professes to start from it. This is claimed to be embodied in an original Enlightenment given to one or more. Often it is claimed to be recorded in a book or a number of books ; but the art of writing is a late introduction ; the enlightenment could have been there before it. But always the ultimate appeal in Religion is to an original enlightenment.

There is no religion that boasts so much about its rationalistic spirit as Thera Vāda or the Southern branch of Buddhism. The Buddha himself has given specific instruction on the point in the Kālāma Sūttā :

Do not go upon what has been acquired by hearing, nor upon tradition nor rumour, nor upon Scripture . . . When you yourselves know, 'These things are good, these things are unblamable,' enter in, abide in them.

This very stricture upon Scripture has become Scripture ; and generally no Thera Vāda preaching is considered sound unless it can be substantiated by what the Buddha said. If this attitude toward original enlightenment is true of Buddhism, it must necessarily be true to a greater degree in all major religions (that is, religions which have such enlightenment to fall back on).

If Religion professes to set out from the Truth, its method must necessarily be expository. However learned a preacher or a theologian may be in the speculative methods of Philosophy, in his own task he will be off the mark if he cannot substantiate it from the Scripture of his religion.

And if the method of Religion is expository, its character must be dogmatic. However much a preacher might disown dogmatism, his presentation is essentially dogmatic in that he wants his audience to accept what he says. Sir Leslie Stephen used to be annoyed at what he considered the impertinence of young men fresh from Universities, dogmatising from the pulpit ; but that is what a pulpit is for. In the University the young men were learning ; in the pulpit they are preaching.

Thomas Carlyle said that Socrates was ' at ease in Zion '. Philosophy being what it is, he could be. We have seen why religion cannot take up the same attitude.

Their Relationship

In regard to the relationship between Philosophy and Religion, since Philosophy has existed as an independent discipline only in the West, anything like a history of the relationship between the two can have a meaning only in reference to Western Philosophy. When philosophical activity first started in Greece some six centuries before Christ, it used to be carried on by individuals here and there ; and the relationship between it and Religion was a lack of all relationship. Philosophers philosophised in loneliness, allowing no room for the gods ; but the people worshipped their gods all over the country. The former had no impact on the latter.

But as time went on, and after the rise of outstanding philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, the spirit of Philosophy began to gain ground and Academies began to spring up ; various systems began

to be discussed, though adherence to any particular system was not obligatory. So that though the proletariat continued to sacrifice, go to temples and celebrate festivals, among the others the gods had definitely taken a back seat. A philosophical spirit was abroad.

When Christianity started going out, it was into the Greek-speaking world it went, where, Philosophy had started its career and where it was cherished as its most precious heritage. It was valued as having emancipated people from the senseless mythologies of the old gods.

The early Christian Apologists were aware of the situation. They knew that they were spokesmen for a definite gospel, which was very different from any of the diverse conclusions of the Greek philosophers ; but they also realised that it would be very unwise to estrange the spirit of Philosophy that pervaded the country. So they took up the stand that Christianity was also a philosophy like that of the Pythagoreans, the Platonists, and the Peripatetics, and therefore any interference with it would involve its opponents in the same crime that had been committed against Socrates.¹ A Christian Apologist named Aristides, called himself 'a philosopher of Athens'. And Celsus and Galen, both determined opponents of Christianity, were compelled to admit that it had a claim to be regarded as a philosophy ; only, Galen complained that Christians were 'philosophising from parables'.²

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c 215), one of the great teachers of the early Church, defined Philosophy as 'the sure and irrefragable apprehension of things divine and human, comprehending the past, present and future', which God had given us. In this matter he said, the Greeks had been given a special role ; Philosophy had been given them to be used as a stepping-stone to the acceptance of the gospel. So to him Philosophy was a valuable ally.

Tertullian, hailing from the other side of the Empire and inheriting a very different tradition, took up the opposite attitude and looked upon Greek Philosophy as the parent of all heresies that arose in the Christian Church and would have no truck with it:

¹ A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. II, p. 188.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 236.

‘What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem and what concord is there between the Academy and the Church?’ he cried. But his voice was not heeded at the time; and Augustine in the 5th century invested Clement’s view with his own immense authority when he said ‘*verus philosophus amator Dei*’ (a true philosopher is a lover of God).

Since in the 4th century, the Roman Empire had become Christian, the Church was able to dictate the thought of all citizens and Philosophy became a hand-maid of the Church. This position continued in Europe till Rene Descartes (1596-1650), the French philosopher, blew it sky high. He laid it down that the starting point of all Philosophy was the realisation of one’s own existence, and the clear and distinct ideas present to one and that all other deductions followed from this. Descartes had broken the long bondage of Philosophy to the Church and restored to it the freedom that had once belonged to it. The difference was that before Christianity, though in course of time the philosophic spirit had spread, the actual task of philosophising had been done only by a few and in a limited geographical area. In the context that prevailed a thousand five hundred years later the right was thrown open to the world at large and has been used to the fullest extent.

In this new world opened by Descartes, what has been the relationship between Philosophy and Religion? Both knew that they operated in the same field; and that they had to talk the same language, because it is Philosophy that had coined the terms to be used on a high plane when talking of the Transcendent. The definition given by Spinoza (1632-1657) of Philosophy as ‘The contemplation of things *sub specie aeternitatis* (in the frame-work of eternity) is after all not different from that of Clement of Alexandria, except for the latter’s reference to God. But each side also knows that its aims are different from that of the other and therefore its *modus operandi* also.

In these circumstances, concord and discord, amity and hostility are somewhat unpredictable and depend on persons and times. On the side of philosophers some outstanding figures like Feuerbach, Nietzsche, John Dewey, and Bertrand Russell have been enemies of Religion. And on the other side, Blaise Pascal, Martin Luther,

Albrecht Ritschl and Karl Barth cannot be accused of over-much love for Philosophy (though they knew their Philosophy all right).

On the whole, however, Philosophers feel that the difference in the respective aims of the two disciplines allows them to ignore Theology. The names of professional Philosophers with a knowledge of Theology must be few indeed. Theologians, on the other hand, feel that the kinship of the two disciplines brought about by the fact that the quest of the Philosophers takes place in the same field as theirs, imposes on them the obligation to keep abreast of the results they have obtained ; and 'The Philosophy of Religion' is on the syllabus of all Theological Colleges. P. T. Forsyth perhaps voiced the opinion of many Principals of Theological Colleges when he deplored the habit of students coming to them with a literary instead of a philosophical background. Many tutors in Philosophy in Universities are clergymen and many Bishops are those who have obtained a I or II Class in the Honours School of Philosophy in the Universities. Nevertheless, a Philosopher does occasionally attempt to theologise and a Theologian does, of course, often attempt to philosophise. When this happens there is a suspicion in the other camp that the standards and aims of one discipline are being substituted for those of the other. And it must be admitted that the suspicions are usually not unfounded.

Having regard to the whole matter, it is obvious that a permanent alliance between the two disciplines is not possible. On the other hand, a permanent divorce between the two is inconceivable.

An attempt at Definition of the Transcendent in Religion

We have examined the etymology of Transcendence ; but while it was helpful, etymologically the word has too wide an application to settle matters for us. We also distinguished it from Immanence ; but since we discovered that every state of Immanence contained a certain element of Transcendence, it would not serve our purpose either to leave things at that stage. In view of the utter indispensability of a concept of Transcendence for Religion, it is necessary that we should have a clear, definite and unequivocal meaning of the term in the context with which we are dealing. Since both Philosophy and Religion speak about the Transcendent, it will hardly do for us to by-pass Philosophy. But it must be

realised that our concern is with Religion ; and therefore, whatever may be the views expressed in Philosophy, the criteria we have to fix upon are those which hold good in Religion. What are these criteria ?

1. In the first place, what transcends must not merely be distinguishable from what it transcends, but must rise clearly and unmistakably out of it and stand well over and above it.
2. In the second place, what transcends must not merely be more real than what it transcends, but must have power to shape and control it ; otherwise, it will be seen it can be a mere idea, an abstraction, a mental fiction, which does not leave anyone any the better or any the worse.
3. In the third place, what transcends must transcend eternally and not temporarily. Time belongs to the Universe ; and therefore, the Transcendent must rise above Time and must be able to control it.

We shall be coming across many views, which from our point of view may seem only partially or perhaps even totally inadequate; that need not surprise us. What we are doing here is fixing the criteria that hold good in the major religions of the world ; they will be the standard we shall use, when it is our duty to judge any view.

Dr. Alistair Kee of Hull University, Britain, in a recent book, called *The Way of Transcendence* makes an attempt to deal with the subject ; but as to how far it is a notable contribution to our knowledge of the matter we shall presently see. The sub-title of the book is 'The Christian Faith without Belief in God'. We shall see, as we go on, that it is possible for a religion to exist without a belief in God : but whether the Christian religion can do so is another question. Dr. Kee wants to reconstruct the Christian religion without its belief in God. Says he, 'I do not believe that men were called upon to have a faith that God exists'; that may be, but he is certainly not speaking about what the Christian Religion says ; for the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation is a call to believe that God exists. 'A generation ago', he says, 'the slogan was 'Your God is too small'. In this generation it may be said that

any God is too small.¹ This may be a remark on the present generation, but it is not a remark on what the Christian Faith says. Dr. Kee declares that Transcendence is what came to an expression in Jesus Christ.² But Jesus always claimed that he represented God ; to separate him from God is to denude the Man of Nazareth of the very significance, on the basis of which he claimed acceptance from people. If Dr. Kee wants to eliminate God from the Christian Faith, what does he want to put in His place ? ' Everything that has been said about God can be interpreted in terms of transcendence ', he says.³ All right ; but what is this Transcendence ? He tells us : ' Transcendence is a secular category ' ; that is, the Transcendent is that which does not transcend. In other words, having displaced God by equating Him with just Transcendence, he proceeds to equate Transcendence with non-Transcendence. The process of reasoning does seem to move very smoothly. Whatever that be, it is difficult to acknowledge that Dr. Kee's contribution to our enlightenment on the subject has been notable.

The Trancendent and Philosophy

Both in Philosophy or Metaphysics and the major religions the tendency is to look upon Ultimate Reality as one. It has been said that Philosophy begins with a sense of wonder ; and it may be said that the major religions start with a sense of conviction. When confronted with any scene of diversity, it is an instinct for both to look for a single clue. Because Philosophy is an intellectual pursuit, it begins with the wonder as to how all the diversity arose ; because in Religion man is driven by something deeper, he begins with a conviction on the subject. We must, therefore, be prepared for the fact that the One that Philosophy arrives at may not always meet all the requirements we have laid down ; but while we may note the occasions when it does not, we must remember that our criteria were laid down for the field of religion.

In European Philosophy when this search for Ultimate Reality, began among the Greeks and the answer they arrived at took two forms : that of conceiving of this Reality as changeless and abiding

¹ Alistair Kee *The Way of Transcendence*, (Pelicans), p. 224.

² *Ibid.*, p. 224.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

and that of conceiving of it as an unceasing flux. Both trends are represented in the subsequent history of Philosophy, though certainly not to the same degree.

At first Ultimate Reality was conceived of as one or another of the four elements : earth, water, fire and air. Soon thinking rose to a higher level in an early teacher called Xenophanes, who lived in the 6th century B.C. But the real founder of the School which held that Ultimate Reality was changeless and abiding was Parmenides (6-5th B.C.), who said that only Being is ; Non-Being is not ; and there is no Becoming. Unfortunately, as we saw earlier, owing to the rudimentary nature of knowledge in those days, he made the mistake of thinking that Being should have physical characteristics and a physical habitation. Thus it came about, as we have noted, that he is looked upon as the founder both of Idealism and of Materialism. He is looked upon as the founder of Idealism because of his message and as the founder of Materialism because of his mistake. The School which arose from this message is called the 'Eleatic School' from Ella, his native place. Dr. Radhakrishnan has identified the dominant School of Hinduism with the Eleatic School. The identification may hold good, if it is the message of Parmenides that is taken into account and his mistake is ignored.

The other form taken by the answer to the search for Ultimate Reality is associated with Heraclitus (c. 536-470 B.C.) ; though as in the case of Parmenides also, others had come across it earlier. The School of Heraclitus is called 'the Milesian' and held that all things in the Universe are in a state of flux and that only change is real. As Parmenides to illustrate his idea, had thought in terms of a solid, Heraclitus thought of his illustration in terms of fire and running water ; he said that a man could not step into the same river twice. His disciple, Cratylus, went one better than his master and said that a man could not step into the same river even once. If Radhakrishnan could claim Parmenides for Hinduism, Buddhism could do the same with Heraclitus.

If Parmenides was the chief teacher to think of Reality as stable and unchanging, the person who really created Idealism out of it was Plato ; for as W. T. Stace says, Plato found in Parmenides the:

germs of what he had been searching for and developed them.¹ To Plato all things in the world were copies of ideas in a higher sphere ; but behind all those ideas in particular spheres was One Ultimate Idea ; and that was the Idea of the Good. The saying of A. N. Whitehead that all subsequent European Philosophy consists of a series of footnotes on Plato does not mean that European Philosophy has been mainly Idealistic but that it has usually looked upon Ultimate reality as something stable and unchanging, behind the changes and chances of this world of senses.

Plotinus (c. 204-270 A.D.) more or less repeated Plato and is called the founder of 'Neo-Platonism'. Spinoza (1633-1677), though called 'God intoxicated' rather ineptly by the German Idealists 150 years later, really went back to Parmenides. To him Reality was all that existed ; Nature and God were one and the same (*Deus sive Natura*). He was not a Materialist, for he recognised that Nature had two attributes : Mind and Matter ; but he was not thinking of anything behind and above what existed. If you want to speak of a God, it is *Natura Naturans* (Nature with the active present participle), if you want to speak of mere Nature, it is *Natura Naturata* (Nature with the perfect passive participle). George Berkeley (1685-1753) in England and Fichte and Schelling in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century put forward the Mind, Schopenhauer (1788-1860) the Will, and Bergson (1859-1941) in France put forward the *elan vital* (life-force) as Ultimate Reality. F. H. Bradley reverted to Parmenides and Spinoza, holding that everything that is is part of Reality, but distinguishing, however, between degrees of Reality.

After Heraclitus, the second trend makes only fitful appearances in European Philosophy and that rather late. Even after its appearance, for quite sometime, it is resorted to only rarely. David Hume (1711-1776) dissolved the Mind into a series of impressions ; but he was not concerned with Ultimate Reality. Schopenhauer used the concept of flux to prove that the Will was the supreme Reality that caused the process of flux. To neither is the flux itself the ultimate thing. It was G. W. F. Hegel who early in the last century gave it that status once again. His philosophy boasts that it is a philosophy of the 'Spirit' ; but he does not mean by the

¹ W. T. Stace *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*, (Macmillan), p. 50.

word what others mean. It is a technical way of referring to 'the primal ground containing within itself all the finite contrasts between subjects and objects'.¹ And this 'Spirit' is subject to the inevitable dialectical law of separation, estrangement and reconciliation which goes on endlessly. 'On pain of being regarded as a dead thing, the Absolute spirit must also undergo development allowing its content to become enriched through self-estrangement and recovery'.² So that it is obvious that endless process is with Hegel the ultimate thing ; and not the Spirit which is subject to it. As has been pointed out, to Henri Bergson in this century Process was important but certainly not ultimate. The man who revived the Heraclitian tradition once again and with far greater appeal to the religious-minded was A. N. Whitehead (1861-1947).³ Whitehead was a person of Protean intellect, who came to Philosophy with an imposing mathematical background and was not one to leave any loose ends. He was different from Hegel, in that the latter was concerned with what he called the Spirit ; but Whitehead's concern was with God. We find, however, that he is using the term 'God' in his own sense, for his God no more rises above or transcends the world than Hegel's 'Spirit', though, unlike Hegel's, He is distinct from it. Whitehead's God is not one who creates the finite order, but one who requires it for His own development ; therefore, he calls his God 'bi-polar'. His God is in a 'primordial' state and advances to a 'consequent' state by 'prehending' the eternal potentialities of the temporal order ; and the process goes on indefinitely. There is not the slightest doubt as to which tradition he belongs.

Hegel's writings had a prestige in the religious world of his time ; but Whitehead's have had a greater influence on Christian theology. At the present time, Prof. Norman Pittinger of Cambridge, England, and Prof. Charles Hartshorne in America are among his avowed and fervent disciples, trying to strengthen that influence. Prof. Hartshorne says that 'the aim of their philosophy is to assert that God always remains God, supremely worshipful, unsurpassable by anything other than Himself, yet

¹ J. Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, p. 212.

² *Ibid.*, p. 214.

³ Perhaps it is no wonder ; the father was a clergyman and the brother a Bishop.

enriched in His own experience as God, able to use what has happened in the world'.¹ In spite of their motives, it is obvious who the master is, whether it is Process or God. It is the Heraclitian tradition, trying its best to come to terms with the God of Christian Theology.

The above are the main trends in European Philosophy ; their purpose is to point to what the philosophers concerned consider is the Ultimate Reality behind the world of senses ; but as to whether the Reality they indicate fulfills the requirements we have laid down is another question. There is a third trend, however, which puts forward a view that is betwixt and between ; it is common enough in Religion, but makes only a somewhat incidental appearance in Philosophy. While admitting the existence of God, it holds that His power is limited. It cannot by any means be said that the reality that it postulates is ultimately transcendent, because its whole point is that it is limited. Why it is common in Religion we shall notice later in this chapter ; and Dean Inge gives a cogent argument why it is rare in Philosophy. He says that the idea may be attractive to the Moralist (who also believes in God), but cannot be taken seriously by the metaphysician. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) seems to have been the first to put it forward ; but he does not seem to have been whole-hearted in his devotion to it, but merely to have tinkered with it on his way to a purely humanitarian ethic. That is, on his way to pure Moralism he was wondering what he should do with a God, who people thought was the source of Moralism, and conceded there might be a God, but that He certainly was a limited kind of God. William James (1842-1910) came to it from the opposite end. He was fighting his way out of pure Moralism, in which he had felt helpless, and had wanted 'a collaborator, counsellor and a stimulator of moral ideals'. But since he could not reconcile the existence of evil with a perfect God, he concluded that though there was a God, He Himself had His own difficulties. With both, the concept of a limited God was being held for the time-being, while each was going in an opposite direction.

The person who really made the concept quite a fad with the general public—though like all other fads it lasted only a short

¹ Quoted, 'Expository Times', Oct. 1969.

while—was not a professional philosopher, but the novelist, H. G. Wells (1866-1946), who used to walk the no-man's-land between Literature, on the one hand, and Science and Philosophy on the other. In a couple of best-sellers during the First World War he 'sold' the idea to the public with so much zest that people almost took him seriously. But he soon moved on to other interests and was able, as he tells us in his autobiography, with great satisfaction to return to the 'robust atheism' that had always been his creed, except for this brief interruption. So he also appears to have held the idea only 'for the time-being'.

We have made this cursory survey of European Philosophy, because since both Philosophy and Religion speak about the same subject, it would not have done for us totally to ignore what the former says on it. We need not, however, grieve when it says something that does not accord with our view of the Transcendent in Religion, nor rejoice when it says something that does. (European) Philosophy is an independent approach to the Transcendent and both its agreements and disagreements with Religion are accidental and depend merely on the outlook and temperament of individual philosophers.

The Transcendent in Religion

For reasons already dealt with, it is obvious that every form of Religion has a greater hold over those attached to it than any that Philosophy can have over those who are attached to it. Philosophic views may be held sincerely and even espoused ardently by those engaged in the philosophical pursuit. A philosopher may write books about his views and found a School of Philosophy; but philosophies do not go very deep down and influence his life as a whole to any considerable degree. R. W. Emerson, the well-known American thinker in the last century, was once telling his friends that he and a few others like him were inclined to agree with Kant about the unreality of time; then pulling out his watch and looking at it, exclaimed 'Goodness me!! It is only 15 minutes more for the train to Hartford', and to the great amusement of his audience started running to catch it.¹ He did not think it neces-

¹ It is well known, how in spite of his view on Time which he had set forth in his 'Critique of Pure Reason', Kant's routine was so strictly regulated by his watch that people used to set their own watches, when he started out for his own afternoon walks.

sary that his philosophic attitude to Time should influence his attitude to the Railway Time Table.

When we come to Religion the matter is different. Every religion exists round a certain concept of the Transcendent. Belief in it is expected to sink down into the personality of those who hold it and to shape their whole life. Religions expect obedience to the implications of the concepts round which they exist. In our treatment of the School of Linguistic Analysis earlier in this chapter, we had occasion to notice the contention of Mr. R. M. Braithwaite that the purpose of a religious view was to describe the moral intention of the person who held it. Since he had said that the truth or falsity of the view was not involved, we disagreed with him strongly. But Mr. Braithwaite saw correctly that any religious view would involve moral consequences. A man can change his philosophy and remain the same—in fact many philosophers do ; but a man cannot change his religion and remain the same. A religious view when held sincerely has a grip on the total personality ; men will go to the stake for it—hundreds of thousands have done so through the centuries. No man will do it for Kant or Hegel ; we found that he may not even be willing to miss his train for it.

A careful distinction must, however, be drawn between definite concepts of transcendence round which religions exist and a mere consciousness of transcendence. A consciousness of transcendence is that from which Religion arises, (as does Philosophy itself) ; but it may remain vague, inchoate and unorganised, expressing itself in crude and rudimentary modes. The belief of the Melanesians in an impersonal and diffused force called *mana*, which may be acquired by rites or incantations, is an instance of this. It is a kind of phenomenon which may be encountered in many of the remote islands of the world and the deep hinterlands of vast continents. This phenomenon is at the stage of anthropology, and not at that of religion. It is this consciousness which Rudolf Otto has analysed in the opening chapters of his ' Idea of the Holy '. A mere consciousness of the Transcendent may inspire the poet ; the haunting feeling of ' the sounding cataract ', ' the tall rock, the mountain and the deep and gloomy wood ' were a presence in the mind of Wordsworth. A consciousness of Transcendence is

essential to Religion, but in itself is not Religion. It may fill a man with a vague fear and subject him to various taboos and fill him with an indefinable reverence for the unseen, but will not drive him to the stake. What drives a man to the stake is a definite concept of Transcendence ; but behind it, of course, there will be a consciousness of Transcendence, from which that concept arises.

When a vague and inchoate consciousness of the Transcendent rises to the level of religion, it may go through two stages : first, a belief in units of limited or partial transcendence, and then a reaching out for complete transcendence. The first stage consists in a belief in a large number of gods with rather delimited powers. The second stage we have noted is a reaching out ; this, we shall see, may proceed along more than one line.

Books on Religion tell us how during the first stage striking phenomena of Nature fill man with awe. It is not merely the phenomena of Nature but also important activities of life, like Love, Prosperity and Learning that have a mystery about them and induce a subdued frame of mind on the part of man. But when man bows down before the phenomena of Nature, he is not to be taken as worshipping the phenomena themselves. He is actually worshipping somebody behind each of them ; he is worshipping the sun god, the sea god, the rain god or the mountain god or the goddesses of the moon or the great rivers. He wants to pray to somebody who will hear him and respond ; the gods and the goddesses behind these phenomena, he thinks, can ; but not the phenomena themselves.

However, this first level is hardly ever a dead level. Though there are many gods which attract devotion at this stage, usually there is a recognition that there cannot be absolute parity among all of them ; and one God is generally found standing out of and above the other gods.

But religiously, it is difficult for man to be satisfied with the partially transcendent, because man is a whole. The partially transcendent gods were useful in particular ways ; but man wants something which can sway his whole life or being, now and hereafter ; this in religious language is called feeling the need for redemption. From an intellectual point of view also the partially transcendent

fails to satisfy, because the Universe is a whole ; and the partially transcendent cannot explain the Universe. The rain god may explain rain and the mountain god may have control of the mountains. But the Universe is larger and is a whole. Hence the drive religiously and intellectually towards the completely transcendent.

As to the way in which this drive should culminate we cannot here lay down rules. We can merely record how it has historically culminated. More often than not, we shall find that it has taken the line laid down by some great personage, who has appeared on the scene at some particular time. We can, however, pronounce whether any particular culmination satisfies the requirements for Transcendence which we have adopted.

We find that the culmination has specially taken three forms. It may end up in a general principle, entirely devoid of the characteristics of Personality, yet satisfying our requirements of complete Transcendence, though there may still be clinging to it traces of the first stage, viz., the belief in a number of minor gods. Secondly, it may end up in an elastic kind of theism, which allows of a wide range—from a virtual pantheon, where one God exercises an easy-going supervision over the others, to a virtual Monotheism ; in such cases we may find the high canonical books stressing the oneness of the Deity, while books of lower authority describe the varying degrees of the prowess of the minor deities. Thirdly, the drive towards the completely Transcendent may also culminate in pure Monotheism. As to which of them should be considered the logical development of the effort to reach a concept of complete transcendence depends on the logic of the person who surveys the phenomenon.

So all over the world it seems to have been common for people at one time to worship a large number of deities possessed of partial transcendence, and then if the second stage is reached, to struggle towards concepts of complete Transcendence, such concepts taking their own forms, according to circumstances.

Has Religion been Outgrown ?

Not merely in Western countries but even in Eastern countries it may be observed that there is a widespread neglect of religion

nowadays. Three erroneous inferences may perhaps be drawn from this phenomenon : that this neglect is entirely modern and that in ancient times people were always devout about their religion ; that this neglect is symbolic of a repudiation of Religion ; and that Religion in itself is out-dated.

However, a little examination of history will show that the complaint that religion was being neglected dates back to ancient times. The Hebrew prophets, were all the time denouncing the neglect of religious duties of the children of Israel and their luxurious life. And we do not think that the people of the Roman Empire as a whole were very religious. The Tudors in England had to impose a fine on those who were not found in Church on Sundays. The Restoration period in England is a by-word. About the religious laxity of the 18th century Bishop Butler and John Wesley have borne ample testimony ; and about the attitude to religion early in the 19th century, Schleiermacher has given his opinion in his appeal to its ' Cultured Despisers '.

The second inference that the neglect of religion is equivalent to its repudiation is also wrong. Neglect of religion is chiefly due to preoccupation with other things. It is a case of the thorny plants choking the growing wheat plants, referred to in the Parable of the Sower. In the Roman Empire, the indifference was due to the luxury easily available at the period ; during the Restoration period in England it was due to sheer licentiousness. Always there is some preoccupation that has kept people away from Religion. In modern times the artifacts provided by the advance of Science, perhaps, provide a far greater chance for such preoccupation.

The neglect of Religion, however, is different from a repudiation of it. The neglect of Religion is a failure to take up any attitude to religion ; a repudiation, on the other hand, is the deliberate assumption of the attitude that religion is false. Repudiation has passed a judgment, it has weighed religion in the balance and found it wanting. Neglect has passed no judgment ; It may, therefore, often co-exist with a belief in Religion. There is a common saying that the Englishman wants a Church that he may not go to it. That is, though he may neglect religion, he certainly does not want to repudiate it. The poet W. H. Auden has recorded how he went to Spain during the Civil War in the thirties and

was stunned with dismay to see all the Churches standing closed ; and how he then realised that though he had for sixteen years ignored the ministrations of the Church, he had all the time been sub-consciously expecting it to keep functioning anyway.

Since neglect is due to certain circumstances and not to any fundamental conviction, this neglect can often cease when those circumstances no longer hold sway. Men who may not be concerned with Religion when they are preoccupied with the products of technology may often be brought back to it when they pass beyond the verge of the power and domain of technology. This was the case with a pilot in America, whose plane was about to crash but which managed to creep into Denver. Recalling the incident later and pointing to the skies he said, ' There are no atheists there '. At Christmas time in 1968 three American astronauts were circling the moon at fairly close quarters and intimated that they had a message for the world ; and when the world waited intensely for their message they read out the first seven verses of the first chapter of Genesis. And when Apollo 11 (eleven) which was the first to land on the moon, was taking off from the ground, Werner Von Braun, who more than anyone else had been responsible for the American space-programme, was repeating the Lord's Prayer in German (his mother tongue). Prof. William Barclay says that it is a common saying that there are no atheists among astronomers. We cannot vouch for the entire correctness of the saying.

However, it would seem that the opinion of those who have spent long periods of time alone on the high seas is also decidedly against atheism, as a result of their experience. Three Britishers have in recent times gone round the world single-handed in small boats viz., Chay Blyth, Sir Francis Chichester and Sir Alec Johnstone. All of them take the same stand. Chay Blyth has said, ' To the atheists I say ' ' Go sailing round the world single-handed and let me know ' .¹ To those who stand at the rim of a world in which man is master the certainty of a world in which he is not master seems to become more apparent.

Repudiation, though different from neglect, does take place. We have examined some of the theories of such repudiation ; but

¹ *Expository Times*, Oct. 1971, p. 42.

while there have been those who have indeed repudiated religion, compared with those who have always clung to religion, their number is very small. When such repudiation appears wide spread, it is usually engineered, artificial and a piece of make-believe. In such cases, it will generally be found that a few have been able to force their own belief, or lack of it, on the many. For a short period during the French Revolution, Atheism was declared the State religion ; but a little while later those responsible for it were executed. Russia, and East Germany propagate atheism and many may refrain from going to places of worship ; but this does not mean that the people living in those countries have weighed religion in the balance and found it wanting. An Oxford don once said that there was no difference between compulsory religion and non-religion ; i.e. they amounted to the same thing. By the same logic, but from the opposite angle, it may be said that compulsory non-religion is not really the same thing as real non-religion. When there is no need to judge a people's religion by the religion of its rulers, the figures are revealing. In England 84% of the people believe in a God and in the U.S.A. 97%.¹

We must however, be aware of how far the charges of the neglect or repudiation of religion really go. Both charges or statements are about man. The statement that certain men do not take penicillin was well as the statement that they do not believe in its efficacy, are statements about certain patients ; they are not a reflexion on the medicine itself. So the statements about neglect and repudiation of religion are statements about man.

On the other hand, the statement that Religion is out-grown and out-dated is different ; it is a statement about religion. It means that religion is something which can be, and is necessarily, left behind as mankind advances. A certain amount of force is lent to such a conclusion by the fact that many religions have passed away ; the Mediterranean basin has been called 'the graveyard of the gods'. So Hegel and Comte, who lived early in the 19th century thought that the stage of Religion had necessarily been passed by mankind.

But the minor theologians, whose works have recently been flooding the book markets of Europe and America have not been

¹ J. A. T. Robinson *Exploration into God*, (S.C.M., 1967), p. 31.

trying to justify the prediction of Hegel or Comte. They have had their own sources of inspiration. They can be divided into three classes : those who are rebelling against Religion in general, those who are rebelling against the concept of God, and therefore against the type of Religion known as Theism and those who are in revolt against the traditional Christian doctrine of God, i.e., against a certain formulation of Theism. The second class and the third will be dealt with in the chapter dealing with Transcendence in Monotheism. Here we are concerned only with the group that has rebelled against Religion in general ; and the group takes its cue from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), who was put to death about the end of the II World War. In one place in one of his letters written from a Nazi Prisoners' Camp he had used the phrase that ' man had come of age ' and in another had said that Christianity should shed its ' religion '. In these phrases this group finds the authentic voice of its generation. ' Few passages ', says Kenneth Hamilton, ' have caused more ink to be pressed out of typewriter ribbons during the past few years than the pages in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* ' (What is New in Religion p. 67).

To lean on Bonhoeffer for this kind of an attack is a desperate expedient. The tomb erected by his friends over his body bears the words :

' Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a witness of Jesus Christ among his brothers. Born on 4th Feb. 1906 in Breslau died on 9th April, 1945 in Flossenburg. '

The last book that he was reading in prison before his execution was ' The Imitation of Christ ' ; and just before he was taken out for his execution he had been conducting a service for his fellow-prisoners ; and the last words before his execution were : ' This is the end ; but for me it is the beginning '. Pryne Best, an English officer, who was with him at the time, has testified that he was one of the few men he had met to whom his God was real and close. Bonhoeffer was a great Christian martyr.

Those who have wanted to use this dedicated theologian for their purpose have totally misunderstood his aim. A friend of Bonhoeffer, himself a theologian of standing has said, ' There have

been martyrs who called the world to the Church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a martyr who called the Church to the world'. Bonhoeffer was doing the much-needed task of trying to disengage the German Church from its excessive preoccupation with its religiosity and get it involved in responsibility to the world.¹

Actually to the modern minor theologians, who want to dismiss the whole concept of Transcendence, Bonhoeffer is just a convenient excuse. They are happy to find a saintly Christian figure uttering a phrase which sums up their own frame of mind. Dr. Van Leeuwen, the Dutch theologian, tries to enunciate their attitude as follows :

The spell of the divine universe is broken ;
upon every temple falls the devastating
judgment that it has been ' made by man ' .
Even modern Science has to deal with a man-made universe.
It moves among the stars and probes the inmost secrets of the
atom ; and in all this man comes face to face with himself'.²

Because he thinks he can pronounce such a judgment, he feels he is no longer a slave of the Universe, that he is now in command of Nature and that he has finally come of age.

But the modern man is not the first to have this experience ; it is an experience that his ancestors must have had very often. Not realising his own share in the concept of Nature, to which Lord Balfour has referred and confronted with the spectacle of Nature, man's tendency would usually be to feel dwarfed and inferior. Therefore, every time a 'law of Nature' was discovered or an important invention devised he would have had a spirit of exhilaration, an accession of confidence in himself. He would have thought that Nature was no longer a mystery before which he should stand in awe ; he had unravelled its secret. He probably had this feeling when the Multiplication Tables were first discovered and the rules of plane Geometry gradually arrived at. He must have

¹ Whoever wants to know of Bonhoeffer's religion must read his poem written from prison, beginning with the words 'Who am I?' and ending with the words 'Whoever I am, Thou Knowest God, I am Thine'.

² Quoted from 'Christianity in World History', A. T. Ven Leeuwen in 'Honest Religion for the Secular Man' by J. E. L. Newbigin (S.C.M.), p. 29.

certainly had the feeling when Galileo invented the telescope and brought the starry world nearer, and when Newton reduced the laws of planetary motions to mathematical formulae. When Benjamin Franklin brought Electricity down from heaven to earth on the string of his kite, Immanuel Kant went into ecstasies. Comte felt that the age of Science had come before Darwin had written and Huxley and Tyndall felt it had come after he had written. And thus man in every epoch must have felt that he was gaining a mastery over Nature. But the greater the mastery he gained, as epoch succeeded epoch, the more he must have realised that Nature is far greater and more wonderful than men of previous epochs had imagined and that in spite of the achievements of the ages there is a long way to go before the secrets of Nature are exhausted.

Nevertheless, Nature with all its wonders belongs to the world of the senses ; if man has gained increasing power by his discoveries and inventions, it is in the world of the senses. The astronauts circling the moon and surveying the planetary system were in this respect no different from the Polynesian sailor gazing on the endless seas ages ago. But both the astronauts and the Polynesian sailor had a feeling of ' wonderment ', because it came to them that what they saw before them was not all that there was ; because over against that world which they saw, there stood a world that transcended it and which they did not see. As the wonders of the world of Nature get revealed more and more, the realisation should also come to man how exceeding great and beyond all imagining would be the wonder of the world that transcended it. If man ' comes of age ' in this world, it makes no difference to his status in regard to that other world. In fact, the more he feels he is of age in this world, the more he should feel his littleness in regard to the world of the Transcendent that stands over and above this world. Einstein who stood almost at the very brink of the scientific world put the matter succinctly, when he said, ' Ideas come from God '. Standing before the ultimate facts of the Universe he realised that they did not explain themselves ; the explanation had to come from outside.

Religion, therefore, does not get out-dated ; because it does not belong to the realm where such a thing happens ; and for that reason, men do not out-grow religion. Things get out-dated in

the realm where our likes and dislikes, our circumstances of life and the situations created by historical events are the determinants. In such a realm men are masters and those things get out-dated which do not suit them or apply to them. Religion is outside this realm ; it is man's response to the Transcendent. And as long as the Transcendent stands over and against him, he will respond to it. Particular responses may get out-dated ; we are no longer where the Polynesians were. That is, particular religions may get out-dated ; but religion, as such, does not get out-dated. Therefore, men do not out-grow religion. History, said Lord Acton, is the best evidence for religion.

II

BUDDHISM AND TRANSCENDENCE

The Two Main Types of Buddhism

Buddhism is certainly one of the major religions of the world. It used to be claimed at one time that it commanded the largest following in the world. That claim was based on the assumption that China, the population of which is about a fourth of that of the world, was a Buddhist country ; but even when the claim was made, it is doubtful if it could have been said at any time that China was entirely Buddhist ; but in view of the attitude that has prevailed in that country for some years past towards any religion whatsoever, this claim to count China as Buddhist may lose much of its meaning. Nevertheless, that fact remains that Buddhism does command a very large following in the world.¹

However, this fact must be accepted with a reservation ; because the term 'Buddhism' may refer not to one religion alone, but to either one of two religions. Within all religions, of course, there are divergences in doctrine and practice ; these have led not merely to different Schools of theology and thought but to their virtual crystallisations into different forms of each of the religions. Thus there are so many forms of Hinduism, that scholars have been greatly perplexed to find a common definition of Hinduism that will cover all these forms. In Islam there is the main division between the Sunnis and the Shi'as and different Schools among the Sunnis and different denominations among the Shi'as. Among Christians there is the Orthodox Church covering all Eastern Europe, Roman Catholicism prevailing in many lands and Protestantism with its many denominations. In spite of these differences, wide as they sometimes may be, there is yet enough in common between these various forms as to entitle them legitimately to be classed under the generic names of the particular religions with

¹ The 1976 Britannica Book of the Year (p. 586) gives the present figures for Buddhism as 249, 877, 300. This would put it well behind most of the other major religions of the world.

which they are associated. But the gulf between the two types of Buddhism is so deep that one wonders whether the application of the same name to both types may appear to be only a matter of verbal convenience. One thing, however, they have in common ; and that is a common descent, though sometimes the genealogical table is hard to trace or sustain.

The two main types of Buddhism are called 'Thera Vāda' (religion of the Elders) or the 'Hīna Yāna' (the Lesser Vehicle), a term applied in derision to it by its opponents, and 'Mahā Yāna' (the Great Vehicle) a term appropriated by those who profess it. The first School has acquired the geographical name of the 'Southern School of Buddhism' among Western scholars, because of its prevalence in the countries of South East Asia and the other School the name of the 'Northern School', because of its prevalence in the more Northern regions of Asia, like China, Japan and Tibet. Though the main types of Buddhism may be classed as two, this is no key to the total number of sects involved ; for Mahā Yāna has had a habit of taking on a different aspect, as it has gone from one country to another and even in the same country itself to break up into different sects and sub-sects. But as far as China and Japan are concerned (and probably other countries) we shall soon see the various sects of Mahā Yāna group themselves into just two kinds. But it does not matter how many different sects of Mahā Yāna there may be, Mahā Yāna as a whole sets itself up as different from Hīna Yāna.

Two attempts at arriving on a common platform between Mahā Yāna and Hīna Yāna have been made in comparatively modern times, one in 1891 by Col. Olcott, an American admirer of Buddhism and the other in 1945 by Mr. Christmas Humphreys, an English Buddhist, to show the accord that exists between the two types.¹ These are not the spontaneous expressions of a common Faith springing from those who have professed Buddhism all along, but artificial constructions imposed by admirers from outside. They do not look like a religious message that could at any time have converted anyone ; and they partake of the same kind of nebulosity as the documents that are often drawn up by well-meaning individuals at Inter-religious Conferences ; such

¹ Christmas Humphreys 'Buddhism', (Pelicans), p. 71-74.

documents, if they do not usually provoke any objections, do not provoke any fiery zeal either. They certainly are not the kind for which anybody will ever be willing to die. An agreed political statement drawn up in special circumstances and for a particular purpose by statesmen holding divergent views, addressed, however, to specific topics has great value and serves a definite purpose, because it represents an agreement which, while not ignoring differences on other points, has been arrived at on particular issues and will be acted upon. But a religious agreement in general distilled from disagreements and about which nobody means to do anything may not be said to have much value.¹

Of the two systems, Thera Vāda or Hīna Yāna was the system mostly known to the world for a long time. The reasons are as follows ; in the first place, it is the one that prevailed in countries which had for long been open to the white-man, and therefore could catch his eye, countries like Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Therefore, to many Buddhism has meant just this system. Secondly, because it was something new that had come into his hands, it made the white-man bend all his energy to unlocking its secrets, as it made him do in the linguistic, archeological and epigraphical fields ; and Western countries were flooded with translations of Thera Vāda texts and commentaries on them. There were English, German, French, Belgian and Russian scholars busying themselves with the project. The resulting publicity for the system was enormous. Schopenhauer (1788-1860) took the matter so seriously that he congratulated himself that he had worked out the same system without any earlier knowledge of Buddhism. In the third place, Thera Vāda is a compact and coherent system, based on a compact body of scripture written in one language ; and though there may be differences between the teachings of priests and popular practice and differences of interpretation and stress among individuals, both lay and clerical, officially Thera Vāda speaks with one voice. So it is easy to know what it says.

As against this, in the first place, the group of Schools which come under the common name of 'Mahā Yāna' prevailed in

¹ The World Congress of Fellowship of Buddhism, founded in 1950, and active for some time, served to show that fellowship could exist between Buddhists of the two Schools, not theological accord.

countries like China, Japan and Tibet, which till comparatively recent times remained entirely closed to the white-man. Secondly, the scriptures of Mahā Yāna are written in different languages : Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan. Thirdly, the voluminousness of the Mahā Yāna scriptures defy any serious translation. Through the centuries they had snow-balled, gathering to themselves, texts, commentaries and discourses, so that their combined bulk would be a nightmare to any translator. One scripture the *Prajñā Pāramitā*, alone consists of 200,000 verses. Finally, Mahā Yāna lacks compactness ; the divergences within it are so wide that even after a long period of study one is not sure of one's bearings.

We must in this chapter deal with both systems and shall be taking Thera Vāda first. For purposes of study it is clear that it has an advantage over the other, because one is always on firm ground. It is clear-cut and explicit ; scriptural authorities are easily available and commentaries both ample and thorough.

Thera Vada

Origin and Basis

The rise of the Thera Vāda School is said to have taken place at the Second Council held about a hundred years after the death of the Buddha (c 483 B.C.). At this Council, oddly enough, it was the Mahāsāṅghikas (the greater body or the majority) who seceded and left the field clear for the *Sthaviras* (the firm ones or the diehards) who were in a minority. The Thera Vādins are those who continue the tradition of the *Sthaviras*. The Third Council is said to have been held in the time of the Emperor Asoka (reigned 264-228 B.C.). Till Emperor Asoka, Buddhism had been a sect ; during his regime it became the national religion ; but for long afterwards, if not always in the ascendant, it loomed large in the life of India.

The Canon of Thera Vāda consists of what are called the *Tipitakas* (three baskets). The word *Pitaka* is derived from the practice of passing excavated earth from hand to hand in baskets ; and in this context refers to the teaching handed down by tradition. The Three Pitakas consist of the *Vinaya*, the *Sutta* (or *Sūtras* or collection of formulas) and the *Abhidhamma* (pre-eminent Dharma).

The *Vinaya* deals with the discipline of monks, the *Sutta* consists of general discourses, covering the whole range of the Buddha's teaching, and the *Abhidhamma* deals with philosophical and psychological issues. Each is divided into various *Nikāyas* or sections. The *Pitakas* are said to have been recited at all the Councils. However there is a strong but significant tradition that the last *Pitaka* was recited by the Buddha to the gods when he had gone to heaven ; which would mean that it had not been recited on earth.¹ The *Pitakas* were reduced to writing in Ceylon in the first century B.C.

The historicity of the Councils has been strongly impugned. The evidence for the first two is contained in an Appendix, called *Culla Vagga*, tagged on to the *Vinaya Pitaka*. Berridale Keith brings all his guns to bear on the III Council, and asks why Asoka who was careful to record all his doings, did not record such an important event. Sir Charles Eliot, however, sees no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Councils, provided we do not consider them to have been constituted according to strict and regular standards.

But in view of the fact the *Pitakas* represent the tradition of just one School and were reduced to writing some 400 years or so after the death of the founder, doubt has been expressed as to whether the *Pitakas* do actually represent the original teaching of the Buddha. The doubt may be increased when it is realised that the *Pitakas*, as they exist, are not in the language in which the Buddha spoke ; he had spoken some form of Maghadhi, the language of his own principality ; the *Pitakas* are written in Pali, the court language of the Emperor Asoka. There had been 18 different Schools of Buddhism prevailing in the early days ; and since the *Pitakas* can represent the tradition of only one of these Schools, the question is whether in the hands of that School the original teaching of the Buddha did not undergo a process of reconstructions ; and if so, how far that reconstruction went. Various suggestions have been made as to what the original teaching might have been. Mrs. Rhys Davids, who has done eminent service to Buddhism in the West, would make the worship of the Buddha the original gospel of Buddhism and also would remove the doctrine

¹ C. Eliot *Hinduism and Buddhism*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul), Vol. I, p. 254.

of *anattā* (no-soul) and monasticism from Buddhism, I. H. Jennings would remove all reference to rebirth. Berridale Keith holds that either the Buddha claimed divinity for himself or that his followers had attributed it to him early and the doctrine had won general acceptance.¹ But in view of his calling himself the Tathāgata (one who comes and goes like the other Buddhas) such a claim lacks probability.

If the Buddha did actually teach something different from what the Pali Canon records, we can scarcely know what it was. And any particular guess as to what he did actually teach may be as good or as bad as any other. We are not called upon to play the role of contemporaries of an era beyond all records and which has long since faded away into the mists of time. All that we are called upon to do is to pronounce on a system that prevails now, which somehow has come down through twenty-five centuries and is considered by those who profess it to be derived from the Buddha himself.

Is Thera Vāda a Religion?

While the question of whether Thera Vāda represents the original teaching of the Buddha may be of purely antiquarian interest and may be by-passed, there is another question about Thera Vāda which we cannot by-pass; and that is, whether Thera Vāda may be considered a religion at all. The observation of A. N. Whitehead, one of the greatest thinkers of modern times, is well known. He said that Buddhism (by which he meant Thera Vāda) is a metaphysic that is in search of a religion. We have already seen that no religion can steer clear of metaphysics; that is, every religion may yield a system or systems of metaphysics, while, of course, not every philosophy can yield a religion. It is not merely Western scholars who have hesitated to call Thera Vāda a religion but Buddhists themselves. The Primer for teaching Buddhism to six year old children in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) states in its introduction that Buddhism is not a religion; the sentence is, however, later qualified.² But the hesitation among Buddhists themselves is significant.

¹ Berridale Keith *Buddhist Philosophy*, (O.U.P.), p. 29.

² Richard F. Gombrick *Precept and Practice*, (O.U.P.), p. 62.



The reason why non-Buddhists as well as Buddhists have shown a reluctance to apply the term 'religion' to Buddhism is that Buddhism denies much that is usually associated with any form of religion. And Thera Vāda does not make these denials incidentally, so that they can be ignored, and the system still be left standing. It is built on these very denials and has no meaning apart from them. We shall see what these denials are and consider whether in spite of them Thera Vāda can still be considered a religion from our point of view.

The Denials of Thera Vada

God

There is a general tendency to think that every religion should believe in a God ; and one of the definitions of 'religion' given in the Oxford Dictionary is that it is the recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control over his destiny and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship. This is not a comprehensive definition that will cover all religions that have existed ; but most religions, no matter with how many gods or goddesses they have peopled the heavens, when they functioned as religions have directed themselves to one or more objects of worship, that they regarded as divine. Sometimes the word 'religion' is used in a loose and metaphorical sense, in which anything a man regards with excessive devotion is called his 'god'. Thus St. Paul said that with some people their god was their belly ; and the Nazis during the Hitler era were said to have worshipped Race as their god. We are not here concerned with such uses of the term ; we are concerned with the fact that with many people 'religion' means belief and worship centering in an over-ruling divine Being ; and when a system defines and elaborates its tenets, there are many people who want to know if it fulfils that criterion before they are willing to call it 'a religion'. Such a kind of divine Being Thera Vāda denies.

'As between theist and atheist positions Buddhism is atheist', says Mr. Christmas Humphreys.¹ The term 'atheist' has often been used in a highly elastic sense to denote anybody who held a

¹ C. Humphreys *Buddhism*, (Pelicans), p. 79.

view different from one's own. Thus Socrates was called an 'atheist' by the Athenians, because he believed in only one God. Sometime later the Greeks and the Jews of Alexandria are recorded as having called one another 'atheists'. And Christians were thrown to the lions in the first century on the charge of being 'atheists'; but Thera Vāda is atheistic in the one, right and proper sense of the term. 'There is not (in Thera Vāda), says Narada Thera, 'as in most of the other religions an Almighty God to be obeyed and feared. Buddhism denies the existence of a supernatural power, conceived as an Almighty Being or causeless cause.'¹

The Buddha did not spend much time in disproving God's existence. In fact, a modern Buddhist is kind enough to say that 'God-belief' is not classed in Buddhism among pernicious beliefs, such as the denial of the moral efficacy of actions, which assumes the fortuitous origin of man and Nature or teach absolute determinism.² The Buddha was not fighting against belief in God as such and, therefore, did not think it necessary to marshal arguments against it. He was building a system which left no place for God. Therefore, his way of dealing with those who came to him for guidance in the matter was one of gentle sarcasm. When one Vasettha came and asked for his opinion about the belief of the Brahmins in Brahmā, he asked whether any of the Brahmins, or their teachers or pupils up to the seventh generation had seen this Brahmā; and if not, the Buddha asked, did not the talk of the Brahmins turn out to be just foolish talk. He added some illustrations: the procedure of the Brahmins was like a row of blind men, one following another, 'the first sees not, the middle one sees not, nor can the latest see; therefore, the talk of the Brahmins used in the three Vedas turns out to be ridiculous, mere words, a vain and empty thing'; belief in a God and an attempt to reach Him was also like building a staircase to a mansion, the whereabouts of which are not known.³ The Buddha also gave his explanation of the origin of the idea of God. When at the end of one cycle of time, another begins, the first being that appears on the scene by reason of ardour, of exertion of application, or of careful thought

¹ Narada Thera *Buddha and his Teaching*, (Vajirarama, Colombo), p. 208.

² Nyna Ponika *Buddhism and the God Idea*, Thera (Buddhist Publication Society, Colombo).

³ *Digha Nikaya*, No. 13 (quoted *Ibid.*, pp. 12-16), Introduction.

imagines that he himself is Brahmā (the Creator god of Hinduism) and because he had wished in his loneliness that there should be others, when they do come, he imagines that it is he who created them.¹

Mr. W. L. King's suggestion that the issue of the presence or absence of God in Buddhist belief is, after all, a matter of words, does not strike one as very profound. He says that if the word 'God' is taken out of the Christian Hymn, 'Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise' and such terms as '*Dharma*', '*Karma*', '*Nirvāna*' and '*Buddha*' are substituted the result will be the same.² To say that *Dharma*, *Karma* etc., have an important place in the Buddhist system is one thing; but to suggest that any of them can be a substitute for what God is to those who believe in Him is another matter. Mr. King must realise that there is for instance, a difference between a cheque presented at a bank by one who has funds to back it and one who has not.

That the Buddha admitted the existence of gods has much less importance than one might think. One may perhaps think that because of it he would be prepared to admit the existence of someone who is above this world of change and decay. On the other hand, the admission is made precisely because the gods are believed to belong to the world of change and decay. It was held that they certainly had some powers and could confer them on others; they were more than men; but they were nowhere near a God who controlled human destiny and to whom human beings had to be responsible. Their existence is admitted because in the words of a priest in Ceylon reported by Dr. Gombrich they have nothing to do with religion.³ So that the gods remain in Thera Vāda Buddhism, not because of their importance but because of their unimportance.

The Soul

The second reason why it is questioned whether Buddhism should be called a religion at all is because of its attitude towards the Soul. The aim of a religion as a religion is to redeem; and

¹ *Brahma Jala Sutta*—quoted *Ibid.*

² *Buddhism and Christianity*, W. L. King (Westminster Press), p. 61.

³ *Practice and Precept* (O.U.P.), p. 46.

what is it that is redeemed? Every man, of course, passes away after a certain number of years in the world. So everybody who believes in redemption has more or less tend to believe in a soul that dwells in man and does not die when he dies. 'Be not afraid of them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul', said Jesus. The concept of the *ātman* or the soul is basic to Hinduism. There is, as we shall see, a strong tendency in Hinduism to equate it with Brahman (or ultimate Reality), and to say that nothing else really is. From an ordinary point of view, what Hinduism says is that through birth after birth and death after death, the soul is on its pilgrimage to salvation, till at last it obtains it. A belief in the soul is, therefore, all important in Hinduism. That there is such a thing as the soul, Thera Vāda utterly denies. In a double-columned article on the subject running into ten pages in the Buddhist Encyclopaedia, Dr. Malalasekera, one time President of the World Congress of Buddhism, drives home the point. He says of Buddhism that the doctrine of *anattā* (no-Soul) is one of the Ti-lakkhana (Skt. lakshana) (3 chief characteristics) of Thera Vāda.¹

The position of Thera Vāda on this subject is explained in a neat conversation between Nagasena, a Buddhist monk, and King Milinda, probably a Bactrian prince of the first or second century B.C., who ruled in North India, in the wake of Alexander the Great. When the King asked Nagasena for a justification of such a curious and seemingly self-contradictory doctrine as *anattā* or *non-self*, Nagasena asked how the King had come to the place of meeting; the King replied that he had come in a chariot. Nagesana then asked what exactly constituted the chariot: the axle, the wheels, the spokes, the frame-work, the ropes, the yoke, or the goad; and the King replied that none of them did. 'And yet you say you came by a chariot?' replied Nagasena; 'There seems to be a chariot but there is no chariot.' In the same way, there are component parts in a human being but no soul or self.

The component parts or aggregates are called *khandhas* (Skt. skandha) and according to Thera Vāda are five in number: *rupa* (form) or matter, *vedanā* (sensation) *sannā* (perception) *samkhāra*

¹ The other two are the Impermanence and Sorrowfulness of all compounded things.

(mental formations) and *vinnāna* (consciousness). These component parts are always meeting and parting ; so that there can be no permanent ego behind them and no permanent entity of any sort but only a momentary situation. 'It is like a river flowing fair and swift, taking everything along with it'. Seemingly there is no movement ; but there definitely is a flow, with the difference that there is nothing to flow. In case of a river, the water at one place at one moment may have moved further and would simply be at another place ; but here what existed at one moment has ceased to exist at the next. What happens is a succession of the meetings of the five aggregates or *skandhas* ; the succession is so ceaseless that an impression is created by the process that there is a personality but there is none. As the Visuddhi Magga says,

Misery only doth exist, none miserable,
No doer is there ; naught save the deed is found ;
Nibbāna is, but not the man who seeks it ;
The path exists but not the traveller on it.¹

Indians have always claimed the Buddha as one of the greatest figures who sprang from the soil of their motherland. On more than one occasion Dr. Radhakrishnan has claimed that the Buddha lived and died a Hindu. It is, therefore, natural that they should try to bring the doctrine of *anattā* into line with the teaching of the Upanishads. Thus Prof. Radhakrishnan says that what the Buddha was refuting was merely the false view that clamours for the perpetuation of the small-self, suggesting thereby that what the Buddha meant was that the individual self did not exist but the universal Self did.

Such a view has received severe handling at the hands of competent Buddhist scholars. Rahula simply denies it point blank. Says he, 'The Buddha did not accept any Self, great or small. In his view all theories of an *ātman* are false mental projections'.² Prof. Conze refers to the conclusions of the Leningrad School, 'that the attempts to find room for the *ātman* in Buddhism are antiquated' and sums up the matter by saying that the doctrine of *anattā* can enlist the agreement of all Buddhist schools of Asia.³

¹ Quoted Narada Thera, *Buddha and his Teaching*, p. 509.

² W. Rahula *What the Buddha Taught*, (Gordon Fraser), p. 59.

³ E. Conze *Thirty years of Buddhist Studies*, (Bruno Casirer), p. 13.

And it is greatly to the credit of Prof. Murti, himself an Indian, that he does not allow his patriotism to overcome his critical acumen ; for he has said, ' It is the curse of Buddhist studies that people will persist in believing that the Buddhists must have radically misunderstood the Buddha, so they hanker after a soul-affirming primitive Buddhism, followed by a soul-denying scholastic Buddhism '. Says he, ' The Upanishads blaze forth the reality of the *Ātman* in every page and every line almost '.¹ If the Buddha had held the same belief, how did it come about that the belief did not creep in somehow somewhere into the Pali Canon ?

Much is made of the fact that when questioned (though he was often more than explicit) he was sometime silent. The conclusion is drawn by those who want to clutch at every straw that he had reservations on the subject. But the Buddha himself has explained the reason for his occasional silence. Once when a man, called Vachagotta, had come and asked him whether there was a soul or atman he had kept silent. When his favourite disciple questioned him as to the reason for his conduct, he said he did not want to disturb the poor fellow. If he had disclosed that there was no soul, the man would have said to himself, ' I had a soul when I came here and now I haven't got one '. The doctrine of *anattā*, or no-soul, is so well attested in Thera Vāda that all attempts to ignore it are misguided.

It was said earlier that, though the Buddha did not always plainly explain why there could be no Almighty God, he had created a system that left no room for such a God. Why the system cannot accommodate the God-concept has, we hope, now become clear. All the three basic characteristics of Thera Vāda *Anicca* (impermanence), *Dukkha* (sorrowfulness) and *anattā* (no-self) which govern Thera Vāda rule out that possibility of finding room for God in the system. That a belief in God should exist side by side with a belief in the doctrine of *anattā* is on the face of it an impossible demand. A God without a self, cannot be God.

Continuity

A third denial of Thera Vāda does not in itself disqualify it from a being called a ' religion ', but following closely, as it does,

¹ *Ibid.*, same page.

behind the other denials it will certainly make people wonder still further how any system that makes it should be thought of in terms of a religion. Earlier we were concerned with the doctrine of Thera Vāda regarding the soul ; now we are concerned with its doctrine about things ; and the Buddha's dictum on the subject is *Sabbe samkhārā amiccā* (all compounded things are impermanent). This does not mean that they do not last forever, but that they do not last at all ; they are impermanent in the sense that they are not permanent even for a moment. That all material things change and ultimately decay every one will admit. The difference in the present case is that Thera Vāda holds that there will be nothing to decay ultimately. Stcherbatsky puts it as follows :

The elements of existence are momentary appearances, momentary flashings into the phenomenal world. They disappear as soon as they appear, in order to be followed the next moment by another momentary existence.¹

Their appearance is not arbitrary but rigidly determined by a process that works like a wheel and is called *Pattica Samuppāda*, or Dependent Origination ; which is explained later.

In a very exhaustive examination of the subject, Dr. Satkari Mookerjee of the Calcutta University draws attention to the similarity of views on this topic between Buddhism and Bertrand Russell. For Russell also held 'that there is no persistence in the world, each entity being momentary and the idea of persistence is only an illusion due to continuity in the series'.² Russell takes his cue from the cinematograph and goes on to say that not merely the man in the cinema, but 'the real man too, I believe, however the police may swear to his identity, is really a series of momentary men, each different from the other....'. Dr. Mookerjee does not seem to set much store by such belated agreement with a centuries-old conclusion.

However, Dr. Mookerjee's chief criticism of Russell is aimed at the basis from which the latter arrived at his conclusion ; for he

¹ Th. Stcherbatsky *Central Conception of Buddhism*, (Susil Gupta, Calcutta), p. 14.

² Satkari Mookerjee 'The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux', (Pubd. University of Calcutta), pp. 17 and 18.

thinks that Russell was arguing from what happens in the cinematograph. 'The Buddhist philosopher', says Mookerjee, 'does not admit the reality of motion',¹ and adds that even according to Russell motion is but 'a logical construction' or 'a symbolic fiction'. The cinematograph may have started the idea in Russell's mind but obviously it is not the basis of his thought; for he holds that the real man in front of the policeman is also a series of momentary men. A strict adherence to Dr. Mookerjee's criticism would mean that he himself had no right to be writing on the 'Buddhist doctrine of Flux'; for the term 'flux' means 'flow'; and in Buddhism there is nothing to flow. What we are dealing with is not a doctrine of Flux but a doctrine of Momentariness.²

Import of Buddha's Teaching

In view of these denials it may seem legitimate to ask whether Thera Vāda can really be called a religion. But whether we call it a religion or not, the person who would have been most surprised at his teaching being called a philosophy would have been the Buddha himself, because he held the exploration of the recondite issues raised by philosophy to be an utterly irrelevant if not a frivolous pursuit. When Malunkya-putta, one of his followers, once came to him and asked him such questions he said to him, 'Did I ever tell you Malunkya-putta "Come lead the holy life under me, I will explain these things to you and did you ever tell me, I will lead the holy life under you, if you explain these questions to me"? Then who refuses whom?' And explaining his attitude, he asked whether a man who was wounded by a poisoned arrow would tell his physician, 'I will not allow this arrow to be taken out, until I know all about the man who shot it, what his name is, his caste, his stature, his complexion, his native place, what kind of a bow he used and what kind of an arrow?' He concluded by saying that the holy life did not depend on these views.³

What then is it that Buddha wanted to teach? He summed it up when he said, 'One thing I teach: Sorrow, its Cause, and its Cure'. He elaborated this in what are called *Caṭṭari Ariya-Saccāni* or the

¹ *Ibid.*, same pages.

² The word is a literal translation of the original term *kshanika vāda*.

³ W. Rahula *What the Buddha Taught*, (Gordon Fraser), pp. 13, 14.

' Four Noble Truths, viz., *Dukkha* (Sorrow), *Sammuddya* (its origin), *Nirodha* (its Cessation) and the *Magga* (Skt. *Mārga*) or the Way, which consists in the adoption of the Noble Eight Fold Path', constituted by Right (*Sammā*) Understanding, Thought, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration¹ the same adjective applying to each of the substantives.

The nature of the human predicament and its cause are shown. The cause is *Tanhā* (thirst or craving); but *Tanhā*, as a cause, does not stand alone by itself; the Buddha did not believe in any Prime Cause or Causeless Cause. Therefore, *Tanhā* is conceived of as but one link in the cycle of causes and effects; each link is the effect of what precedes it and the cause of what follows. There is no first or last. The whole cycle is called *Paticca Samuppāda* or 'Dependent Originaion'.

Since, however, for purposes of convenience one must start somewhere, it is customary to start with *Aviggā* (*Avidyā*) or ignorance and if one starts with *Aviggā*, *Tanhā* is the eighth in the series. It is this which 'gives rise to all forms of suffering and continuity of being'.¹ What precedes *Tanhā* is subterranean; what follows it are Change, Becoming, Birth, Aging and Death. That is, *Tanhā* is the point at which the operation of the cyclical chain emerges into phenomenal life; and what follows is an arc in the circle. What we referred to earlier as the meeting and parting of the *Skandhas* operate in this arc.

The acme of the Buddha's enlightenment was the discovery that if the chain was crushed at this point, all consequents are destroyed, the whole chain is brought to naught and *Nibbāna* is attained. When this discovery dawned on him, the Buddha could say:

Through many births I sought in vain
 The Builder of this House of Pain.
 Now the Builder I plainly see!
 This is the last abode for me.
 The gable's yoke and rafters broke
 My heart has peace. All lust will cease.

¹ *What the Buddha Taught*,—W. Rahula, p. 29.

The cause of all the *Dukkha* that envelopes life had been found and also its cure.

Once the cure had been found the Buddha felt it was not something which he should keep to himself, but which should be proclaimed to all mankind. Therefore, he urged his followers saying :

Go ye now Bikkhus, for the benefit of the many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world. Preach the doctrine which is glorious in the beginning, glorious in the middle and glorious in the end. . . . There are beings whose eyes are scarcely covered with dust, but if the doctrine is not preached to them, they cannot see salvation.

Therefore, we are justified in saying that the Buddha was essentially a person with a religious message, which he urgently wanted to proclaim to the world. It is a crass misunderstanding of a person, who had renounced a throne, undergone untold privation had wandered about through forests and had been a life-long mendicant for the sake of his cause, to look upon his aim as that of wanting to add one more system to the many already prevailing in the world. He was a preacher of redemption.

A University Professor of Buddhist Philosophy, to whom the author submitted the first draft of this chapter, has warned him that words like 'salvation' and 'redemption' should be used with care in Buddhism. But it may be seen from the quotation given above, that the word 'salvation' does not come from the author. And the Buddha could not help using the word, because he was a man with a sense of mission about his task. Another eminent Buddhist scholar, who was on the staff of the 'Buddhist Encyclopaedia' for many years, has given me the admonition that the Buddha could not have been a 'preacher of redemption' because there was no one to be redeemed ; and has also advised me that in any connexion with Buddhism the word 'teach' would be more suitable than the word 'preach'. But if there was no one to be redeemed there was no one to be taught either. And such words as 'for the benefit of the many, for the welfare of mankind, out of compassion for the world' are the words habitually used by prea-

chers of redemption. Above all it may be seen that the word 'preach' was used by the Buddha himself.¹

Does it mean then that Buddhism is not a Philosophy? It may be remembered that in the first chapter it was said, that in the East there is not the same separation between Religion and Philosophy as in the West. Buddhism is certainly a religion, as the Buddha wanted it to be, teaching redemption or deliverance. It is also a metaphysic, as Whitehead judged it to be, dealing with the issues that metaphysics usually deals; only it is not a metaphysic that is in search of a religion. It is already a religion and happens to be a metaphysic, only because it is a religion. It wants to be a religion essentially; in seeking to fulfill its purpose it is a metaphysic incidentally.

The Search for the Transcendent

If it be held that Buddhism is only a philosophy and not a religion, we can save ourselves the trouble of searching for the Transcendent in it; because while it may sometime give its views on what is the Transcendent, it is not obliged to do so. It may, as the American philosopher John Dewey did, consider that the whole concept of the Transcendent is an illusion through which the Greeks have misled all subsequent philosophy. Dewey of course, did not realise that there were other places besides Greece where people were thinking about the subject. But since we have concluded that Buddhism is a religion, we are compelled to search for the Transcendent in it; for a religion without a Transcendent is inconceivable.

What is that which according to Buddhism clearly and distinctly rises above the phenomenal world, has human destiny in its control and is eternal? It may not be like what plays such a role in other religions, but it must be there.

It has been said that Buddhism substituted a 'Thus' for the 'That' of Hinduism. What is meant is that Buddhism postulates a Process in place of the static Brahman of Hinduism. We have

¹ I have used the very respectable translation of Paul Carus. I am, however, aware that alternative words for 'preach', 'salvation', etc., can also be used. But I find that E. Zurcher in his authoritative book on Buddhism has also used the words 'preach' and 'salvation', pp. 21, 27.

seen what that Process is. We are told that the 'Law of Dependent Origination' suggested itself to the Buddha during the first watches of the night a week after he had attained the supreme bliss of Enlightenment. It seemed to him such a satisfactory and comprehensive explanation of what went on in the Universe and behind it, that he is said to have repeated the names of the successive links forwards and backwards many times. Some scholars have doubted whether the whole chain in such perfect order could have suggested itself to him all at once ; but no useful purpose will be served in discussing the doubt.

Is the Process of Dependent Origination then the ultimately Transcendent in Buddhism ? Its claim may not be easily ignored. It looks so timeless and almost beyond the senses that the universe itself is but an episode in its operation. But to regard it as the ultimately Transcendent, would be to pass an adverse verdict on the whole significance of the Buddha's achievement.

The significance of the Buddha's achievement was his discovery of the weakness in the operation of the Process. He found that if it was crushed at one point the whole of it would collapse. And on this he kept hammering away for the rest of his life. Crush *Tanhā* and the *Paticca Samuppāda* loses its power.

It may, perhaps, be pointed out that it does so only in individual causes, *i.e.*, when people followed the Buddha's prescription ; otherwise the Process would still continue to operate. This would be like saying that a disease for which a remedy had been found is still mortal, because it would wreak its toll on those who did not take that remedy. But a disease once considered fatal, but for which a remedy has been found, is not thereafter entitled to be called fatal. By the same token, if some have broken the power of the Process others also can do the same. The Process has ceased to be unconquerable and therefore has ceased to be the ultimate.

Therefore, it becomes clear that this seemingly all-powerful Process cannot be considered the ultimately Transcendent in Buddhism. To deprive it of its eternal power was the whole point of the Buddha's accomplishment.

Is then the goal at which the Process is brought to an end the Transcendent? There is a wide-spread tendency to consider *Nibbāna* as the Absolute in Buddhism. A passage in the *Udāna*, one of the oldest works in the Pali Pitakas is quoted in support of this ; it runs as follows :

O Bikkhus, there is the unborn, ungrown and unconditioned. Were there not the unborn, ungrown and unconditioned, there would be no escape for the born, grown and conditioned. Since there is the unborn, ungrown and unconditioned, there is an escape for the born, grown and conditioned.¹

The first difficulty about any discussion of *Nibbāna* is that we are totally in the dark as to what exactly it is. Etymologically, the commonest derivation of the term is from *nir + vā*=to cease, to blow, to be blown out or be extinguished. Narada Thera, however, derives it from *nir + vāna*=cessation from craving. If craving ceases then there is nothing more. We are nevertheless forbidden to call it 'extinction', because, according to the doctrine of *anattā*, there is nothing to be extinguished. But on the whole, Buddhist opinion tends to consider it a state of happiness.

But it may be asked, how, if there is no one to be happy in that state, there can be any happiness. The author once asked this question of a monk of great learning in one of the great monasteries in Colombo and he said, 'Is not existence sorrow? Therefore, is not freedom from existence happiness?' Actually, what he said was a repetition of an answer given by Sariputta, a disciple of the Buddha, 2,500 years ago. He had exclaimed, '*Nirvāna* is happiness! *Nirvāna* is happiness!' When Udayi asked, 'But friend Sariputta, what happiness can there be, when there is no sensation?' And Sariputta said, 'That there is no sensation is happiness.'² Rahula in reporting the conversation says that the word '*sukha*', commonly translated 'happiness' does not mean what we mean by happiness'.

Neither non-Buddhists nor Buddhists themselves can be sure of what *Nibbāna* is and any exploration of it is not encouraged.

¹ *Udāna*, Colombo, 1929 Edition ; quoted in '*What the Buddha Taught*' by W. Rahula, p. 37.

² W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 43.

Perhaps the advice given to any one who makes the attempt may be similar to that given by Benjamin Disraeli, the great 19th century British statesman, to a young man whom the father had taken to the great man for advice about his future. Disraeli looked him over and said, 'Whatever you do, young man, never try to find out the author of the 'Letters of Junius' (an anonymous piece of eighteenth century political literature). In anticipation of all venturesomeness in the matter, Thera Vāda has, therefore, pronounced the subject out of bounds ; it is *atakkāvācara* (undebatable).

But the chief difficulty about *Nibbāna* as far as we are concerned, is that it does not shape and control human destiny. No doubt it rises above the turmoil of the human scene and it may be eternal ; but it is a just a state to be attained, a *terminus ad quem*. Nor is it a state to which every one does attain ; the Buddha attained to it and the *Arhants* (saints) attained to it ; and it is a state to which every Thera Vādin desires to attain but not one he necessarily does attain. It has been protested that *Nibbāna* is not the result of human effort, that it is there all the time, whether men attain to it or not. Nobody says that *Nibbāna* is the result of human effort, in the sense of something created by human effort ; but it is definitely something reached by human resolution and effort ; *i.e.*, by following the Noble Eight-Fold Path. Our whole point is, that it is a state reached (or not) by human effort ; though it is independent of us and above us (*lokuttara* ; Skt : *lokottara*=above the world) and is there all the time, it is not what is meant by the Transcendent in our discussion of the subject, because it cannot in itself shape human destiny.

The Transcendent in Thera Vada

What then is the Transcendent in Thera Vāda ? We have seen why the inexorable Process which leads to involvement in suffering through birth after birth cannot be called the ultimately transcendent. And we have seen why the state to which the crushing of that Process leads also cannot be considered the Transcendent. What then is the Transcendent in Thera Vāda ?

We have seen how the otherwise all powerful Process has to yield to the *Magga*. Why ? Obviously because the *Magga* is more powerful than the Law of Dependent Origination. The

Magga, as we saw, consisted in Right understanding, Thought Speech, Action etc. But why should it be assumed that the procedure of adopting the *Magga* would inevitably over-ride such an arch, primeval and seemingly omnipotent law that has kept working independently age after age? Why cannot it be assumed that such a procedure would be useless in the face of such a mighty foe? Or why cannot it be assumed that its adoption instead of putting an end to the Process and leading to Nibbāna would lead men to further and further involvement in a life of birth, death and sorrow? If it cannot be so assumed, why not?

It becomes increasingly clear therefore that the ultimately transcendent must be sought for in that which guarantees the efficacy of the *Magga* over the power of the Process of Dependent Origination. The Buddha must have been overwhelmingly convinced of that efficacy: for says Rahula, 'Practically the whole teaching of the Buddha, to which he devoted himself during 45 years, deals in some way or other with the (Noble Eight-Fold) Path' or *Magga*¹.

If the Buddha kept on teaching that the adoption of the *Magga* would be the end of suffering, the question may well be asked why he did not explain why this should be so. The reason is that the Buddha assumed that guarantee of that efficacy all along and did not think it necessary to refer to it. In solving mathematical problems, a teacher does not keep on referring to the Multiplication tables all the time; he assumes them, knowing that they will not be disputed. And what was it that the Buddha assumed as the guarantee of the efficacy of the *Magga*? It was the Moral Law of Cause and Effect.

It is well known that this Law is accepted by all Schools of Hinduism (except one). But it must not however be imagined that the Buddha borrowed it from Hinduism. It was something accepted by everyone in the world in which the Buddha was living as a matter beyond all question. The Buddha protested against Hinduism at many points; but against this he did not, because it was not a distinctive doctrine of Hinduism but a universal assumption of the time. More than thirty years ago, when the World War II was raging, C. S. Lewis said that, nevertheless there were

¹ *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 45.

many matters in which there was untroubled agreement between President Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler and between Karl Barth and H. G. Wells (between whom there could have been a full-scale theological battle) : In the world of 2,500 years ago in India this was one such matter.

We have, therefore, no option but to say that on examination the Moral Law of Cause and Effect, which happens to be common to both Hinduism and Buddhism, while it is not the ultimately transcendent in Hinduism is what is ultimately transcendent in Thera Vāda Buddhism.

Thera Vāda denies much but asserts that, nevertheless, the Law of Dependent Origination keeps working automatically. But there is one thing that does break its power and that is the adoption of the *Magga*. Therefore, what ensures the efficacy of the *Magga* to do so is what is the ultimately transcendent in Thera Vāda.

The Difference in this Respect between Both Religions

Though the Moral Law of Cause and Effect is to be found in both Hinduism and Buddhism, since the two religions are different from each other, we may also expect it to function differently in each religion.

We shall see in the next chapter that within Hinduism itself there are two types of Schools. The School of Sankara which commands high prestige would take Brahman (its name for Ultimate Reality) out of what is commonly termed 'religion'. Most of the other Schools do not. In spite of this inner cleft within Hinduism, the relationship of all its Schools to this Law differs fundamentally from that of Thera Vāda in two important respects.

The first difference is in regard to status. In all Hinduism this Law is a servant and not the master. Even according to the first School we have mentioned, the Law keeps working as long as the individual self does not realise his identity with Brahman ; the moment he does, the Law loses its power over it. In the Theistic Schools the status of the Law of *Karma*, as it is called in Hinduism, is seen more clearly. The Law keeps working ; but the Deity is ever watchful on behalf of His devotees. In Vaishnavism we may note two special features. Vishnu is willing constantly to intervene on behalf of

those who come to Him, so that in particular cases the Law becomes totally powerless. Secondly, in Vaishnavism, Lakshmi, his consort, has a special soteriological role, frequently prodding the Deity to acts of intervention. There is more than one form of Saivism ; in the most influential of these, *viz.*, Saiva Siddhānta, the Deity does not intervene so frequently, the view taken being that since the machinery of the Law was set up by the Deity, it must be allowed the right to keep functioning. But devotion to Siva is a weapon with which man can fight the machine. In no School of Hinduism is there any doubt that the Law functions under a higher authority. Since Thera Vāda does not recognise any such authority, therefore, there is a difference in the status of the Law between it and Hinduism.

The second difference between the Law as it stands in Hinduism and Thera Vāda is in regard to the target of its operation. In Hinduism there is a self or a soul ; it is on this that the Law operates. It keeps operating through the ages and it pursues the soul through birth after birth and age after age to award reward or punishment, according to its desert ; the Law knows each soul that it is pursuing and never loses track. The Law in Hinduism does it, because of the basic Hindu belief in the ātman. In Thera Vāda, however, the Law operates under the aegis of the doctrine of *anattā*, or no-soul. It would look like a high Government official wanting to pin a medal on someone when there is no one before him, or like a judge wanting to pass a sentence and the prisoner's dock is empty.

In Buddhism the doctrine of *anattā* is often proclaimed ; but the doctrine of the working of the Moral Law of Cause and Effect is always assumed. They seem irreconcilable to each other ; but Buddhism cannot afford to let either of them drop out. How then does the Law of *Karma* operate when there is no soul with which it can keep track through the ages ? The answer that Thera Vāda makes is logical enough from its own point of view. Since there is no soul in life, death makes no difference ; there is no soul to pass over at death. There never was any 'doer' but only the 'deed' ; what, therefore, passes over is the 'deed'. In other words, though the soul of the person does not pass into another birth, the karmic effects of his life do pass. But if the person does not pass over, who gets rewarded or punished ? The deed cannot experience reward or punishment ; there must be a person and the

question may be asked, 'Is it the same person or is it not?' The Pali Canon gives the answer in the form of an oxymoron. *Na ca so na ca anno* (not the same and not another). Radhakrishnan explains it in the phrase that there is continuity but not identity. Illustrations are cited from many phenomena in Nature to explain the matter : the succession of one wave after another, the one giving birth to another, the latter wave though not the same as the earlier but coming into being because of it ; or one candle lighting a second and the second lighting a third and so on indefinitely ; the candles may be different and the flames also ; but the latter flames do owe their origin to the earlier ones.

Whether the illustrations carry conviction or not is irrelevant; what is relevant is that behind them is the resolution that somehow that Law had to be retained ; and it is no wonder. The Moral Law of Cause and Effect is indispensable to Thera Vāda ; for it holds the structure of that religion together. It is the ultimate in Thera Vāda and it alone provides the reason why the walking of the Noble Eight-Fold Path leads to the end it does.

The Law in Thera Vada Examined

What we have claimed here is that the Transcendent in Thera Vāda is the Moral Law of Cause and Effect. What is a law? Immanuel Kant defines a law as 'a formula which expresses the necessity of an action' ; he might have added or an 'inaction', for many laws are prohibitions or commands for inaction. But the chief defect of this definition is that as a definition it is tautologous ; for if it is the necessity behind an action or inaction that makes it a law, any definition of a law which leaves the term 'necessity' undefined merely defines a law as a law.

What endows a law with the 'necessity' for obedience to it and sets it apart from any advice, practice or custom? Any advice, practice or custom may become a law, but none of them is a law in itself. What is the difference between them and what is regarded as a law? A law has authority behind it. And what is the source of that authority? It is the will of a person or a group of persons capable of enforcing it ; this capability means the power to punish those who break the law. Any advice urging that one should go to bed and rise early may become tantamount to a law

in a Boarding School or a military camp when it is decreed by a person capable of enforcing it. A practice like vegetarianism may become tantamount to a law in a camp of ascetics, when it is decreed by the chief ascetic, who is capable of enforcing it. On the other hand, what was a law once may cease to be law, because those who could enforce it are no longer alive. Assyrian and Babylonian laws once peacefully obeyed are no longer laws.

So behind a law there must be an authoritative person or group of persons. And the greater the authority of such persons, the greater the scope and power of the law. A law of the land has greater scope and power than a Municipal law. A cosmic law, like the Moral Law of Cause and Effect, must have authority of cosmic proportions if it is to be really looked upon as a law. In Hinduism it has a valid claim to be so regarded, because there it has the authority of the Deity behind it. Such a claim it does not have in Thera Vāda.

As opposed to such a view of a law, 'the laws of Nature' may perhaps be cited. Of course, there are those who will say the laws of Nature are the laws of God ; but Thera Vāda will certainly not say so. It will hold, as some others also do, that these laws exist and function on their own authority. Narada Thera lays great stress on this point.¹ There are many 'laws of Nature', each branch of Natural Science having its own set of laws, some named after the scientists who discovered them, others according to the aspect or area of Nature to which they apply. But two important reasons may be noted against the analogy holding good.

In the first place, 'the laws of Nature', though so called are not laws, but only descriptions of how certain elements or forces in Nature work. A certain scientist observes that certain things follow on certain others or people have observed from immemorial times that they do ; and they have given the term 'laws' to such occurrences. It is not, however, possible to claim for all these 'laws' the inexorability that is popularly associated with them ; for the pathway of Science is littered with the carcasses of discarded laws. Aristotle's laws were superseded during the Renais-

¹ *Buddhism in a Nutshell* (Wheel series—Buddhist Publication Society), p. 32.

sance. Newton's laws regarded with veneration for some centuries have been superseded by Einstein's in some important respects. Some 'laws of Nature', of course, are never superseded. However, the fact remains that all 'laws of Nature' are descriptions. They are in the Indicative mood; a law must be in the imperative mood.

The second reason why the 'laws of Nature' are not on a par with the Moral Law of Cause and Effect is that the 'laws of Nature' contain no 'value judgment', whereas the Moral Law of Cause and Effect does. The 'laws of Nature' are morally neutral; they do not put a premium on goodness, they do not favour the good against the bad, as the Moral Law of Cause of Effect does. The sun rises and the rain falls on the good and the bad alike. But Thera Vāda expects the Moral Law of Cause and Effect to work relentlessly in favour of those who walk the Noble Eight Fold Path, though it has no one to import a value-judgment into it. It expects it to work mechanically like a Law of Nature, but unlike such a law to also favour the good. What is merely mechanical cannot have a moral bias.

At first sight, the view taken of the Moral Law in Thera Vāda may seem to resemble the view held in Western Philosophy by Immanuel Kant, regarding the 'Categorical Imperative'. Kant held that the command of Conscience to do the right is unconditional; the Imperative is categorically binding and is not dependent either on the inducement of any external reward or approval, on the one hand, or on a dread of external punishment, on the other. It does not owe its origin to its attitude to the State or public opinion or even God. According to Kant, Morality, if it is to be worth its name, should be autonomous or self-imposed and not be heteronomous or imposed by any other.

It is, however, a mistake to think that Kant separated the Moral Law from God and hung it in the air; for we shall see how he knocked down all attempts to deduce the existence of God from the earlier 'Proofs' and built his own argument for the deduction on Morality. What he insisted on was that the existence of God was not the basis for the need for morality; but on the other hand, the fact of the need for morality was the basis of proof for the existence of God.

The point that Kant wanted to make in the distinction was that morality would not be genuine morality, if it was pursued with an ulterior motive, however noble. 'For nothing', says he, 'glorifies God more than that which is the most estimable thing in the world, respect for His command, observance of the holy duty which His law imposes on us.'¹ We must not be moral because God will give us happiness; but, on the other hand, unless He gives us happiness because of it, God will not be God. 'For He is also the holy law-giver (and creator), the good governor (and preserver) and just judge.'² He tells us why the Greeks failed to solve the moral problem; 'it was because they made the rule of the use which the will of man makes of his freedom the sole and sufficient ground of this possibility, thinking that they had no use for that purpose of the existence of God.'³

It is obvious, therefore, that Kant did not want to say that the law of Morality was autonomous; for he says over and over again that it is God-given, *i.e.*, heteronomous; what he wanted to say was that, though imposed from outside or from above, a man would be true to the spirit of the law, only if he treated it as if it were autonomous or self-imposed. A man building a bridge must be screwing his bolts, not because he has got to keep working for eight hours a day to claim his wages, but because he takes pride in building a bridge. Michelangelo painted the Sistine chapel in St. Peter's, Rome. There is no doubt that he did it and could do it, only because he had been commissioned by Pope Julius II, but his achievement is considered one of the greatest triumphs of art in the world, only because he looked upon the work as his own, sank himself into it and cherished it with a single mindedness free of any ulterior motive. It is clear, therefore, that the equation of the Moral Law of Cause and Effect in Thera Vāda with Kant's Categorical Imperative cannot hold.

It is not by any means derogatory to the Noble Eight-Fold Path that its effectiveness is assumed only because of the working of the Moral Law of Cause and Effect; but there is no getting away from the fact of that assumption. Therefore, it becomes

¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, (Longman's sixth Edition), p. 228.

² *Ibid.*, same page, footnote.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

clear that what is ultimately transcendent in Thera Vāda, according to our definition is the Moral Law of Cause and Effect. We have, however, tried to point out here that a Law in itself, without any other or further authority behind it which can regulate and enforce it will *ipso facto* fail to satisfy the basic requirement of what a law is. But neither can Thera Vāda put anybody there and still remain the same.

Popular Buddhism

In his book 'Beliefs and Practices in Sri Lanka', Dr. L. A. de Silva quotes from an article by Dr. Ananda Guruge in which the latter refers to a remark of a foreign scholar, who had come to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), professing complete bewilderment at the utter disparity between what he had learnt of Buddhism from books and the Buddhism that he saw in practice. 'I thought', he said, 'I knew what Buddhism was but now I feel I know nothing about it at all'. What he had learnt was the Buddhism set forth in the Pali Canon, propounded by scholars, foreign and local, and having the *imprimatur* of the Sangha and on which we have been commenting so far.

What the gentleman saw was the popular observance of Buddhism: the worship at the *stupas* (erected over relics), worship before trees of the type under which the Buddha had attained enlightenment, lamp-lightings, processions, festivals and the observance of sacred days. Most of this could be seen as constituents of popular religious practice anywhere, whatever the religion may be. The snag is—and it is a big snag—that it should occur as the expression of something built upon the denial of so much that is usually regarded as religion and which seriously doubts whether it is a religion at all. But the priests, who are part of it all, will vehemently deny that this kind of thing makes any difference to the official teaching. And it is on record that the Buddha himself sanctioned the worship of the *bodhi* tree (*ficus religiosa*) and every thing associated with him.

It is natural that among the many objects of such worship, the commonest should be that of the image of the Buddha himself. There is a legend that when the Buddha in his life-time went to heaven for ninety days to preach to his mother, the king of Kosala

had a statue made of him, 'to have a visible representation of Him in his absence'. But in actual fact, there seems to have been for long a hesitation about making an image of him, the reason probably being that no image could do justice to the subject. But by the first century of the Christian era images of him seem to have come into vogue. Now, of course, they are practically countless ; so much so, that it is said that there are more statues of him in the world than of anybody else. Before these images flowers are offered, lamps are lit, and men and women bow and prostrate themselves daily. In fact, one can hardly notice any difference between what is done before these images and what is done before the images in a Hindu temple.

In view of all that we know of the teaching of the Buddha, the question arises as to whether this is what in Roman Catholic theology is *dulia* (from Greek *douleia*), which is simply reverence paid to the saints or *latria* (from Greek *latreia*) which is adoration paid to God only. The Sangha, which holds with unswerving fidelity to the doctrine of *anattā*, would say that it is definitely the former and is simply the tangible expression of the first of the 'three gems' : I take refuge in the Buddha. It is, they would say, the respect paid to the teacher of the *Dhamma* ; and the members of the Sangha who live in the *Vihāras*, where this takes place, see it daily and allow it to go on.

But is it possible that the members of the Sangha who see this homage, and the people who perform it hold different views about its significance ? Count Keyserling, the German philosopher, who came out to the East just before the First World War and has written a penetrating analysis of all that he saw, has said, 'The East has succeeded in what has never been reached in the West : the visible representation of the divine. As such I know nothing more grand than the figures of the Buddha.'¹ Keyserling was looking at the phenomenon of Buddhist public worship from outside and got the impression that people were not looking upon the Buddha as a mere teacher ; and that it was really *latria* that they were offering.

However, what must be realised is that both *dulia* and *latria* may be expressed by the self-same acts ; but what the attitude of

¹ Quoted L. A. de Silva : *Beliefs and Practices*, p. 54.

mind behind them is, is difficult to judge from outside and certainly by an outsider. Dr. L. A. de Silva (though a Christian) is well qualified to judge in the matter and know what is actually in the minds of people. He lists four classes of Buddhists : (1) the orthodox and well-informed to whom the Buddha was the most enlightened of Teachers, (2) those to whom he is *Devati-deva* (the greatest of the gods), the gods being above mankind but not absolutely God, (3) those to whom he is the one who has attained Buddhahood and is a source of inspiration to all, (4) and the average Buddhist.

About the last class Dr. Silva says :

But for the average Buddhist the Buddha is all the above and much more ; in him they find the fulfilment of the human need to worship—and when they bow in worship before the Buddha image they give expression to the sense of awe and wonder before the ultimate mystery of life.¹

Dr. Silva does not say that the average Buddhist thinks of the Buddha as the Christians think of God, knowing that that would be repulsive to Buddhist ears. But what he does say indicates the profound difference between the first view which is the official view, and the last view. The view of the *Sangha* is 'cognitive', and according to it the Buddha is dead ; the last view is 'affective' and according to it, he is very much alive and potent over everything ; he in fact is the Ultimate. This, of course, is an unofficial view, but it also happens to be held by those who numerically are far superior to those who hold the first view.

It would, therefore, seem that the belief of a very large class of those who profess Buddhism is that what is the Transcendent in Buddhism, in the sense in which we have defined the term, is the Buddha himself. When we are dealing with the tenets of religions as they are expounded by accredited teachers, this is a kind of thing of which perhaps, we are not expected to take account. But considering the tenets of Buddhism, nor is it a side which we can afford to ignore.

¹ ' *Beliefs and Practices* ', p. 55.

The Disappearance of Buddhism from India

Ever since Asoka, Buddhism had for long competed with Hinduism for the claim to be the national religion of India. As centuries went by, it became evident that it was fighting a losing battle. But soon after the 10th century A.D. it disappeared completely from the land of its origin. In 1956 Dr. Ambedkar, for deliberately avowed political reasons, started a movement in its favour among the 'Untouchables' in Central India and to a small extent reintroduced Buddhism into the country; otherwise, for nearly nine centuries or so any sort of Buddhism was a stranger to India.

Many external causes may be assigned for this strange event, everyone of them having a bearing on it. It is said that Hinduism absorbed many of the features of Buddhism, and thus killed it with a fatal embrace; one of the strongest arguments in favour of this view being the way in which certain great teachers of Hinduism, the chief of whom was Sankara, sucked out the chief element in Buddhist philosophy and made it a cardinal feature of their own system. Another cause assigned is that two sets of Hindu poets, one on the Saivite side and one on the Vaishnavite side, from the 6th to the 9th century A.D. recaptured the hearts of the people for the old religion. A third cause assigned is that Buddhists lost the debate with the great Hindu controversialists from the 8th to 10th century. Another cause also may be suggested, though it may not often be easily accepted, and that is that Buddhism was politically outmanoeuvred by Hinduism, the point behind the suggestion being that the Prime Ministers of the Kings often being Brahmins saw to it that it was a Hindu King who ascended the throne (any Buddhist competitor being quietly put out of the way). It is also pointed out that after the coming of the Muslims, Buddhism had no chance.¹

All these factors did play their own role in bringing about the final *denouement*. But the basic role in the disappearance of Buddhism from India was played by a movement within itself, which may seem unbelievable in its contradictoriness, if not for

¹ The penetration of the Muslims began in the 9th century and increased in intensity as time went on.

the fact that that is how things worked out. The contradiction lay in the fact that on the one hand, Buddhism made itself violently repugnant to the natural genius and ancient tradition of India, and on the other hand, contrived to make itself a new and extravagant reproduction of Hinduism. In either case, it may be seen that Buddhism was buying its way out of the Indian religious scene. Both sides of this movement in Buddhism are together called Mahā Yāna.

MAHĀ YĀNA

Its Rise

It has been said earlier that there were as many as eighteen schools of Buddhism prevailing in India in the early centuries after its foundation. Whether there were important differences between each and everyone of them we do not know; but in later times three schools were sufficiently noteworthy in their distinctiveness to have attracted the attention of Sankara in the 9th century A.D., and to have led him to wonder how the Buddha could have taught such divergent doctrines.¹ Of the three, the Mādhyā Mika (the Middle Doctrine) seems to have had the greatest vogue; for Ramanuja (1017-1127 A.D.), the other great teacher of Hinduism, shows his bitter contempt for its teaching by coupling it with his opponents' views. The upholders of the doctrine of *Sūnya Vāda* (the doctrine of the Mādhyā Mika) he says, and those who deny the reality of everything except Brahman (followers of Sankara) 'have no right to a philosophy, for they both refuse to admit the reality of the sources of knowledge'.²

The rise of the School of Mādhyā Mika is commonly associated with one Nagarjuna (1st century A.D.). But all authorities are agreed in saying that though he might have been the earliest literary exponent of its teachings he was by no means its founder. Radhakrishnan says that his doctrines can be traced back to the original teaching of the Buddha.³ We shall presently see that Radhakrishnan is perfectly right.

¹ *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras* (Sacred Books of the East) (Sankara Vol. I, p. 401).

² *Vedārtha Samgraha* (Ramakrishna Ashram), p. 53.

³ S. Radhakrishnan : *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, p. 643.

The teaching of this School came to be called *Sūnya Vāda* — (doctrine of Emptiness) ; but the term by which it called itself was *Mādhyā Mika*, because it took up a middle position between ‘ Yes ’ and ‘ No ’ to every question. *Sūnya* ordinarily means ‘ nothing at all ’, and in Buddhist art is represented by a small circle. It is customary for Buddhist writers to deny the correctness of the English translation of every basic word in Buddhism ; so we need not be surprised at Dr. E. Conze’s protest against the translation of *Sūnya* by ‘ emptiness ’. But he has himself unwittingly furnished us with a lot of information about the history of the word which would make us wonder how else it could be translated, if it is not translated as ‘ Emptiness ’. What he has said is enough to annihilate his own protest. He says that the small circle which we know as ‘ zero ’ was known to the Arabs about 950 A.D. as ‘ shifr ’ (empty). This became ‘ cifra ’ in Latin, when about 1150 it came to Europe. In English it became ‘ cypher ’ ; and we are told that ‘ cypher ’ is nothing but the Sanskrit word *Sūnya*. Incidentally we are told that it is the introduction of this symbol which made the science of arithmetic possible.¹ What further argument could anybody else have brought forward to invalidate Dr. Conze’s own protest ?

It is related that when the doctrine of *Mādhyā Mika* was first expounded to the gods, they themselves were greatly puzzled and asked for an explanation. And Subhuti answered saying, ‘ There is nothing to understand, nothing in particular has been indicated, nothing in particular explained ’.² It would look as if the doctrine of *anattā*, so vehemently espoused by Thera Vāda or Hīna Yāna, had worked itself to its logical conclusion or to a *reductio ad absurdum*. So Radhakrishnan’s dictum about the connexion of *Mādhyā Mika* with original Buddhism is seen to be perfectly legitimate.

This was one side of the situation that pushed Buddhism out of the picture in India ; but we have said already that there was another side to it which was equally responsible for it ; and that was that Buddhism had become a reproduction in other terms of Hinduism and therefore had made itself unnecessary. ‘ The vital

¹ E. Conze *Buddhism*, (Bruno Cassirer). Footnote, p. 131.

² E. Conze *Thirty years of Buddhist Studies*, (Bruno Cassirer), p. 145.

reason for the disappearance of Buddhism from India', says Radhakrishnan, 'is the fact that it became ultimately indistinguishable from the other flourishing forms of Hinduism'.¹ It may be seen that the two sides of the new movement contradict each other. What highlights the contradiction with acute intensity is that both sides claim the authority of the same source, viz., Nagarjuna.

If this second side of Mahā Yāna satisfies the Hindu predilection for gods, it must nevertheless have come out of a source that had some association with Buddhism. The term 'Bodhi' means 'enlightenment' or 'wisdom'; but the fact that only one person had been called the 'Buddha' means that only he had actually attained to Enlightenment. The impulse that lay behind the new movement in Mahā Yāna was the conviction that this Enlightenment was open to all; and the conclusion it led to was that many had progressed far along that path, and some had, in fact, attained to it. The members of the first group were called the 'Boddhisattvas' (those capable of enlightenment) and those of the second 'Buddhas'. Gautama Buddha had been a historical figure and, therefore, there was some hesitation about multiplying the number of 'Buddhas'. So we are told that the number of Buddhas could be counted as four, seven or twenty-four; but even here, as the matter was in popular hands, the count has a tendency to get out of hand. But as far as Boddhisattvas, of whom history has nothing to say, are concerned, no limit could be imposed and we are told the estimate runs into unnumbered millions.

In Hīna Yāna also there is the doctrine that Enlightenment was open to all, but since no one could be classed with the Buddha himself, those who attained to it were called *Arhats* (*arh* = deserve) or 'worthy persons'. The Buddha had emphasised over and over again that one had to depend on oneself for salvation. In his last sermon he had said, 'Those who shall be lamps unto themselves, relying upon themselves only, and not relying upon any external help, they shall reach the topmost height'. Each had to gain his own merit and it belonged to him only. What made the Boddhisattvas different from the *Arhats* of Hīna Yāna was that the merit they gained could be transferred; the one who could do such a

¹ *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 605.

transfer was certainly a saviour and worthy of worship. And if there were an unnumbered number who could do this, then there were an unnumbered number worthy of worship. The gods had come back into Buddhism.

This change that came over Buddhism is attributed to a number of causes. The first of them, and this is the one most widely attributed, is the atmosphere created by the Bhakti movement in Hinduism. The point about it is that it was at this very time that the Bhagavad Gita, with its strongly theistic tone, had burst upon the country after it had been battered by the unending speculations of the Upanishads. Sir Charles Eliot, however, would rather place the stress on Persian and Greek influences, on the former rather than the latter, which had penetrated India at this period. He supports his contention with a lot of archaeological data.¹ Dr. Conze takes a different line and goes to the extent of tracing it to a certain amount of Christian influence. None of these influences need be discounted. But Dr. Conze makes a further suggestion which should, I think, be discounted. He says, that the Sūnya Vāda school, in order to fulfil its mission, felt it had to supplement its metaphysical doctrine with a mythological doctrine.² This would mean that, in the first place, he wants to make it a pre-planned and deliberate manipulation. In the second place, he wants us to look upon a revolt as a consummation and a contradiction as a fulfilment.

In considering the matter, what must be borne in mind is that a religion that had originally been preached to a select band of recluses had by now spread far and wide, partly because of its inner vitality and partly because of State patronage. It had, therefore, ceased to be a monopoly of recluses and become a religion of the masses ; and they refused to sit by as spectators, merely watching the efforts of recluses to obtain Salvation. So while the other influences may have been present, it would look as if largely it was the pressure of the laity and the desire for universal salvation that lay behind the phenomenon of the sudden appearances of many ' Buddhas ' and Boddhisattvas on the scene.

¹ Sir Chas Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul) Vol. 1, Intro. p. XXXI.

² E. Conze, *Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies*, p. 145.

Out of this welter of those considered to have attained to Enlightenment or were well on their way to it, it is not strange that certain figures should stand out. They were Akahobya, Amitābha, Avalokiteswara and Manjusri. Of these Amitābha was considered to have already attained to Buddhahood, and faith in him was looked upon as certain guarantee to rebirth in Paradise. Dr. Conze, while considering the whole thing natural and necessary to Mahā Yāna, if it was to be a living religion, is rather distressed that Mahā Yānists should cling to the historicity of these figures, and not recognise them as figments of the imagination and arbitrary inventions.¹ Dr. Conze may be reminded that no worshipper wants his deity to be an imaginary deity. People worship a deity because they expect him to be their 'refuge and strength and a very present help in time of trouble'. They may not probe into dates and historical contexts, but they certainly believe their deities to exist. A creation of their own mind can scarcely be 'a refuge and strength' to them in times of trouble.

Thus, as we have said, Mahā Yāna has two sides ; both sides were developed in India and both stemmed from the same source which claimed to be ancient, but seem to have been developed about the beginning of the Christian era. And if the second side represents a revolt from the other, we shall find it can never get away from it and will usually be seen to retain profound traces of it. The school of Mahā Yāna as a whole was also called the 'New Wisdom School', to distinguish it from the School of Thera Vāda or Hīna Yāna which was called the 'Old Wisdom School'. Both started migrating steadily either because of missionary zeal or because circumstances in India were becoming increasingly uncongenial. The Old Wisdom School migrated to the South and is now found in the countries of South East Asia and the New Wisdom School migrated to the North to China, Japan and Tibet.

When a religion migrates from the land of its birth to other lands, it is natural for it to carry its scripture with it. When Thera Vāda migrated to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) it took the Pali Canon with it (in an oral form). In the case of the Buddhism that migrated to the North in its Mahā Yāna form, it had by that time accumulated other scriptures, besides the Pali Canon. If this were all, there

¹ Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 150.

would be nothing peculiar about it. What was peculiar about it was that when it went to China and then to Japan it began there to accumulate various Chinese and Japanese translations, commentaries and expositions round the original corpus and these became as sacred as the nucleus from which they had sprung. Sir Charles Eliot compares Mahā Yāna Scriptures to what might be constituted by a 'library, comprising Latin translation of the Old and New Testaments, with copious additions from the Talmud (Jewish writings) and Apocryphal literature, the writings of the Fathers, decrees of the Councils and Popes, together with *opera omnia* (all works) of the principal Schoolmen (Roman Catholic theologians of the Middle Ages) and the early Protestant Reformers'.¹ Since a literature so vast can have no definiteness, Radhakrishnan feels entitled to say that Mahā Yāna has no canon.² The remark, however, may be taken as a gibe and not an assessment.

As will always happen when you are confronted with such a vast body of literature, you feel that there is nothing specially binding on you, and that you can pick and choose as you like. And that, we shall see, is exactly what happened in China and Japan. Most schools in China and Japan follow the trend either of the *Prajñā Pāramittā* (Transcendent Wisdom), particularly the 'Diamond Sūtra', associated with it, or the *Saddharma Pundarīka* (Lotus of the Good law). Each of these two different scriptures pulls in a contrary direction; and it suits the Mahā Yāna situation exceedingly well.

The tradition is that Buddhism first reached China around 61 A.D. But the struggle to establish itself was hard and long, because China had its own indigenous philosophies, like Confucianism and Taoism; and the ideal of Buddhism went against the practical bent of the Chinese. It was not till the Tang Dynasty (620-907 A.D.) that Buddhism became a powerful force in China. It first reached Korea round 372 A.D.; and there it had to gather sufficient strength before it could spread to another land; and so it was round 552 A.D. that it reached Japan and here the seed fell on fruitful soil.

¹ Sir Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. III, p. 281.

² S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 585.

The two great figures of Far Eastern Buddhism are Bodhidharma (who arrived in China about 520 A.D.) and Honen (1133-1211). To each of them may be added the name of his outstanding follower, Hui Neng and Shinran. Each pair is representative of the two different sides of Mahā Yāna. In case of the first, while it was Bodhidharma who introduced the teaching of his School in China, it is to Hui Neng, the sixth in the line of succession, that modern followers of the School are indebted for what it is now.¹ And Shinran, the disciple of Honen carried the doctrine of his master to such lengths that this sect is now much greater than his master's.

Buddhism in Japan has a tendency to keep splitting indefinitely ; thus the Jodo Sect has four sub-divisions ; and of these the first and the fourth have four and six sub-divisions, respectively. One of the principal causes for this process of fragmentation arises from disputes over the headship of the monasteries. Nevertheless, it is customary to speak of the Twelve Sects of Buddhism in Japan ; but the names of the sects are not always the same ; and of the names given in one list four are extinct. However, such gaps are always filled up by sub-divisions of existing sects. Making due allowance for all this, it is possible to distinguish five major Schools or sects on the basis of their teaching and practice, viz., Tendai Shingon, Nichren, Jodo and Zen.

Of the five, Tendai and Shingon are usually paired together, both regard Buddha Vairocana as the chief object of worship and both retain many of the characteristics brought over originally from India. The Nichren sect named after its founder (1122-1282) is purely of Japanese origin and growth. It is noted chiefly for its attempt to restore the historic Buddha to his original status which he had lost in Japan. The Jodo sect and more particularly its off-shoot Jodo-Shinsu are characterised by a whole-hearted devotion to Buddha Amitābha. (Amida=Amitābha). These four Schools or sects are assigned by scholars to what is called the *Tariki* group (depending for salvation on another's effort). With the *Jiriki* (depending for salvation on oneself) group which goes under the name of 'Zen' we shall deal later in this chapter.

¹ D. T. Suzuki 'The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind', (Rider & Co.), pp. 11 & 12.

TARIKI

Amidism

Since the number of Buddhas and Boddhisattvas in Mahā Yāna is unlimited (and unlimitable) it is obvious that the sects have the option to pick and choose as they like. In practice, however, it is necessary that the choice should be narrowed ; and anyone of the many objects of devotion may loom larger than the others. But over all sects hangs the shadow of Amitābha or Amida. Though he is central only to the Jodo sect (and its branches) devotion to him is not confined to that sect. As Sir Charles Eliot says, the cult of Amidism has become an aspect of all sects.¹

There is no mention of him in the Pali Canon ; but there is mention of him in one of the major scriptures of Mahā Yāna, viz., *Saddharma Pundarīka* (the Lotus of the Good Law). The chief basis of the Amida cult consists of the Larger *Sukhavati* (Description of the Land of Bliss) and a smaller book by the same name. In particular, it is based on two vows, 18 and 20 made by Amitābha before he became a Buddha that he would not attain to Buddhahood, until all those who trusted in him and called upon his name had obtained salvation. Nagarjuna, in spite of his Sūnya Vāda philosophy, definitely cast his weight in favour of the cult. Asked how trust in Amitābha would save a man from the effects of his sin, his reply was classic : the smallest stone dropped into water sinks, the largest put into a ship floats.

The Buddhist Encyclopaedia traces the first preaching of the cult in China to the tradition of a Parthian prince of the first century A.D. but more historically to one Hui Yanan (333-418). It was, however, put on its feet as a sect by Honen under whom it was first called Jodo. Honen taught the worship of two deities: Sakyamuni (Gautama) and Amitābha ; but he laid his chief stress on the latter, as he considered the teaching of the Gautama too impracticable in this decadent age. He enunciated the proper method of worshipping Amitābha as the repetition of the Nembutsu (Namu Amida Butsu=Homage to Amitābha Buddha) and is himself reputed to have repeated the formula 60,000 times every day.

¹ Sir Charles Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul), p. 362

Shinran (1173-1262), a disciple of Honen, took the cult much further than the master who, though he did not like it, did not denounce it. The philosophy of Gautama was swept aside and his name itself reserved only for funeral ceremonies. The sect founded by Shinran was called Jodo Shinsu, because Shinran claimed it was Jodo in its true form. It is the largest sect in Japan. According to it, it was Amitābha alone who saved; therefore, faith in him was enough. A principle which holds good in the sect says, 'Even a bad man will be saved, how much more a good man?' No man can undo the evil that he had done, but Amitābha can. Honen had vigorously affirmed the need for good conduct because Amitābha disliked evil. To Shinran, on the other hand, faith in Amitābha cancels all evil and was therefore all sufficient. Once Shinran had reduced all essential religion to this doctrine, it only remained for him merely to cut out of religious practices all that he deemed unnecessary. Therefore, the abolition of monasticism, clerical celibacy and vegetarianism followed inevitably.

Jodo-Shinsu may naturally be presumed to have certain affinities with those religions which teach Salvation by Faith. Emil Brunner, the famous Protestant Christian theologian, has reported that once, on a visit to Japan, he came across a young man who spoke fluent German, and on his inquiry as to why out of all the European languages he had chosen to master German, the young man replied, 'I heard that in that country (Germany) also there had been a sage who had taught the same doctrine as ours and I wanted to study his writings'. But if Martin Luther, following St. Paul, puts such stress on Grace and Faith it is in a certain context. The present writer has said elsewhere that an extreme emphasis on any particular doctrine in a religion is bound to put a strain at some other point in that religion.¹ If extreme emphasis is placed on Grace and Faith, the doctrine of God in that religion must be able to stand the strain of that emphasis. In the Christian context with its doctrine of a transcendently holy God the strain can well be taken. In the Southern School of Vaishnavism in Hinduism, where the doctrine of God is much less clearly defined, the stress on the sufficiency of Grace deteriorates into the heresy

¹ S. Kulandran, *Grace in Christianity and Hinduism*, (Lutterworth), p. 254.

of *dosha bhogya* (enjoyment of sin) ; i.e., God enjoys man's sin, because it gives Him the opportunity of forgiving the sinner.¹

Looking at the Amida cult from the point of view of Hīna Yāna, Christmas Humphreys cannot help exclaiming that 'on the face of it, it discards three-fourths of Buddhism'. And as for calling this method of obtaining salvation an easier one than *Jiriki* (depending on oneself), when millions of Japanese are following the latter method, Humphreys asks, 'Is this thoughtful kindness or insolence?'² Perhaps, Humphreys may be a little less severe, if he is reminded that the devotee of every religion thinks that his is the shortest road to salvation.

The criticism of Sir Charles Eliot, who in addition to his tremendous intellectual versatility and encyclopaedic knowledge of Comparative Religions had the advantage of having been British Ambassador in Japan, is more dispassionate. Says he :

The worshippers of Amida in Japan are numerous and progressive, but should this be called Buddhism? It grows out of Buddhism; no doubt; all stages except the earliest are perfectly clear but has not the process of development resulted in such complete transformation that one can no longer apply the same name to the teaching of Gotama and the teaching of Shinran? The phenomenon has so far as I know no precise parallel in the history of religions.³

Though expressed with greater restraint, the one criticism is making the same point as the other; and that is, that the Amitābha cult has deviated widely from what has been deemed the original teaching of Gautama Buddha.

Shinran no doubt appears late in history and what is termed the Jodo Shinsu sect appears on the scene late; and it is beyond doubt that under him the original doctrine did undergo considerable change. However, the cult which he simplified rather radically is no innovation. It had come from India along with Mahā Yāna. According to *Sukhāvati Vyūhu*, one of the original scriptures of

¹ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 669.

² C. Humphreys, *Buddhism*, (Pelican), p. 164.

³ C. Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul), p. 389.

Mahā Yāna, Amitābha was originally a monk, called Dharmakara, who by enormous effort had attained to the lordship of one of the four sections of Paradise; it so happened that in course of time Amitābha had outstripped others as an object of reverence. Shinran in his own sect had merely speeded up the process of growing devotion.

But in the *Tariki* branch of Mahā Yāna, Amitābha though the most predominant object of reverence, does not stand by himself. He is in a setting of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It was not the pre-eminence of Amitābha that the Mahā Yāna had to account for, but the mutual relationship prevailing in the whole world of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. We have seen the historical causes that led to the movement which produced them. But how was the whole multitude of them to be accommodated within Buddhism? Is there a common basis in terms of which their relationship to one another can be explained? The question was bound to be asked at some time. Sir Charles Eliot thinks that it probably arose when Buddhism confronted Islam in Central Asia. Any way, the solution arrived at was the conception of the *Ādi Buddha* (primal Buddha). Eliot, however, records that it is unknown in China and Japan and not well known in Nepal.¹ Though it is related to Saivite thought, there is no doubt that the concept comes very late in Buddhist thought. According to this concept the primal Buddha has three bodies: *Dharma Kāya* (the fundamental body), *Sambhoga Kāya* (enjoyment body) by which he manifests himself to those in Paradise and *Nirmāna Kāya* (the body of transformation) by which he manifests himself in human form. Because the whole thing is an after-thought and is intended to serve merely as an explanation of the phenomenon of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, it has never had a strong hold on Mahā Yāna. Perhaps because it had got along very well without any explanation for a thousand years it did not see the need for one now.

The fact remains that, in spite of the large number of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who float about in the world of Mahā Yāna, Amida has to many become the one Buddha. Gautama has in the Far East lost the place that he has always held with undisputed

¹ C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. III, p. 388.

supremacy in Hīna Yāna and become only a proclaimer of the Amitābha's greatness. 'In China and Japan', says Malalasekera, 'and other countries of the Far East he came to be worshipped as the supreme personification of the Dharma Kāya itself, absorbing within himself all the attributes of perfection. He thus became not one among the many Buddhas but Buddhahood itself, the manifestation of the highest enlightenment'.¹ It is not that the other Buddhas were not believed in but that the Amitābha came to be the one Buddha that mattered.²

The Background

We have said that Mahā Yāna originated from the doctrine of Emptiness and that the doctrine or concept of many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas was a revolt from that doctrine. We were, however, careful to say that the latter concept always bore about it the marks of the context from which it had sprung. That is, the revolt did not issue in a repudiation but in an accommodation. The drama of salvation in a world of beings human, divine and semi-divine seems entirely real by itself; but the atmosphere and background seem suggestive of an entire unreality that sets the whole thing at naught. The lore of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas set up by one set of scriptures is voided by another set of scriptures.

The *Saddharma Pundarīka* and the *Sukhāvati Vyūku* play the former role and the *Prajñā Pāramittā* and the *Vajra Chedika* (Diamond Cutter), in particular, play the latter role. From a few of the pronouncements, from the second set of scriptures given below, the reader may judge to what extent the latter plays havoc with the world created by the first set and renders it entirely unreal.

'The qualities and doctrines of Buddha indeed! They were preached by him as no-qualities. Therefore, they are called qualities of the Buddha'. 'Numbers of worlds indeed! They were preached by him as no-numbers. Therefore, they were called numbers of worlds'. 'What was preached by the Tathāgata (the Buddha) as *Prajñā Pāramittā* (transcendent wisdom) that was preached by the

¹ *Buddhist Encyclopaedia*, p. 434.

² In pictorial representations he bears a remarkable resemblance to the Gautama (Vide *Buddhist Encyclopaedia*, pp. 440-449).

Tathāgata as no *Prajñā Pāramittā*. Therefore, it is called *Prajñā Pāramittā*. 'A true idea is no-true idea'. 'In that which was preached by the Tathāgata there is no truth or falsehood'. 'What do you think, O Subhuti, is there anything (dharma) that was preached by *Tathāgata*? No, indeed, O Bhagavat (the worshipful one, i.e., the Buddha), there is not anything (dharma) that was preached by the Bhagavat'.

It would seem as if all this was not enough and a *coup de grâce* had to be given, and so we have what follows :

'The Bhagavat said, "He who has entered on the path of a Boddhisattva should have this thought. All beings should be delivered by me in the perfect world of Nirvāna, and yet after I have delivered these beings no being has been delivered. And why? Because, O Subhuti, if a Boddhisattva had any idea of beings, he would not be a Boddhisattva".¹

Does it then mean the whole world of human beings, Buddhas and Boddhisattvas trying through the ages to work out their salvation is but an insubstantial pageant that fades and leaves not a wrack behind? Exactly. The words of the *Diamond Cutter* are as follows :

As in the sky : stars, darkness, a lamp, a phantom, and a bubble. A dream, flash of lightning and a cloud—thus we should look upon the world (all that was made).²

On the one hand, assertions of the efficacy of salvation by the Buddhas and Boddhisattvas, particularly by Amida are strenuously maintained, and, on the other, denials of its reality persist in the background. Different and equally valid authorities are quoted for the one as well as the other. Neither the assertions nor the denials are meant to be ignored. Dr. Susumi Yamaguchi, President of the Ottani University, Japan, attempts to solve the paradox of the situation by, if anything, a more sweeping and all-comprehensive paradox. 'Buddhism', he says, 'warns its followers against a one-sided Emptiness. It is said that Emptiness

¹ *Diamond Cutter* (S.B.E.—Vol. XLIV), pp. 120-145.

² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

itself is empty. The meaning is that when subject and object are negated, negation may be taken for a reality and so must be negated'.¹ But he himself has admitted that the process may go on for ever, each negation continuing to be negated *ad infinitum*. Dr. Conze makes a remark which may explain the method of exposition but not the subject under consideration. Says he, 'Buddhist philosophers differ from philosophers bred in the Aristotelian tradition in that they are not frightened but delighted by contradiction'.² They may generally delight in contradiction but in dealing with this subject they are driven to it by the sheer force of Aristotelian logic.

Why, it may be asked. The answer is that the contradiction is resorted to because the expositors are faced with a contradictory situation. Two traditions which seem to be totally irreconcilable with each other have to be held together and only a paradox can do it. And Dr. Yamaguchi on behalf of the Jodo Shinsu School explains the matter as follows: 'Brunner suspected that Amida and supreme Emptiness had nothing to do with each other. This is not so. Only when Emptiness assumes a positive shape of our worldly existence can it annihilate our adherence to ourselves and our possessions which are conceived as real. Emptiness becomes positive when it is expressed as subject and object of our existence, though it is beyond such modification itself'.³

Expatriating on the point, Dr. Yamaguchi says that 'Infinite Light' and 'Infinite Life' are both epithets of Amitābha and the transformation of Supreme Wisdom into great Compassion is the original fundamental vow of Buddhism.⁴ In other words, something irreconcilable with something else may be its consummation.

The doctrine of Incarnation is a recognised doctrine in Religion. In Christianity there is one Incarnation and all Christianity is based on the fact of that Incarnation. In Vaishnavism there is a doctrine of the possibility of repeated Incarnations, though only ten are recognised as important. Among the Greeks and

¹ S. Yamaguchi, *Dynamic and Static Buddhism*, (Yischo, Tokyo), p. 60.

² E. Conze, *Buddhism*, (Bruno Cassirer), p. 129.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 76, 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

the Romans the doctrine was held in a very modified form ; but the doctrine as held by them is hardly entitled to that name as the gods merely usually assumed human form for the time being just to perform particular tasks. When a proper doctrine of Incarnation exists, the doctrine of God held by that religion must allow it. The philosophical theory of *Coincidentia Oppositorum* (Coincidence of Opposites) is hardly a convincing basis for a doctrine of Incarnation ; it is a strain on the mind to be called upon to believe that Amitābha is an incarnation of Emptiness.

It may perhaps be suggested that the doctrine of the Ādi Buddha may provide such a basis. But Dr. Malalasekera has warned us against equating the concept of Ādi Buddha with the concept that we may have of God. Such an equation, he warns us, will be a complete misconception and would be an absolute reversal of the Buddhist point of view. So instead of occupying ourselves with laboured attempts to prove that out of the two doctrines irreconcilable with each other the one arose naturally from the other, we must be willing to face the fact that in the *Tariki* section of Mahā Yāna Buddhism, two irreconcilable doctrines are held together.

Jiriki

Zen

We have so far dealt in Mahā Yāna with a section that attempts to hold to a protest and at the same time to hold to that from which it protested. And we have seen to what extent it has to go to justify its position. The other section is saved from such attempts by its severe consistency. The *Jiriki* section (which teaches salvation through one's own effort) consists of three schools : the Rinzaï, the Sota and the Obaku. But the distinction between them is so slight that they are usually lumped together under the name of 'Zen'. The term is Japanese and is derived from the Chinese word *Chān*, which in its turn comes from the Sanskrit word 'Dhyana' (contemplation).

We have said that the Mādhyā Mika or *Sūnya Vāda* school which flourished in India carried the tenets of Hīna Yāna to their logical conclusion. We have seen how the Mahā Yāna itself was based on the Mādhyā Mika school but how the very extremes to which it

went bred a protest within it. The Chān School of China, which became the Zen School of Japan, rid itself of the protest ; but it is not a mere continuation of Mādhyā Mika ; it is an explication and an application of it. Suzuki considers that what it does is to spell out the meaning of the doctrine of *anattā* or no-self, which of course is cardinal to Hīna Yāna. Suzuki explains the role of Zen as follows :

‘ With the Buddha, this was no philosophical concept, it was his very experience. When the intellectualisation went further and deeper, the doctrine of *anātman* assumed a more metaphysical aspect and the doctrine of *Sūnyata* developed . . . The doctrine of *Sūnyata* has a more comprehensive application . . . For the concept of *Sūnyata* is now applied not only to experience of egolessness but to that of formlessness generally ’.¹

Bodhidharma, the first apostle of Zen, who brought it to the Chinese Court circa 520 A.D., appears from pictures of him, which have come down to us to have been a formidable personality ; and in his interview with the Emperor he seems to have acted not merely in keeping with his own character but also in perfect keeping with the tenets of his creed. The emperor told him that he had had many temples built, monks and nuns installed and scriptures copied, and asked whether there was any merit in his actions. ‘ None whatever ’, said the apostle. Somewhat taken aback, the Emperor asked, ‘ What then is the first principle of the sacred creed ? ’ ‘ It is just empty ; there is nothing sacred ’, replied Bodhidharma. At his wit’s end, the Emperor finally asked, ‘ Who then are you ? ’ ‘ I have no idea ’, replied the apostle.

Bodhidharma was in a different position from Nagarjuna. Nagarjuna, living in India in the 1st century A.D., was under pressure of movements from which Bodhidharma was free. Nagarjuna had to be ambivalent and equivocal in the circumstances in which he lived ; Bodhidharma could, because of his circumstances, be unequivocal and therefore relentlessly true to the original impulse of the Mādhyā Mika School. In being so relentlessly true to the impulse of the Mādhyā Mika School, Zen-

¹ D. T. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, (Rider & Co.), p. 119.

puzzles many people who may not have been puzzled by the original School. The original school simply taught *Sūnya Vāda* as a philosophical theory ; there were many theories afloat in the world, and one more did not make much difference. What Zen does is to bring down the doctrine of *Sūnya Vāda* from the air to the ground ; it draws out the implications of the original theory and applies them generally. It is only if this is understood, that anybody can make anything out of Zen.

The methods used by Zen to impart its instruction are unlike the methods used by any other School. It sets little store on learning ; the few books in Zen monasteries are kept in the most unsavoury places.¹ The picture of the sixth patriarch Hui Neng shows him pulling a holy scripture to pieces, like a wild maniac. The answers of masters to questions by pupils, when kept within reasonable limits seem merely irrelevant ; but they are not always kept within reasonable limits, and often extend to acts of physical violence. What the Zen masters are trying to do is to make their pupils arrive at Enlightenment by making it clear that it is not to be found where they are looking for it. When it is realised that what Zen is doing is attempting to make *Sūnya Vāda* to be taken seriously, we shall to some extent understand the peculiar methods of instruction employed by Zen. The methods are peculiar because the message inculcated is peculiar.

The Enlightenment which a Zen teacher is aiming at is called *Satori* which whether derived from the Sanskrit word *Samadhi* or not means the same thing ; 'peace' or 'tranquility'. 'The question and answer method used more in the Rinzai branch than the Soto and is called the 'koan'. It is said that there are 1700 standard koans.

The following shows the peculiar relationship of the answer to the question :

Q.—What is the nature of the Buddha ?

A.—Three chin of flax.

Q.—What is the meaning of the visit of the first Patriarch ?

A.—The cypress tree in the courtyard.

¹ We wonder what is happening to the literary output of Dr. D. T. Suzuki ranging over 60 years.

Q.—Why are you rubbing that brick ?

A.—I want to make a mirror.

Q.—If all things are reducible to One, to what is the One to be reduced.

A.—When I was in the district of Ching, I had a robe that weighed seven chin.

If the answers look irrelevant to the questions, it is because their aim is to show that the questions are irrelevant to the purpose in view. The pinching of the pupil's nose or the still more drastic methods of physical contact when resorted to seem to have the desired effect, especially when repeated with sufficient frequency. But the desired effect could (fortunately perhaps for others) be only a personal experience and does not bring others any the nearer to the secret of Zen.

What is related below may to some extent do so : When succession to the office of the Abbot of a large monastery was to be decided on, all the 500 pupils were brought together, so that it could be discovered who best understood the secret of Zen. The best of the pupils wrote :

This body is like the bodhi tree.
The Soul is like a mirror bright.
Take heed to keep it always clean
And let no dust collect upon it.

Hui Neng, who was no pupil, and had no claim to any scholarship but was engaged in manual labour in the monastery, put in the following verse :

The Bodhi is not like a tree,
The mirror bright is nowhere shining ;
As there is nothing from the beginning
Where can the dust collect ?

Hui Neng was elected.

In the realm of art one of the best illustrations is a series of pictures. In the first there is an ox grazing, in the second a man comes to catch it, in the third the ox rushes away from him, in the

fourth the man having caught it is riding it, in the fifth the ox disappears, and the man is left with a cord and a whip. The final picture is blank.

Is then the secret of Zen that there is no secret? And does the enlightenment arrived at consist in the realisation that there is nothing to be enlightened about? D. T. Suzuki's record of a conversation between a pupil and a master seems to go a long way towards confirming our own *inkling*.

Pupil —This being so, what is it attained?

Master—Just see into nothingness.

Pupil —Even if it is nothingness, it is seeing something.

Master—Though it is seeing, it is not to be called something.

Pupil —If it is not to be called something, how can there be seeing?

Master—Seeing into nothingness—this is true seeing and eternal seeing.¹

Search for Transcendence in Mahā Yāna

We have found that there are two kinds of Mahā Yāna—the *Tariki* and the *Jiriki*, the first teaching salvation through someone else and the second teaching salvation through one's own effort. We have said that the first group, in spite of differences, is overshadowed by Amitābha and that the second group can be brought under the term 'Zen'.

To search for Transcendence in the first may be undertaken but with the realisation that it is a somewhat hazardous enterprise, for while Amitābha is in the foreground, Emptiness is always in the background, threatening to swallow him up. Sir Winston Churchill in one of his last great speeches delivered before his retirement, referring to the situation created by the discovery of the Atom bomb, said that we were living in an era in which Existence and Annihilation were twin sisters. But the first is still living, in spite of the second. Annihilation has not succeeded in swallow-

¹ *Op. cit.*, Suzuki, p. 30.

ing up existence. Similarly, we may say that while Emptiness still hovers in the background, to millions who worship Amitābha he is still real ; he is not a Boddhisattva or even a Buddha, he is the Ultimate. So far as the Amitābha cult is concerned, we may without engaging in any needless probing consider him the Transcendent fully satisfying the requirements we have laid down.

We need not spend much time on the concept of the Ādi Buddha. As we have observed, the Ādi Buddha is only a co-ordinating philosophical expedient : he is not the centre of a cult, has no shrine and no worshippers. He therefore, is no candidate for the role we have in mind.

If the search for the Transcendent in the Amitābha cult could be undertaken only with the knowledge that it was a hazardous enterprise, we may say that the search for the Transcendent in Zen need not be undertaken at all. Says Alan Watts :

In Zen there is no dualism of heaven and earth, natural and supernatural, man and God, material and spiritual, mortal and immortal ; for ordinary men and Buddhas, *Samsāra* (ordinary life) and Nirvāna, *Avidyā* (ignorance) and Bodhi (enlightenment) are the same.¹

In case this attitude may not always be maintained, Lin-Chi is reported to have given the rather blood-curdling admonition, ' If you encounter the Buddha kill him ; if you encounter any Patriarch kill him '. Kill them all without hesitation, for this is the only way to deliverance'.² In fact, all Zen is one unrelenting effort to dissolve and dissipate the whole concept of Transcendence.

We need not, therefore, be surprised to find that when a Zen master was asked what Enlightenment was, he replied, ' Your every day thoughts '. Master Pai Cheng said that Zen simply meant ' Eat when you are hungry, sleep when you are tired ' ; and Lin Chi declared that ' the truly religious man has nothing to do but to go on with his life, as he finds it in the various circumstances of this worldly existence. He rises quietly in the morning,

¹ Alan Watts, *Spirit of Zen*, (John Murray), p. 83.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ Alan Watts, *The Spirit of Zen*, (John Murray), pp. 47, 48.

puts on his clothes and goes out to work. When he wants to walk he walks, when he wants to sit, he sits, he has no hankering after the Buddhahood, not the remotest thought of it'.¹ In short, you are in the midst of life, just keep on living, there is nothing more to it, there is nothing to transcend it.

One may approve or disapprove of Zen as a Philosophy ; some may do the one and some the other. But it is hard to call it a religion, certainly according to the definition we have laid down. But Zen may not be concerned with being called a religion and certainly it will not be concerned with our definition.

¹ *Alan Watts, The Spirit of Zen* (Murray), pp. 47, 48.

III

TRANSCENDENCE IN HINDUISM

Difficulty of Defining Hinduism

We know who a Muslim is and who a Christian is ; and though a certain type of Buddhism has departed widely from what has come down to us as original Buddhism, still we know who a Buddhist is. It is, however, difficult] to say who a Hindu is ; and that is because it is difficult to say what exactly Hinduism is. It is characterised by such a wide diversity of belief and practice, that the task of defining its identity looks extremely elusive. A rather summary solution was proposed by Lord Sinha, a famous Indian statesman of fifty years ago. He defined a Hindu as anyone who is willing to call himself a Hindu.

One reason for the difficulty lies in the fact that the term 'Hindu' was originally not a religious, but a geographical term. Though the term 'India' was known even before the time of the Romans, the term came into general vogue only after the Muslim invaders broke into India from the North and applied it to everyone who lived in the land South of the river Indus.¹ However, the term has come to have a religious connotation and may be said to have at present only a religious connotation. The Hindu-Muslim riots which used to take place frequently during the British regime in India, were largely on a religious basis ; and Hindus are distinguishable not merely from Muslims, but from Christians, the Zoroastrian Parsees and others. But if Lord Sinha's definition is recognised as too drastic to be adequate, to say that a Hindu is one who is not a Muslim, or a Christian or a Zoroastrian is simply to give up the attempt at definition. We shall see that the attempt need not be given up.

The chief reason for the difficulty of defining who a Hindu is lies in the fact that Hinduism had no founder. Not every religion

¹ The term 'India' however occurs in the book of Esther in the Old Testament (I-1), written circa 100-150 B.C.

in the history of the world has had a founder. Tribal religions both in ancient and in modern times cannot point to a founder ; but a unity of belief and practice in small communities is a comparatively easy matter. If it be said that the religions of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon also which were mighty empires had no founders either, it has to be realised that in their case, the belief and practice of the rulers set the standard and that the people followed. This cannot, of course, be said of the Greeks and the Romans ; but while they both worshipped ' the immortal gods ', they set up no religious systems. While there were particular Greek and Roman gods, among both people the worship of other gods besides their own was allowed ; the one distinctive feature among the Romans was that under the Empire they demanded in addition the worship of the Emperor.

The role that a founder plays in religion is that when religion in general rises from its earliest and primitive stage to the second stage we have referred to, he gives the turn which the religious aspirations of the people concerned should take. The Buddha intervened in the religious history of India and Buddhism followed the lines he laid down. And so we shall find in all cases of what are called the ' major religions ' of the world. A chart was drawn up and a norm laid down. Adherence to that norm is the criterion by which it may be judged to what religion a man belongs.

When Hinduism reached the second stage of religious development, no great religious figure intervened and no chart was drawn up. There was just a spontaneous urge to reach a higher level. When this happens there is no clear break with the past ; and traits of the first stage are not discarded. Dr. Radhakrishnan has said that Hinduism is a movement not a position, a growing tradition, not a fixed revelation. The guide-lines fixed by a founder are absent and such a diversity of belief and practice allowed, that we have to search hard for a criterion.

But is there no criterion ? In our first chapter we said that while the method of Philosophy was largely speculative, that of Religion was largely expository. We however, pointed out that in the East this hard and fast distinction could not be always upheld, as philosophical activity was mostly carried on within the framework of Religion. In the case of Hinduism we find Religion and

Philosophy meeting almost at the very top. Certain philosophical speculations fill the place that the founder does in other religions. Their acceptance is the only criterion which may be applied to judge whether a man is a Hindu. This acceptance is not as exacting as may perhaps be imagined ; it usually means nothing more than an abstinence from its deliberate rejection. A criterion the very acceptance of which is nominal and which even after acceptance gives room for a wide diversity of interpretation—since it consists of philosophical speculations—suffers badly in fulfilling its role. But a criterion there is ; and our difficulties arise because of its laxity.

Hindu Scripture

What we have called certain 'philosophical speculations' are part of the sacred books of Hinduism called the *Vedas* (vid = know ; cf. Latin video) ; but they are their essential part. The *Vedas* comprise four sections : those consisting of devotional songs to the gods, those dealing with ritual, and those which consist of meditations in forests, and lastly speculations on philosophical subjects. These speculations are called the Upanishads. (upa + ni + shad = sitting down by the side of ; therefore, doctrine taught to disciples). They came at the end of the *Vedas* ; and therefore came to enjoy the etymological benefit conferred by the word 'end' which could also be construed to mean 'summary'. The teaching of the Upanishads is called *Vedānta* (veda + anta = end of the *Vedas*) ; and is now generally taken to mean the summary or substance of the *Vedas*. It was exactly the same benefit that metaphysics derived from Aristotle. Other names are also used in Hinduism to denote its Scriptures ; they are *Sruti* (Sru = hear) which distinguishes it from *Smṛti* (Smr = remember) and *Sabda* (literally, sound).

When Hindu expositors appeal to the *Vedas*, they may always be understood as appealing to the Upanishads. Says Swami Vivekananda, 'All the *Dharshans* (systems) that you have ever seen or heard are based on the Upanishads ; whenever they want to quote *Shruti*, they mean the Upanishads'.¹ He adds 'In the Upanishads is the primary authority—they are the words of the

¹ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, pp. 327 & 333.

Rishis, our forefathers, and you have to believe them if you want to be a Hindu'.¹ The Vedānta Sūtras (also called Brahma Sutras) which later summed up the teaching of the Upanishads, say, 'the Vedas are eternal'. And Swami Vireswaranda, who comments on the passage, says, 'They are impersonal and eternal. The Rishis only discovered them but were not the authors of the Vedic texts'.²

The very prestige attached to the Upanishads created a situation that threatened to set that prestige at naught. It led to a large number of aspirants for anonymous immortality to put out various works and call them 'Upanishads'. The process evidently went on for a long time; for Swami Vivekananda refers to one called 'Allo Upanishad', obviously the work of a Muslim author, produced in the time of Moghul Emperor Akbar (A.D. 1542-1602). The public, however, seems to have had its own criterion and only 108 are recognised as belonging to this class. Even out of these only those produced before the 4th century B.C. are regarded as authoritative. These are about a dozen in number. Sankara, the greatest teacher in Hinduism comments only on ten.

There are two facts which must be borne in mind about the Upanishads. They do not and cannot speak with one voice. Concerning their general characteristic, Radhakrishnan says that they are 'tentative solutions of metaphysical questions put forth in the forms of dialogues and disputations'.³ Those who thus speculated on these questions did not all of them sit down at the same time and place and decide on what their solutions were to be. The speculations were done by different people at different times and at different places; and each philosopher felt free to let his mind rove at random over the subjects that confronted him. None was bound by another's view. The assumption of a perfect unity of views between them is, therefore, scarcely warranted.

In the second place, these philosophers were not speculating in a vacuum or against the background of a vacuum. They were speculating 'in the face of the facts of life', says Radhakrishnan. But life is many-sided; what were the facts of life that these philo-

¹ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, pp. 327 & 333.

² *Brahma Sutras* (Advaita Ashram), p. 122.

³ S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (Allen & Unwin), Vol. I, p. 138.

sophers were concerned with? Even a most casual reading of the Upanishads will make one realise that the philosophers engaged in these speculations were Brahmins, that is, those who belonged to the priestly class. Though the Upanishads are put after the Brāhmanas, which deal with the routine of ceremonial worship, it does not mean that the era of ceremonial worship had ended when the era of speculation began. Therefore, it is obvious that those who speculated were those who had once been engaged in priestly duties and had retired or perhaps were still engaged in them and taught in their spare-time. The 'facts' on which they speculated and which formed the raw material of their thinking were of the life in which they themselves had lived or were still living, and the questions they confronted were concerned with the nature of the gods, the world, the men who dwelt in it and the relationship between all of them.

But the world which these seers knew was part of a larger world. And the world is a place where many things go on as they have gone on, ever since the life of man on earth had started; men are born and die, buy and sell, marry and are given in marriage. It is also, on the other hand, a world where nothing stands still. People certainly are born and die, but they are not the same men; great personages arise and great events occur, which leave behind them far-reaching consequences. The world may want to keep still; but Time and History insist on change. Therefore, when Scripture had to be interpreted later, it would be in the light of these changes.

The Impact of Buddhism

In the religious world of ancient India, where people continued to worship the old Vedic gods, though with decreasing fervour, there occurred an event of extraordinary importance, which was startling in its suddenness and profound in its consequences. Two new religions, dynamic and godless, burst upon the scene viz: Buddhism and Jainism. Of the two it was the former that was fraught with deep consequences for the old religion of the land. The reasons for it are two. In the first place, the old religion had been the preserve of the Brahmins; whereas Buddhism opened its own doors to the masses. No doubt, Buddhism was originally confined only to those who had renounced the world and were

therefore called 'bhikkhus' or beggars (Skt. *bhiksh*) ; but anyone could become a bhikkhu ; whereas one could become a Brahmin only by birth. The other reason for the influence of Buddhism was its adoption as the State religion by the Emperor Asoka (reigned 264-228 B.C.). This made it possible for its preaching to be on a wide and intensive scale. The hold that Buddhism had gained on the country continued to be strong even long after it had lost its State sponsorship.

Buddhism, as we saw in the last chapter, disappeared from India about 1,000 years ago. That means that for 1,500 years before that the two religions had stood poised against each other. And even as the Christian creeds become explicable only with a knowledge of the controversies and heresies that the Christian Church had to confront in early times, so a good deal of Hinduism becomes explicable only with a knowledge of the issues raised in its confrontation with Buddhism. In fact, the term 'Hinduism' itself is technically applied to the old religion of the land only after it had been reshaped by that confrontation.

During the confrontation the old religion fought back with all the resources at its command. In the first place, the position occupied in Buddhism by such a definite personal figure as the Buddha inspired it with the idea that the gods, Vishnu and Siva, could be made to occupy a corresponding position within Hinduism and thus become centres of devotional religion. In the second place, two great epics were produced singing the praises of the incarnations of one of the gods ; and the stories they related passed into the folklore of the country. One of these epics also contained a poem called the 'Bhagavad Gītā', (the Lord's Song) which became one of the most potent forces that has worked for Hinduism, ever since. In the third place, there was an effort to sum up the teachings of the Vedānta in cryptic formulae called Sūtras which could be easily remembered. Finally, there was a perfect avalanche of devotional poetry both from the Vaishnavite and the Saivite sides which continued from the seventh to the ninth century A.D.

It was after all this had happened in the sphere of the old religion, that the great *Achāryas* (Teachers) set out on their task of formulating their systems. Since the final authority in Hinduism is the Vedas, each of them had to declare that his task was that of

setting forth and explaining the teaching of the Vedas ; which in effect, of course, meant the Upanishads. By general consent it seems to have been allowed that they could use the *Vedānta Sūtras*, which professed to summarise the Upanishads, as their basis, and could use the *Bhagavad Gītā* to support their position.¹ The Upanishads, the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* thus came to be called the *Prasthāna Traya* (the principal three) and were considered 'binding' on all those to whom Sanskrit was the sacred language. Of the first of these we have observed that they do not speak with one voice. The *Vedānta Sūtras* of Bādarāyana are extremely terse and cryptic ; and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, because of its single minded purpose to have Krishna accepted as the ultimate deity, is anxious to please all sides and is highly eclectic. The sources at their disposal, therefore, allowed ample scope for the great exponents, each to build up his own case and claim sufficient warrant for it.

The Role of Tradition and its Basis

However, the great exponents were not as free as they might seem to be. If the sources allowed them almost unlimited freedom the particular tradition to which each belonged tied him down to the particular line that he had to follow ; each had really to be spokesman for certain traditions. Some of these traditions were early and were affected by the impact of Buddhism. Since that religion had been propagated for centuries all over the land with unceasing force and persistence, the teachers of Hinduism had to make up their minds as to the attitude they had to take up on the issues raised by it ; and they did so with the conviction that the particular attitudes they took up were those which were demanded by the Vedas.

The number of these traditions must have varied from time to time ; some must have died out in course of time and new ones must have arisen. Madhva in the 13th century knew of twenty-one Schools of tradition. Mr. Gough holds that the tradition as presented by Sankara's School can trace its origin back to the time of the Upanishads.² Some other traditions may also make the

¹ The date of the *Vedānta Sūtras* is probably circa 200 B.C. though later dates are also assigned.

² *Sankara's Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras* (S.B.E.) Vol. I, p. xviii.

same claim. Since the great exponents appear practically at the end of the first millenium of the Christian era, the lines of succession of the teachers even in the Schools which have survived cannot by any means be accurately known ; but allusions to some of them occur frequently in the great commentaries written later. But that such a succession did exist need not be doubted ; because the institution of *guru paramparā* (succession of teachers) is a recognised custom in Hinduism.

These Schools may be divided into two groups by the application of two criteria : the first criterion is the god round which they centre, and the second is the standard by which they test the validity of an argument. We shall find out that both criteria will produce the same results. Those Schools which centre in Vishnu recognise the *Prasthāna Traya* as the test of validity.¹ Those which centre in the God Siva have their own test of validity. All, however, had to acknowledge the Vedas as the final source of authority. Of the first group only five have come down to us, and of the second, three. We shall here examine three of the first and one of the second.

If the various traditions had adopted certain distinct attitudes, we may well ask why it is that they came to adopt them. It would be irresponsible to think that it was done quite arbitrarily. The teachers in whose hands these traditions took shape were living in the midst of communities that, generation after generation, were accustomed to particular types of religion. These teachers must have adopted their attitudes in the belief that they were the ones that could best safeguard the type of religion they knew in their circumstances. If Hinduism is to be known through its great exponents and these exponents depended upon certain types of tradition, we would do well to realise that the traditions themselves depended on the religion professed and practised around them.

In Hinduism the bottom, i.e., the popular basis, has a far greater status than it has in any other religion. In any other religion it is legitimate to ask whether what is preached is being practised ; in Hinduism the legitimate question is whether what is being prac-

¹ There is some difficulty about assigning Sankara's School definitely to the Vaishnavite group, because though he argues on the basis of the *Prasthāna Traya*, he recognises both gods and relegates them to a lower plane of thought.

tised is being preached. The great exponents who have given their names to their systems would insist that what they were interpreting were the scriptures ; but we know that they were interpreting them, according to the traditions to which they belonged ; and these in turn were interpreting the religion they knew. So the religion of the land was the primary stuff which gave birth to the Systems. If it be said that, on the other hand, the great exponents and the traditions were always seeking for scriptural support, we must also realise that the Upanishads themselves had been speculations on ' the facts of life ' ; and for subsequent generations the facts of life were the situations in which they themselves lived ; and their reactions to them would shape the traditions.

However, if the top, (i.e. the teachers) was influenced by the bottom, we must not underrate the influence of the top on the bottom. The great exponents spelt out the latent implications of their traditions, based them on sound authority, defended them, met objections and cast over their systems the spell of their genius. And if what was below was the raw material from which the formulations at the top were devised, the clarifications, arguments and convictions from the top seeped down below. So the process was one of mutual action and reaction.

Anybody living anywhere in India would notice temples big and small. In the big temples there would be regular worship with chants, lighted lamps, the burning of incense and the offering of flowers. At the small shrines an occasional devotee would stop to pay his respects to the images of the gods they house. One would also see throughout the year people going on pilgrimages to places considered specially sacred. All temples have festival seasons and those of importance attract people in hundreds of thousands from all parts of the land. Besides these, in most homes people would practise their own religious ceremonies. The chief deities worshipped in public and private may go by various names ; but mostly these names can be traced to one or other of the two chief Gods : Vishnu and Siva ; either has a fair supply of them. Siva has 1008 names and Vishnu has only eight less, most of them being attributes derived from their exploits on earth.

It is this phenomenon which the various schools and their great exponents try to interpret. To be confined to this pheno-

menon is to be satisfied with a sight. To understand it we must be willing to look at it through the interpretations of those who have lived in the midst of this phenomenon and have tried to explain each in his own way what it represents and who to some extent have influenced it. And to a consideration of these Schools we shall now proceed.

THE ADVAITA SCHOOL

Introduction

The term *Advaita* is the negative of the word *dvaita* = duality (cf. Latin *duo*) and therefore, means 'non-duality'. The term 'Monism' is often applied to it and may be convenient; but we shall see that it is considered by some to go further than 'non-duality' and is therefore actually a misinterpretation of its meaning. The School we are now considering is often more accurately called the School of *Kevala Advaita* (pure non-dualism or pure monism), to distinguish it from another School which also claims the title *Advaita* with another qualifying adjective. Of all the Schools in Hinduism, this became the most important because of the genius and the ceaseless and single-minded effort of its chief exponent, Sankara (788-820 A.D.), one of the towering figures in the history of Philosophy in the world.

Though the tradition of this School had existed for a long time its first great exponent was Gaudapada. Radhakrishnan dates him round 550 A.D.; Das Gupta brings him down by a couple of centuries.¹ Neither date will do; for we know on Sankara's testimony that he was the teacher of Sankara's own teacher and, therefore, only two generations removed from him. Das Gupta's date will bring him down to Sankara's own times.

Anyway, he belonged to a tradition that had been greatly influenced by the teaching of Buddhism. Das Gupta suspects that Gaudapada himself was a Buddhist;² Such a suggestion, though natural in view of his teaching, need not be accepted. We are on better ground in concluding that Gaudapada was a Hindu,

¹ Das Gupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, (Camb. University Press) Vol. I, 423.

² *Ibid.*, same page.

but a Hindu who did not think he needed to be converted to Buddhism, because he believed that Hinduism and Buddhism said the same thing and that both proclaimed *Advaita*.

The Buddhism that Gaudapada knew was that of the Mādhyā Mika School and that of the *Vijnāna Vāda School*. The former is associated with the doctrine of Emptiness and the latter with the doctrine that the Mind alone was real and everything presented to it was unreal. Since he believed that the Upanishads also said the same thing, he proceeded to expound his own teaching on these lines : the world was unreal ; both ' being ' and ' becoming ' were alike inconceivable ; there was no difference between a waking-state and a dreaming-state, between true perception and false perception. According to him, ' That things exist, do not exist, do exist and not exist, and neither exist nor non-exist ; that they are moving or steady, or none of these, are but the thoughts with which fools are deluded '.¹ Such an attitude may be said to be the expression of the principle, *Nāsti bhedaṃ katamchana* (there is no difference whatever) and may look like a pure Mādhyā Mika Buddhism ; where is the Hinduism in this ? But when, however, you introduce the explanation that only the *Ātman* is and nothing else, is, it begins to look a little different. Devanandan says that Gaudapada ' clutches at the sole reality of the *Ātman* of the Upanishads to save himself from the void of his own making '.² Anyway, he seems to have been satisfied that Buddhism was also proclaiming the doctrine of Advaita, even as Hinduism was. His attitude was, however, hardly complimentary to the old religion ; for he was more hearty in proclaiming the denials of the new religion than he was in making the assertions of the old.

Sankara, the next great spokesman of the tradition and the greatest in its history, had great respect for Gaudapada, but none for Buddhism. Of Gaudapada he says he was ' the adored of his adorers, who finding all people sinking in the ocean made dreadful by crocodiles of rebirth, by churning the great ocean of the Vedas with the churning rod of wisdom explained the secret of the Vedas '.³ His own exposition of the Upanishads also seemed so near to the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 428.

² P. D. Devanandan, *Concept of Māyā*, p. 87.

³ Quoted *Ibid.*

Buddhist point of view that he was himself accused by his opponents of being a *prachanna Bauddha* (a crypto-Buddhist). Though Sankara's exposition of Hinduism might seem to be on the border line of Buddhism, his whole motive was very different from that of Gaudapada. To the latter any controversy between the two religions was unnecessary ; his purpose had been to reconcile the one with the other. Sankara's purpose was to extinguish Buddhism. As has been said, his language about it was 'not merely derogatory but inflammatory'.¹ He dismisses the Mādhyama School which had exercised such a fascination over Gaudapada with scorn in a few words as unworthy of his refutation.

How then could both be said to have belonged to the same School? The answer is that in the time of Gaudapada there had been no School to speak of. Schools require definite and clearly enunciated tenets. Such a condition had not existed in the time of Gaudapada ; there had been a climate of opinion, a tradition. It had been greatly impressed by the similarity between what Buddhism was saying and what the Upanishads had been saying. It was felt that there was some difference, but the similarity seemed paramount. Those who belonged to the tradition, therefore, could not make up their minds about the basic attitude they should take up towards Buddhism. Sankara made up their minds for them. To him, similarities notwithstanding, the difference was overwhelming and it determined his attitude to Buddhism. He enunciated the tenets for the tradition and made it a School, as did everyone of the other great *Āchāryas* for the tradition he represented.

Suspicious about Sankara's motive were natural to those who were not aware of his rather peculiar position. He was the champion of Hinduism in the camp of those whose sympathies seemed to favour Buddhism ; but peculiar as his position was, there cannot be the slightest doubt about where he stood. Since his motive was different from that of Gaudapada, his method was also different. Gaudapada had approached his task as a philosopher ; and he could afford to do so ; Sankara, though a far greater philosopher, could not afford it. He had to convince not only those of

¹ *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras*, Vol. I, p. 426.

his own tradition, but those outside ; and the only unshakeable authority that would be accepted by everyone was Scripture. So he set himself up as an exegete of Scripture, pure and simple. The reason he gives is, 'The arguments some clever people have cogitated with great pains are shown to be fallacious by people still more ingenious and their arguments are again refuted by others'.¹ So while his predecessor had used one of the smallest Upanishads as a peg for his views, Sankara commented on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, which purport to be a summary of the Upanishads as a whole, and on ten of the Upanishads. And with such force and earnestness did he stamp his own interpretation of the Upanishads themselves, that though any system purporting to expound the Upanishads is entitled to be called the 'Vedānta', to many Sankara's interpretation has come to be synonymous with that term.

Though Sankara lived for only 32 years, he is supposed to have written no less than 312 treatises. But there is no doubt that most of them were subsumed under his name so that they might shine in his reflected glory. However, as in the case of the other great exponents who look to the *Prasthāna Traya* as their authority, Sankara's *magnus opus* was his Commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras*. It is from this we shall draw for our knowledge of his teaching on the various topics. The legend that he composed this work at the age of twelve need not be taken seriously. Those who created it to add to his prestige did not realise that it would disqualify his opinions from serious consideration. The avowed purpose of the *Vedānta Sūtras* is to sum up the Upanishads ; but such is their terseness, that it gives their professed interpreters the freedom to expound their own views and of illustrating their points as they like and still claim that they are interpreting the original. We shall see the subjects dealt with and Sankara's opinions on them.

Brahman

Since it is Brahman who forms the central topic of the first three Schools we shall be considering, it is good for us to know what the word stands for. Sankara derives it from 'brih' = to grow. In early Vedic times it did not refer to any particular god. It was

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 318. All refs. to writings of Sankara and Rāmānuja are to translations in the Sacred Books of the East (S.B.E.), unless otherwise stated.

rather a mysterious power which was induced by the sound of the music at sacrifice and began to exist when the Sōma juice was pressed and hymns were recited.⁺ By the time of the Upanishads, however, the term had come to mean all that we mean by 'Ultimate Reality'. A. Hillebrant in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics equates its significance with that which Christians attach to the term *Logos*.

Sankara's doctrine is that Brahman is all that there is ; and nothing else is. What he means by it we shall soon be seeing. This is the doctrine called *Kevala Advaita* or pure Non-dualism. Sankara's system is closely knit, compact, making a complete whole, every part having a logical place and none of it dispensable, each rendering the others necessary. The acceptance of any one part means the acceptance of the whole.

The doctrine may seem strange. Why then does Sankara take up such a stand ? He says, because the scriptures demand it ; and by 'scripture' he means certain verses of scripture. These verses are the *Abheda* (a + bheda = non-difference) or Identity verses. Some of these, in particular, were given the rather convenient title 'Mahā Vākyas' (great sayings). They are : *Aham Brahma asmi* (I am Brahma), *Tat tvam asi* (Thou art that) and *Ekam eva advitīyam* (Indeed it is all one). There are, of course, other sayings of this sort ; 'These worlds, these things and all this are the self', 'Brahman is all this' etc.

These are all in the Upanishads and cannot be ignored. But what does 'Non-different' actually mean ? We shall find that the chief battle between the three great exponents is waged round this issue ; viz : the meaning of 'Non-difference'. Sankara's position is that it means exactly what it says : there is no difference of any sort. The battle becomes possible, and actually necessary, even from a scriptural point of view. The Upanishads are discourses and discussions between teachers and students ; they could not have been carried on except on the assumption of a difference of opinion between the teacher and student. So parts of scripture

+ Brahman = Brahma stands for ultimate Reality and Sankara's treatment of the subject requires the neuter personal pronoun for reference. Brahma is to be distinguished from Brahmā, the personal god of Creation and a member of the Triad along with Vishnu and Siva.

recognise *bheda* (difference) also. It would, therefore, look as if scripture was lending support both to Non-difference as well as difference. Which side are we to take? Sankara's reply is that scripture is a treasure-house and cannot be opened haphazardly; it can only be opened with a key; and the key is in *Mahā Vākyas*.

It is almost like the prosecuting counsel in a case saying, 'There is much uncertainty in this case owing to conflicting evidence; the only way to arrive at the truth is to trust what the Government says'. According to Sankara the verses which teach *abheda* (Non-difference) and called the 'great sayings' are the verses to be trusted, to get at the true meaning of the Upanishads.

If Brahman alone is, it follows according to Sankara that Brahman cannot have any qualities. If it had, it would follow that qualities had an independent reality of their own; if it was said that Brahman was good or wise, the whole doctrine of non-duality would be scuttled. If Sankara had been asked whether he was not stretching his doctrine beyond reasonable limits, he would have said, "But that is exactly what scripture lays down. For does not scripture in defining Brahman say, *Neti, Neti?*" (na + iti = not thus, not thus).¹

As against this, it might be urged scripture often does attribute qualities to Brahman. The Taittiriya Upanishad attributes *Satyam jñānam, anandam* (truth, wisdom and infinity). Brahman is also, often called *sat, chit, ānanda* (Truthful or existent, intelligent and blissful); and Sankara himself attributes bliss, immortality and imperishability to Brahman.² Sankara's answer is that when we say, 'Brahman' these qualities are included; inherent in Brahman and are part of it, part of its nature. Brahman is not blissful or intelligent, or imperishable; it is Bliss, Intelligence and Imperishability. We shall later find the same point is made sometimes in Islam.

This insistence on the sole reality of Brahman tempts Max Müller, the great Orientalist of the 19th century, to equate Sankara's view with that of Spinoza. The similarity is inescapable for opposite reasons. To Spinoza also, Substance is all that there is; 'You

¹ *Bṛihad Aranyaka*, II, 3 : 6.

² *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras* (S.B.E.) Vol. I, pp. 168, 169.

can call it God if you like or you can call it Nature'. But to Spinoza all that there is, is God (or Nature) ; to Sankara, however, Brahman is all that there is; and there is nothing else. We shall see the great difference between the two shortly. It is enough to say here that if Spinoza is called a 'Pantheist' it is for the right reason ; if Sankara is called a Pantheist it is for the wrong reason.

Brahman and the Individual Self

If Brahman is all that there is, any person can well ask, 'What about me? Do I not exist?' It may seem a more natural question in the West ; for did not Descartes build his whole system on the absolute certainty of his own existence? But it can also be an equally natural question in the East. For says George Thibaut, the translator of the Commentaries of Sankara and Ramanuja on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, the wants of the human heart in the East are not so different from what they are elsewhere. 'Comparatively few even in India are those who think it sweet to be wrecked on the ocean of the Infinite'.¹ Sankara will admit the legitimacy of the question asked by the person who says, 'Do I not exist?' and say, 'Of course you do ; I am not dissolving you, I am only giving you greater status ; you do exist and you are the Universal Self ; for do not the scriptures say, 'I am Brahman' and "Thou art That"?'.

The equation of the Individual Self with the Universal Self sends Max Müller into ecstasies :

The fearless synthesis embodied in the simple words *Tat tvam asi* (thou art that) seems to me the boldest and truest synthesis in the whole history of Philosophy. Even Kant, who clearly recognised *Tat* or 'it', that is, *Ding an sich* (the thing in itself, behind the Universe of experience) never went far enough to recognise the identity of *Tat*, the objective *Ding an sich* and *tvam* and the subjective side. Among us such a synthesis of the subjective with the objective self would raise the strongest theological and philosophical protests, whereas the theologians of India discuss it with perfect equanimity.²

¹ Introduction to *Vedānta Sūtras* CXXVII.

² Max Müller, *Six Systems*, (Longman's & Green), p. 161.

It is not that such an identification had not been put forward or had not been implicit in many European Systems since Parmenides ; but in the West it requires an effort to put it forward ; and even when put forward, it would be a philosophical bubble, blown into the air. Here it is put forward as a religious truth with the utmost nonchalance. Sankara could say, 'It is nowhere the purpose of Scripture to make statements regarding the individual soul'.¹ And it does not seem to him that he is making a startling statement.

Nescience

Even if the individual Soul is identified with the Universal Soul and thus put out of the way, there are other things which may prove somewhat more obdurate, like the sun, the moon, the stars, this solid earth, its rivers and mountains. Sankara says, 'You do see them, no doubt ; but the fact that you do see them is due to *Avidyā* (a + vidya = false knowledge)'. Such a reply may be easily acceptable, if only one person sees these things ; but it so happens that everybody does. Sankara's reply is that this Nescience is not individualistic but cosmic. Everybody born into this world is caught up by it ; it is inescapable. Nescience superimposes itself on what is non-dual and produces the impression of duality or multiplicity. Knowing that his whole doctrine would look fantastic, in spite of his belief that it is scripturally imperative, he begins arguing his case in his Commentary of the *Vedānta Sūtras* by expounding his theory of *Adhyāsa* (adhy+ās) or superimposition. We can now understand how in spite of the seeming resemblance between Spinoza and Sankara, they are saying opposite things. To Spinoza everything we see is and is God (or Nature); to Sankara, everything we see—is not ; only Brahman is and that we do not see. To Spinoza Nature is everything and to Sankara it is nothing.

If Nescience is superimposed on everything and everybody, so that people have to persist in the error of mistaking what is not for what is, it may be asked what the nature of this great power is, that which causes such an all-embracing error cannot be founded on *sat* (truth) ; if it is founded on *asat* (falsehood), it just cannot exist. So Sankara takes refuge in the rather common device of

¹ *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras* Vol. I, p. 160.

denying both contraries and leaving the answer hanging in the air. Fr. de Somet in a learned article contributed to the 'Journal of Indian International Studies' makes much of the fact that the proportion of the use of the word *avidyā* in Sankara, to his use of the word *māyā* (illusion) is about 10 : 2 and even then, the word *māyā* may have such meanings as 'wonderful' and 'magical' and not 'false'. The point of his contention is that *avidyā* is something that belongs to us ; though everybody may suffer from it, still it is our fault. Unfortunately, for Fr. de Somet, Sankara seems to put the responsibility on Brahman itself, and that for a curious reason. He says 'Brahman being all-knowing and all-powerful and possessing the power of *Māyā* etc'; i.e., *Māyā* belongs to Brahman, not to us.¹ Besides this, what is the implication of the emphasis on 'Superimposition'. If there is superimposition, who superimposes? Can Nescience, which is neither *sat* nor *asat*, have the power of imposing itself on all the people all the time?

It might look as if Sankara is on better ground when he says that Nescience is inherent in all physical existence. Actually we shall find that Sankara has put himself into a worse, if not an impossible position. His argument is that perception is our normal organ of knowledge and perception operates through physical senses and therefore it is no wonder that the knowledge we get through them is *aparā vidyā* (lower or inferior knowledge). Knowledge through the senses is thus placed irretrievably under condemnation. We shall, however, see, that the remedy for *aparā vidyā* must also be obtained through what depends on the senses, viz: Scripture. But Sankara is not the man to be daunted by such petty considerations. Anyway, he cannot now retract his devaluation of the senses.

Sankara has denied so much, that it is no wonder that he brought on himself the charge of being a *pracchanna Bauddha* (crypto-Buddhist). But those who made the charge understood neither his aim nor his method. His aim was to assert the absolute and unchallengeable reality of Brahman and his method was to clear all debris out of the way. Buddhism had denied the reality of the world and Gaudapada, on behalf of Hinduism, had accepted the denial without reserve. If the world had to go, Sankara was

¹ *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras*, Vol. I, p. 362.

willing to let it go. What mattered to him was to assert the reality of Brahman ; and if by Brahman's association with the sun, moon and stars doubts might be cast upon Brahman's own reality, let them go ; the reality of Brahman will then stand utterly unquestioned. Dr. Macnicol tells the story of a Hindu holy man being stabbed during the days of the Indian Mutiny in the last century, whose last words to his assailant were, 'Thou also art He'.¹ He himself might go and the whole world might go ; but Brahman is ; and that was enough.

Meaning of the Unreality of the World

When Sankara held that the world was unreal, what did he mean ? Did he want to say that the world we see was a delusion ? This was the view held by the *Vijnāna Vāda* School of Buddhism and taken over from it by Gaudapada. He had said that objects of waking experience came to naught in dreams and vice versa² i.e., he had equated the waking-state with the dream-state. Sankara will have none of this nonsense and goes to great lengths refuting it. The ideas of a dream-state, he says, are negated by the waking-state ; but the reverse does not happen. The ideas of a dream-state are acts of remembrance, whereas the impressions of the waking-state are acts of consciousness. And if they are impressions, they must be the impressions of something outside of them. If they are impressions of impressions, there would be a *regressus and infinitum*.³

It is, therefore, far from Sankara's intention to suggest, as is generally supposed, that the world is a hallucination. The world has a certain kind of reality ; only it is phenomenal reality, i.e., reality as far as the senses go ; it is a reality that belongs to the sphere of *Aparā Vidyā* (lower knowledge). This subtle, but important, distinction was not grasped by some worthy Brahmins, who when he went on a visit to Kashmir are said to have refused to feed him and his disciples, or otherwise take any notice of them, on the ground that, according to him, food and shelter were unreal.

¹ N. Macnicol, *Psalms of the Maratha Saints*, (Association Press), Calcutta, p. 31.

² S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 458.

³ *Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras* Vol. I, pp. 424-431.

To Sankara, *Aparā Vidyā* was not baseless, but was a modification of *Parā Vidyā*; the effect of the modification must be taken into account for practical purposes, though it must not be mistaken for what is ultimately real.

The Two Brahman

Sankara's theory of superimposition and the resulting Nescience have an effect not merely upon human beings and the world, it has an effect upon Brahman itself. Sankara held that Brahman is *nirguna* (without qualities); but when it was pointed out that the scriptures do very often attribute qualities to Brahman, he could say that it was not that Brahman possessed those qualities as attributes, but that Brahman was their embodiment and that they were inherent in its very nature. While such an explanation would accord with his doctrine of a *Nirguna* Brahman and in fact was essential to its maintenance, it was obvious that it did not accord with the general habit and outlook of Scripture. It was obvious that this attitude of Sankara could only be taken up in spite of Scripture and not because of it.

Scripture does often attribute qualities to Brahman. Why? Sankara was now driven to a desperate expedient. 'If you want to press the question', says he, 'it may be said that there are two Brahman: The Brahman of *Parā Vidyā* and the Brahman of *Aparā Vidyā*; the former is *Nirguna* (without qualities) and the latter is *Saguna* (possessed of qualities). It is to this *Saguna* Brahman that Scripture often attributes qualities; this is the *Īsvara* of religion. He is different from individual selves; He creates the world at the beginning of a *yuga* (aeon) and dissolves it at its end. It is this Brahman people worship and should worship till they attain enlightenment'. With this stipulation Sankara is willing to yield ample scope for what is ordinarily called religion with its temples, priests, devotional practices, ritualistic ceremonies and festivals. The *Nirguna* Brahman, however, is above all this.

Release

Though popular opinion is usually inclined to relegate salvation to the period after death, all major religions are agreed that it is something that can and should be attained to in this life. As to what constitutes salvation there will, of course, be differences of

opinion among the various religions concerned. According to Thera Vāda Buddhism, this state of salvation is called *Nibbāna*; and what it means is *nirodha* (cessation of *tanhā* (craving) and consequently of *dukkha* (sorrow). In Hinduism the word for salvation is *moksha* (*much* = release). The general assumption of people in all Hinduism is that it is release from the cycle of births and deaths. Then what? Here it is inevitable that the disagreement between Sankara's School and the others should be fundamental. To Sankara the cycle of births and deaths is itself caused by Ignorance; it is Ignorance that makes the individual self think that it is different from Brahman. So salvation consists in the individual self-realising its identity with Brahman. In this life, the soul of the individual though it might have realised this identity, is still embodied. At death it becomes disembodied and what was a mere realisation becomes an action. The classical text bearing on the point says, 'Whoever knows the supreme Brahman becomes even Brahman'.¹ This means, says Sankara, that the soul, already the same as Brahman, becomes actually one with it and merges into it. The other Schools, however, strongly challenge the case which he builds on this text.

An Assessment

The great argument advanced in favour of Sankara's achievement is that he has succeeded in evolving a unified system out of a source that speaks with a divided voice. But the fact of unification is in itself not necessarily a laudable achievement; if it were, every system of the other great expositors is also entitled to the same honour. Everything depends on how the unification is brought about. Sankara, as we have found, builds his whole system on the 'Identity' verses and upon a literal interpretation of them, manhandling everything anywhere to the contrary. Whether this procedure is correct is very much open to challenge; anyway, it was seriously challenged by his adversaries.

An obvious point of vantage from which Sankara's whole system can be attacked, and of which Ramānūja was subsequently to make full use, is his reliance on Scripture, after having relegated Scripture itself to the world of *Aparā Vidyā* or lower knowledge.

¹ *Sa yo ha vai tatparam Brahma ved Brahmaiva bhavati*, Mundaka III, 2 : 9.

It is by relying on Scripture that he declared the world of multiplicity to be unreal ; scripture is always his final argument. His stand has been, ' Scripture says that Brahman alone is, there can, therefore, be no further argument on the point ; *causa finita est* '. But if according to scripture Brahma alone is and nothing else is, then what about the scripture itself which says it ? It is reasonable to ask, ' How can you on the basis of what is itself unreal, declare everything else to be unreal ? '

Swami Vireswaranda, in his own commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras, answers the question on behalf of Sankara, with two quotations, one from Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886), the great Hindu saint, and the other from the Bhagavad Gītā.¹ The Paramahansa says, ' When we run a thorn into our hand, we remove it with another thorn and throw away both ' ; and the Gītā (II-46) says, ' To the sage who has known the Self all the Vedas are of as much use as a reservoir when there is flood everywhere '. Both the analogies break down when used as arguments. In the first case, the thorn used as the lancet is only an instrument ; the knowing agent is the man ; one thorn does not give a knowledge of the other, and the place where it has lodged. With Sankara, however, it is scripture (here corresponding to the thorn used as lancet) which gives us the knowledge that the world is unreal. And as for the analogy cited from the Gītā, a somewhat similar criticism might be urged. No doubt, the reservoir is useful only till the flood comes and then becomes useless ; but the reservoir does not produce the flood. (Whereas it is Scripture that produces a knowledge of the Brahman-Ātman identity). The analogies, it is clear, do not help in eliminating the contradiction involved in Sankara's treatment of Scripture.

There is also an ungracious inconsistency in it. The Vedānta Sūtras declare the Vedas to be eternal. Sankara exhorts us to pay great attention to the point ;² (and Swami Vireswaranda nods strong approval). Therefore, when it suits him it will not do to say, ' Oh, you must not take all that I said earlier too seriously. '

¹ *Brahma Sūtras*, Advaita Ashram, pp. 20 & 21.

² Sankara's *Commentary* I : p. 211.

Personal

We have seen the single-mindedness with which in a brief life of incessant activity Sankara dedicated himself to propagating the doctrine that Brahman alone is and nothing else, and thus relegated what is generally termed 'religion' to a lower, unreal world. However, what startles us about his personal life is that he is also one of the great religious poets of India, who has sung in moving terms the praises of various gods : of Siva, his consort Durga, his son Skanda and of Krishna and Rama, the avatars of Vishnu.

In the days before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 there used to be repeated attempts at assassinating the Czar and his close relatives, in spite of the unceasing effort of the authorities to change the programmes of travel and public appearances of the imperial family almost from day to day. It was known that these attempts were made by a body of people known as the 'Anarchists'; what, however, puzzled everyone was how they came to know the changes in the movements of everyone concerned. When the Revolution took place, the puzzle is said to have been solved. The chief of the Russian Police was found to have been also the Chairman of the Society of Anarchists. In which capacity was he his real self?

In the case of Sankara, however, we need not ask the question. The School of *Advaita* recognises two levels of existence and, therefore, one may move from the one to the other without feeling that one was doing anything unusual. Gaudapada has said that only Dualists quarrel among themselves; non-Dualists do not. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda (1862-1902) in the last century and the Ramana Maha Rishi in this century were equally at home at both levels. There seems, therefore no doubt that the expositor of *Advaita* was the true self of Sankara.

Transcendence in Sankara

To find the element of Transcendence in the teaching of Sankara is more than easy, because there is nothing else to find. But the teaching involves certain serious problems. Transcendence by definition requires that there should be something to be transcended; Sankara leaves nothing which Brahman can transcend. Earlier we have noted an attempt to equate his position with that

of Spinoza, who was an Immanentist, pure and simple. Sankara himself would have been horrified at the equation ; but it might be said that he had invited it. Transcendence which has nothing it can transcend and an Immanence which has nothing to transcend it cannot help looking alike.

The word 'Theopantism' has been used in certain quarters for such a position. It, however, does not seem to have crept into Dictionaries, not even Philosophical dictionaries ; but at least it helps to distinguish the position from ordinary pantheism. Dr. J. S. Whale says that Pantheism may either resolve the whole universe into God or equate God with the Universe.¹ But the teaching of Sankara does neither ; to Sankara only Brahman is and nothing else is.

The teaching of Sankara may look similar to Immanentism, but as we have seen, it is the very opposite of it. Sankara has carried Transcendence to an extreme to which it should not have been carried ; because at that extreme it seems to lose all meaning. Here arises the second problem ; and that is, why then he should have done it ? What was he after ? Was he groping towards a God, who was not merely beyond the mythological associations of the Hindu gods but beyond the highest conception to which the human mind can ever attain ?

That in doing what he does, Sankara is doing what every profound Christian thinker himself should do, and that his outlook on the subject is not basically different from what the Christian outlook should be, is the opinion of certain competent Christian scholars. Brahmabandhav (1861-1907), a Roman Catholic Sanskrit Scholar, Fr. R. V. De Smet, S.J. of De Nobili College, Poona, and Dr. Karl Keller, formerly a Missionary in India and now of the University of Lausanne, take the view that it is Sankara's position that does justice to the Christian concept of God. Brahmabandhav says that the Christian concept of God is that of the Trinity and Sankara's position accords with it. Fr. De Smet says that the early documents of the Church say that God is *simplex* ; and that is what Sankara also says. Dr. Keller says that Sankara's Brahman is the 'wholly other'.²

¹ J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge University Press), p. 32.

² *International Review of Missions*, Vol. XLI (1953), p.385.

It is difficult to believe that a thinker with such supreme gifts as Sankara spent his life with such unwavering zeal in setting up a Reality almost devoid of all meaning. It may be that he was trying to look beyond the reach of the human mind and that the Reality he was after had a meaning for him and was worth preaching. But we must reckon with the fact that there were great Hindu thinkers who were violently opposed to his view on the subject. As far as the Christian standpoint is concerned, we find that the Bible is all the time dwelling on a God dealing with man. It is outside the scope of religion to go beyond this into the self-existence of God ; Philosophy thinks that it is within its scope ; but what one philosopher gives out as his conclusion another contradicts ; and Immanuel Kant has warned us that the whole attempt is deluded.

In this book we are dealing with Religion. George Thibaut, who translated Sankara's Commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras and had the advantage of long residence both in Allahabad and Benares, says that Sankara's commentary is the one 'generally accepted by Brahminic students of Philosophy' ; but he adds the devastating comment that 'it has never had any wide-reaching influence on the masses of India'.¹

VISISHTA ADVAITA SCHOOL

We may note the noun Advaita is common to both this School and the previous one we considered. It is the adjective qualifying it that makes the difference. The adjective is a form of the word *Viśeṣha* (qualification). *Viśiṣṭa Advaita*, therefore, is also a School of Non-Dualism ; but it is a Non-Dualism that believes in attributes to what is Non-Dual. Like the earlier School this also expresses a tradition of long-standing ; but it is usually associated with Rāmānuja, its chief spokesman who lived in comparatively later times (1017-1127 A.D.). Rāmānuja lived at a time when Buddhism had practically disappeared from India. But the tradition he represented had crystallised when that religion was a living force in the country ; it was a tradition which had reacted violently against Buddhism. Rāmānuja's service to it was threefold. In

¹ *Sankara's Commentary*, Introduction (S.B.E.), CXXVII.

the first place, he enunciated its tenets for it, clearly showing its agreements and disagreements with the rival school. Secondly, he proved that philosophically, his tradition had a better case than the other. But above all, he put his own tradition back on the basis of Scripture, from which Sankara had knocked it off. Sankara had tried to show that a proper interpretation of Scripture supported his own position. Rāmānuja proved that the only interpretation that did justice to Scripture showed that it was indubitably on his side.

Sankara was an exegete and so was Rāmānuja. It might perhaps be said that whereas Sankara was a disinterested exegete, Rāmānuja was really an apologist for a certain point of view. But it cannot be denied that Sankara himself was an apologist for a certain point of view. The difference was that Sankara was an apologist for a tradition that, in its anxiety to fight Buddhism on equal terms, could merely tolerate the old religion, only as a concession to the unenlightened, whereas Rāmānuja was an ardent spokesman for the tradition that wanted to defend it to the utmost.

Each of the protagonists was placed in circumstances that fitted him to carry out the role he had undertaken. Sankara not merely belonged to a tradition that was isolated from the religion of the land but was himself an isolated figure, a celibate, a peripatetic teacher who spent his brief life wandering from place to place. Rāmānuja, on the other hand, was President of the largest Vaishnavite temple in India, throughout the greater part of an unusually long life.¹ Archbishop William Temple has said that Archbishops have seldom been great theologians; he himself was an exception and so was Rāmānuja a thousand years earlier. In his expositions Rāmānuja was speaking as an ecclesiastic and never tries to hide it. His consistent attempt throughout his books is to prove that the highest Brahman is the God Vishnu.

Sankara was a person of supreme genius; but as a controversialist one cannot help feeling that Rāmānuja manages to score over

¹ Sri Rangam is considered the largest place of worship in the world (2880 ft. × 2475 ft.); but it includes seven courtyards, quite a number of them being lined with shops and houses.

As President, Rāmānuja is said to have founded 700 *maths* (monasteries) and 89 hereditary Abbotships (marriage being allowed). He is also said to have collected all hymns of the Alvars (Tamil Vaishnavite poets).

him every time, and this, not because he is a greater master of the art of controversy, but because the sources are really on Rāmānuja's side. He draws usually from the Upanishads and the rest of the *Prasthāna Traya*; occasionally he resorts to the *Purānas* (mythological literature) also; but the interpretations are always more natural and entirely guaranteed by the texts. Since Sankara's writings already held the field, Rāmānuja had to knock down his system point by point, and then set up his own, and do this largely on the basis of the same authorities that Sankara had used. With what unremitting thoroughness and superb skill he performs his task as we shall see as we go along. Such has been the sense entertained of his achievement that his arguments have always been regarded as the chief philosophical basis of Hindu Theism.

Brahman

This, as we said, is the central topic of each system. We have seen Sankara's views on it. Says Rāmānuja, Brahman is not and cannot be undifferentiated Reality. He proceeds to give his reasons: Differentiation is an intrinsic necessity. It is necessary, because what is undifferentiated cannot be conceived. Perception demands differentiation; otherwise, a man searching for a cow may well be satisfied with a buffalo. Cognition demands it, because if all acts of cognition had one and the same object only, everything would be apprehended in one act of cognition. Speech demands it, because a plurality of words is based on a plurality of meanings. Inference demands it; because what is devoid of difference cannot be established by instruments of knowledge.¹

Sankara had denied qualities to Brahman; but says Rāmānuja, Scripture ascribes various auspicious qualities to him, like *Satyam-jñānam, anandam*, purity, bliss, immortality, consciousness, strength and freedom from sin. Scripture also refers to Brahman's creation of the universe, which would mean that he is not devoid of qualities; and not only Scripture, but you yourself, he says, have on many occasions ascribed qualities to him. However, apart from anything else, do you realise that when you attribute non-duality to Brahman you are attributing what is in itself a quality?

² Sri Bhāshya, (Commentary on Vedānta Sūtras) (S.B.E.), pp. 40-44.

In denying qualities to Brahman, Sankara had taken his stand particularly on the phrase 'Neti, Neti', used in one of the Upanishads in speaking about Brahman.¹ Upon this argument Rāmānuja pounces with real ferocity and wipes it off the floor. Scripture, he says, has earlier spoken of the many qualities of Brahman; and 'None', says he, 'but a person not in his right mind would first teach that all things mentioned in the earlier part of the section are distinctive attributes of Brahman and thereafter directly negative his own teaching'.² What then is it that is denied? It is the finitude of Brahman; that is, having attributed qualities, the author wishes to give the warning that it should not be concluded that this is all that there is to Brahman. It is the 'this-muchness' of Brahman that is denied.

It may be remembered that what Sankara did not allow as adjectives he allowed as abstract nouns. Brahman was not blissful or conscious or pure etc.; it was Bliss, Consciousness or Purity. Rāmānuja does away with this artificial distinction. Qualities, whether as adjectives or as nouns require something to hang on to. A light implies that something is shining; consciousness requires that somebody should be conscious. If these qualities are inherent in Brahman it is saying that Brahman has these qualities.

Brahman, the Individual and the World

In attacking Sankara's position on this subject and insisting on the distinction between Brahman and everybody and everything else he takes three different lines:

- (1) Scripture asserts that Brahman is the agent of the creation and dissolution of the world. In fourteen pages in the Sṛī Bhāshya he piles quotation on quotation to prove his point.³ The following two are examples. 'In the beginning was the Soul . . . verily he had no delight and he desired a second and created beings'; 'May I be many, may I grow forth'; and from the Gītā he quotes the verse (VII-6) 'I am the origin and the dissolution of the world'.

¹ Brihad Up. II—3 : 6.

² Sṛī Bhāshya p. 615 & Vedārtha Samgraha, p. 38.

³ Sṛī Bhāshya, pp. 652-626.

- (2) Since both the World and the Individual soul are subject to vicissitudes, pain, imperfection and evil, there must be a necessary distinction between the World and the Individual, on the one hand, and Brahman on the other.¹
- (3) In regard to the individual soul in particular, Rāmānuja definitely takes up the position that Descartes was to take up 500 years later in Europe ; and that is, that the self of the individual is inviolable. The consciousness of the individual is not universal consciousness. The 'I' of the individual is in itself and by itself a knowing agent. 'In the absence of egoity, Inwardness cannot be established for consciousness'.² The 'I', however, can both be a subject and an object or both ; when it is both, the flow of consciousness is the object and what passes judgment on it is the subject. It is a witness. (*sākshin* ; sa + *akshin* = one who sees with the eye).

Nescience

When Dean Swift's famous book, 'Gulliver's Travels', was praised in front of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the latter said that there was nothing much to the book ; once the author had thought of 'the little men' and 'the big men', the rest was easy. Similarly, it may be said of Sankara's system that once his theory of Nescience was accepted, everything he said would seem reasonable and fall into place. Rāmānuja, therefore, realised that if he was to confute Sankara's system as a whole, he had to raze the theory of Nescience to the ground ; and to this he bends all his energies :

- (a) In the first place, he asks, 'From where do you get this strange theory of cosmic Nescience?' It cannot be from Scripture ; the term 'darkness' is used in Scripture ; but it is used of the collective ignorance characteristic of unintelligent matter. The word '*māyā*' is also used in Scripture, but in the sense of 'wonderful' in the accounts of the Creation.
- (b) And if the idea of cosmic Nescience is correct, he asks, do you realise that the Scriptures themselves on which you

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 563.

² *Ibid.*, 67.

rely for all your arguments would become useless, as they themselves would form part of the world of Nescience?

- (c) From wherever you yourself might have got your knowledge of the matter, what is the source from which this Nescience itself comes forth? It cannot be from individual souls, for you have said that only Brahman exists. Would you, then suggest that Ignorance comes forth from Brahman, the self-luminous source of all knowledge? Self-contradiction cannot go further.
- (d) If you maintain that the defect in us partly obscures Brahman and *Avidyā* proceeds from the hidden Brahman, you have split the homogeneity of Brahman.
- (e) And if every act of cognition partakes of the character of Nescience, do you realise that this would apply to the cognition that proposes to put an end to Nescience? So enlightenment itself will have to be produced by Ignorance; Does not your talk get tied up in knots?
- (f) The fact of the matter is that all knowledge is real. You say that we sometimes mistake a shell for silver. We certainly do; but there is no false knowledge involved. There is a similarity between a shell and silver. If the silver element in a shell predominates, it is that we see; what we see is real enough. There is no false knowledge.¹

We have to admit that when Rāmānuja has finished with it there is very little of the theory of Nescience left standing.

Two Brahman or One ?

The scripture themselves had nowhere suggested that there were two kinds of Brahman, a Higher and a Lower One. But since they had often attributed qualities to Brahman and Sankara held that Brahman had no qualities, he had to introduce his theory of the two Brahman.

¹ The 'Sri Bhāshya' is a Commentary on the texts of the Vedānta Sūtras. The arguments above are summarised from various sections pp. 23 sq : 102-107, 145-147 etc.

Rāmānuja says that it is ridiculous to speak about two Brahman ; the Scriptures do not. Why then, it may be asked, do Scriptures sometimes speak about him as if he were possessed of qualities and sometimes, as if he were not? Rāmānuja says, 'Ordinary people, when putting language to use imagine that the denotation of terms is exhausted by their reference to various empirical objects. But this is just part of the range of denotation . . . the principal part of the objective meaning of the term, namely, the highest Self, transcends ordinary modes of cognition like perception.'¹ In other words, Brahman is the ultimate subject of all propositions. Why then do people talk about men, the world and the things that are therein? And why do Scriptures talk about them? It is not because there are two kinds of Reality ; Reality is one and is *advaita* ; but it is not *kevala* (pure) *advaita*, but *visishta advaita* (Reality with distinctions).

So Brahman is One and not Two ; but his oneness is not undifferentiated but differentiated.

Rāmānuja's Solution

We have seen how carefully he has cleared the ground for his own system. He has done it in such a manner that Sankara's system could not keep standing, but his could. What do we mean? Sankara had built his case on the *abheda* (non-differentiating) verses. The Upanishads, however, contain both *abheda* and *bheda* (differentiating) verses. Any other opponent might have been expected to take his stand on the *bheda* verses and belittle the *abheda* verses. Rāmānuja does not want to do this, because he believes that both types of verses are integral to the Upanishads and that no explanation which ignores or belittles either type is legitimate.

Rāmānuja's own explanation of the matter involved is clear and often repeated in his own writings. The following passage from the *Vedārtha Samgraha* puts it succinctly :

This is the fundamental relationship between the Supreme and the Universe of individual souls and physical entities. It is the relationship of soul and body, the inseparable relation-

¹ *Vedārtha Samgraha*, p. 19.

ship of supporter and supported, that of controller and controlled, that of the principal entity and subsidiary entity. That which takes possession of another entity, as the latter's support and controller, is called the latter's soul. That which in its entirety depends upon, is controlled and subserves to another and is, therefore, its inseparable mode, is called the body of the latter. . . . Such being the relationship the supreme Self, having all as its body, is denoted by all terms.¹

He dwells on the subject frequently. In the Sri Bhāshya he says 'Brahman, thus being the soul with regard to the whole Universe of matter and souls, the Universe inclusive of intelligent souls is the body of Brahman'.²

The stress on Unity was right, but the stress on distinctions is also right and necessary. Sankara had used the Unity verses as the criterion for interpreting all Scripture; when asked why, he had said it was because they were the criterion. He had, therefore, begged the very question he had to answer. Rāmānuja says this would not do; in interpreting Scripture all Scripture has to be taken into account and not one type of verses only. When that is done, it will be seen that the relationship between Brahman, the souls and the world is not one of undifferentiated unity, but of a unity that runs through diversity. It is not a unity entirely of substance but of substance and its modes and attributes. This is the explanation of the seeming contrariety between the *abheda* verses and *bheda* verses. The two types of verses do not militate against each other, they supplement each other.

In solving his problem, Rāmānuja has used such phrases as the 'Soul of the world' and 'Substance and attributes'. In Western Philosophy Plotinus and Spinoza used similar language; but the difference between them and Rāmānuja is great. With Plotinus 'the Soul of the world' is the third highest in a descending order of the hierarchy of realities, the Absolute being the highest. Spinoza's 'Substance' is a piece of philosophical fiction used to give an abstract unity to everything and everybody, but lacking existence. Rāmānuja's Self, on the other hand, is the *Purushot-*

¹ *Vedārtha Samgraha*, p. 76.

² *Sri Bhāshya*, p. 227.

tama (the most excellent person) who is not used as an artifice for unification but is the real unifying principle of all that is.¹

Release

Now that he has given his explanation to the problem of the relationship of Brahman to everything and everybody else, he is ready to deal with one outstanding issue that remains to be settled. Sankara had held that the Universal Self and the Individual Self are one ; difference between them is imagined through Ignorance ; oneness is realised in this life through knowledge, but actualised at death, when the individual soul freed from its body merges with the Universal Self.

With Sankara's view on the subject Rāmānuja proceeds to deal summarily and with considerable sarcasm. He says to Sankara :

- (1) Bondage is something real and ought certainly to be terminated ; but it cannot be terminated by the kind of knowledge you are talking about.
- (2) For while, on the one hand, you say Ignorance should be terminated, on the other hand you say everything (except Brahman) is unreal. So not merely the Ignorance that is terminated, but both the knowledge that terminates it and the act of termination itself are unreal.
- (3) Therefore, behind every particular terminating knowledge or cognition there must be another cognition that causes it ; and so on in infinite regress.
- (4) If the regress ends in Brahman, it could not in the first instance have originated from Brahman.
- (5) If on the other hand, it ends in the individual self (superimposed on Brahman), it means the individual self is destroying itself. It is like saying Devadutta has cut everything down on the surface of the earth ; which would mean Devadutta has cut himself also down.² (The illustration reminds one of the undergraduate who was boasting that in his University laboratory they had dis-

¹ See B. Kumarappa ' *Hindu Conception of the Deity* ', (Luzac), p. 59.

² All arguments condensed from *Sri Bhāshya*.

covered the universal solvent and the father asking where they meant to keep it). The individual self cannot be the origin of the very knowledge that destroys itself.

Rāmānuja holds that the released soul does not lose its individuality, but remains distinct ; it becomes like Brahman in that it is characterised by uncontracted intelligence and in that it is free from all evil;¹ but it still remains a mode of Brahman and not independent of him. This is the relationship which explains such a text as, 'He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman' etc.

Personal

We have seen that both Sankara and Rāmānuja were not merely exegetes, but apologists, each for the tradition to which he belonged. But Sankara was an apologist for a tradition, which though willing to take up arms for the defence of the old religion of the country was not, however, in living contact with it. So the message of Sankara was not one that could be proclaimed. Rāmānuja belonged to a tradition that was in living contact with that religion ; and therefore, his message was one that could be proclaimed and, in fact, called for proclamation or preaching.

So Rāmānuja was essentially a preacher. Though quite often in his Commentary on the *Vedānta Sutrās* he identified the highest Brahman with Vishnu, Vāsudeva and Hari, his style was somewhat cramped, because he had to comment on the texts before him and keep refuting his opponent largely on the basis of the Upanishads. In his other books, however, he is free to let himself go ; and is no longer bound to look upon the Upanishads as his primary source, but could draw from the *Purānas* and the *Āgamas*, which favoured his own branch of religion, which has come to be known as Srī Vaishnavism (that which honours Srī or Lakshmi along with Vishnu).

Rāmānuja was the preacher of a personal God and a God of Grace. One of the doctrines in which this fact about God is enunciated is the doctrine that God comes down to earth, whenever things go seriously wrong here and righteousness needs to be re-established ; this is called the doctrine of *avatārs* (descents).

¹ *Hindu Conception of the Deity*, p. 323.

It is a cherished belief among all Vaishnavite sects and had been set forth in the Bhāgavad Gītā more than a thousand years before Rāmānuja. But the Gītā, though treasured by all those who believe in a personal God in Hinduism, is highly eclectic and is often on all sides of all questions. So the doctrine had not yet been put on a sound philosophical basis and with rigid logical consistency. Rāmānuja was well qualified for the task and makes use of his knowledge, ability and authority for doing it. The doctrine consisted of a general principle ; but it was two *avatārs* in particular which were emphasised and became central in worship viz., those of Rama and Krishnā. Both receive Rāmānuja's support. 'The supreme Lord voluntarily descended to the mundane world and became the son of Dasarata (as Rama) The same Lord took birth in Vāsudeva's household (as Krishna) voluntarily for removing the burden on earth'.¹ Though Vaishnavism was willing to let the Deity come down to earth, it was unwilling to compromise His majesty any further. So an *avatār* does not become what in Christian terminology is known as 'Incarnation'. Therefore, it was held that though he came down to earth, the body of the Supreme Lord is not a structure composed of physical elements.²

Another method by which Hindu Theism in general gave concreteness to the doctrine of Grace was by making the consort of the Deity the personification and organ of Grace. Rāmānuja not merely identifies himself with this characteristic of the doctrine, but makes it the hall-mark of his distinctive position. He begins his Commentary on the Vēdānta Sūtras with an address to 'the Highest Brahman, the abode of Lakshmi' (the consort of Vishnu). It is because of this great emphasis placed on her by his sect of this point that it has come to be called 'Sri Vaishnavism'.

In the *Saranāgati Gadya*, which is attributed to Rāmānuja, but may not be from his pen, the doctrine of Grace is developed almost to the point of being of the same quality as Martin Luther's enunciation of the Christian doctrine of the *sola fide and sola gratia* (only by faith, only by grace), except for a fault which is called *Dosha Bhogyā* : i.e., it would make God enjoy human sin for the

¹ *Vedārtha Samgraha*, p. 120.

² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

opportunity of forgiving it.¹ However, many Vaishnavites themselves do not approve of the extent to which *Saranāgati Gadaya* goes.

Transcendence in Rāmānuja

Sankara was so preoccupied with the transcendence of Brahman that he lost all concern with religion (in public anyway). No doubt, he allowed a lower Brahman for religion, but that Brahman was disqualified from the outset from serving any purpose, as he did not exist. Rāmānuja, too, was concerned with the transcendence of Brahman ; but he was concerned with religion also. To him there is no antithesis or even difference between Brahman as he is and the Brahman of religion; the one is the other. If Brahman is transcendent, as he certainly is, he is not so transcendent as to take himself outside the reach of religion. He, therefore, keeps a balance between Transcendence and Immanence. And his great achievement has been to give a sound philosophical basis for the visible religion of the country which otherwise might have been regarded as mere popular superstition.

Nevertheless, it would seem that the balance maintained by Rāmānuja is a little too nice and delicate. The God of Rāmānuja is certainly distinguished from individual souls and the world ; He is called 'Supreme Lord' and 'Controller'. But He is not 'high and lifted up'. His supremacy is not overwhelming. The reason is not far to seek ; for Rāmānuja's Brahman is not merely the efficient cause of the Universe, but also its material cause.² The Universe is Brahman in a modified form and He continues to be its Soul.

In passing any judgment on Rāmānuja's Theism we must, however, take into account the circumstances and the context in which he worked and the material he had to use in setting it up. He was not aware of the criteria we would use for judging Theism. He was only aware of the vast popular religion which had come down through the ages, and of a most influential School of interpretation that took the Highest Reality out of it all and placed it practically out of all relationship or contact with it. His claim

¹ *Vedārtha Samgraha*, p. 120.

² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

to greatness among the greatest exponents of Hinduism rests on the fact that he was able to prove that the Highest Reality could be brought back into the midst of popular religion on the basis of the very authorities who had been quoted to take it out of it.

But in considering Transcendence and Immanence in regard to any Religion born in India, we have to consider not merely the relationship of the Deity to individual souls and the world, but also to certain impersonal laws, forces or principles which somehow have always been believed to be at work in the Universe. One of them is the Moral Law of Cause and Effect, called the *Karmic Law* (*kri*=do) ; and the other is the Time Process, which is assumed to be cyclical. If these work independently of the Deity, the Deity cannot of course be said to be transcendent. In Thera Vāda Buddhism, which does not recognise a Supreme Deity, we found that the first Law worked automatically and was actually what was ultimately transcendent in that system.

In Rāmānuja's system the Karmic Law certainly keeps working, but can hardly claim any dominance. The Deity can intervene anytime and for opposite reasons, both legitimate. If unrighteousness seems to get out of control, the Deity does not wait to let the wrong-doers await their punishment in some future birth, but comes down to set things right and punish the wrong-doers then and there. Contrarywise, if a wrong-doer throws himself on the mercy of the Deity, he abrogates the Law in his case.

The idea that the Time Process goes on in endless cycles has had a strong hold on the Indian mind. Rāmānuja also held the belief: 'As the creator formerly made the sun and moon and sky and earth etc. whatever various signs of the season are seen in succession, the same appear again and again'.¹ That the idea that the Time Process is cyclical appears in later Greek and Roman thought is well known ; that it found its way into it from India can scarcely be doubted.² What is the relationship between this endless process and the Deity? What is Rāmānuja's opinion on the subject? 'They (the endless repetitions) are matters of sport to him as it

¹ Sri Bhāshya, p. 405.

² For contacts between East and West after Alexander's invasion, see Radhakrishnan's 'Eastern Religions and Western Thought', (O.U.P.), p. 153 sq.

were', he says.¹ As to why the Lord should delight in such a sport is another matter. That Time worked in cycles was taken for granted ; an explanation has to be found and it seemed to him that this was the only one available to guard the transcendence of the Deity.

THE DVAITA SCHOOL

Difference with Other Schools and Possible Cause

We saw that the term *Advaita* was the negative of *Dvaita* ; *Dvaita*, means Dualism and *Advaita* the opposite. Both the previous Schools we examined were forms of *Advaita* ; Sankara's was *Kevala* and Rāmānuja's *Visishta*. That is, the former was pure: non-dualism (or pure Monism) and the latter was qualified non-Dualism (or qualified Monism). The latter, therefore, is based on a modification of the former. The School we are considering in this Section does not rest on a modification but on a defiant contradiction of it.

The first two Schools move in the same universe of discourse ; they argue from the same premise ; the third argues from the opposite premise. Those who look upon Sankara as the exponent of Hinduism *Par excellence* are willing to recognise Rāmānuja also as an exponent of it, though definitely a second best ; but the voice of Madhva (1199-1278 A.D.) who is associated with the third School seems to them the voice of a stranger. What he says appears to them alien and un-Hindu.

It would look as if those who take up such an attitude have reason on their side. Sankara's School had enjoyed such prestige in Hinduism for such a long time, that anybody actually attempting to contradict him would strike them as doing so because of inspiration from outside Hinduism. The suspicions of such people in the case of Madhva became confirmed when it was discovered that, apart from Madhva's general outlook having greater affinity to Christianity than to the recognised Schools of Hinduism, there also seemed to be certain definite points of coincidence with Christianity.

The points of coincidence are rather startling. In the first place, there are quite a few similarities between the recorded lives of Jesus

¹ Sri Bhāshya, p. 405.

and Madhva: the occurrences at the baptism of Jesus and the initiation of Madhva have much in common ; Jesus fasted and prayed before His ministry and so did Madhva ; Jesus stilled a storm, so did Madhva ; both walked on the sea and both multiplied loaves to feed others. In the second place, there are certain teachings of Madhva, which are not merely to be found in Christianity but are to be found nowhere else. Madhva teaches that salvation can be obtained only through Vāyu, the Son of Vishnu ; and this of course is very similar to the teaching of Christianity in regard to Jesus Christ. Also Madhva's system has a doctrine of Predestination ; and it is well known that John Calvin (1509-1564), the great Protestant Reformer, taught a similar doctrine in Christianity. Thirdly, that Madhva lived in South Canara makes the possibility of such influence likely ; because South Canara borders on Malabar, where Christianity had existed for some centuries.

Should *Dvaita* be looked upon as a new-fangled doctrine in Hinduism ? Actually the shoe is on the other foot. *Dvaita* is fundamental to any religion that recognises any kind of Deity ; that is, the devotee must recognise his own distinction from the Deity, if his devotion is to be anything more than a farce. Therefore, Dualism is necessarily earlier than non-Dualism can possibly be ; a person has to recognise that there is a Deity, before he comes to the conclusion that he and the Deity are one. Since *Dvaita* is fundamental to religion, it is not something that religion ever outgrows. The non-Dualist himself is a dualist when he is before a shrine or in a temple ; he sheds his Dualism only when he starts speculating and arguing. It is, therefore, idle to say that Dualism is something new and that it crept unheralded into Hinduism in the 13th century A.D.

Nor can it be held that it is merely latent in all religion and therefore was so in Hinduism also, but that as a definite philosophical doctrine it was never held before Madhva. Radhakrishnan himself says that it is reasonable to suppose that the tradition of Dualism existed prior even to Madhva.¹ What is conclusive however, is that Gaudapada, who lived two generations before Sankara, that is well 1,000 years before Madhva, knew of the vogue of Dualism ; for he tries to claim an advantage for *Advaita* over against *Dvaita*,

¹ *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II-788.

when he says that only Dvaitins quarrel among themselves, whereas Advaitins do not. It is therefore, clear that *Dvaita* was a recognised tradition even before Sankara. The drawback it had suffered was that till Madhva came it never had any teacher of the same calibre as Sankara or Rāmānuja to expound its position.

It must also be noted that Madhva, when he appears on the scene, does not seem to have the slightest awareness that he is a rebel. He was no doubt a rebel against Sankara's system ; but his point was that Sankara had misinterpreted the sources and he looked upon his own mission as that of recovering and re-establishing the true religion of the land. Therefore, he called his system *Sad* Vaishnavism (true Vaishnavism). His teaching naturally differed from those of the great exponents who had gone before him ; but he drew his conclusions from the same authorities as they, *viz.*, the Upanishads, the Vedānta Sūtras and the Gītā ; and all his 37 books are written in an entirely Hindu context and with the conviction that it was he who was giving the true meaning of the religion that had come down through the ages.

The resemblances to Christianity, nevertheless, remain to be accounted for. But in approaching the question we can be sure of four things ; first that Madhva would not consciously have borrowed from outside Hindu sources ; secondly, that even as great Hindu authorities (like Radhakrishnan, Das Gupta and B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao) are not willing to make any admissions in the matter ; neither is any Christian anxious to press the matter. Thirdly, the coincidences are not sufficiently weighty for the purpose for which they are adduced. We noticed that three grounds were suggested for Madhva's indebtedness. As for the resemblances between the lives of Jesus and Madhva, it is very doubtful as to how many of the incidents referred to in the life of Madhva can be traced back to original sources. In regard to doctrinal coincidences, it is doubtful how the role ascribed to the son of Vishnu got into Madhva's teaching. But as Mr. C. N. Krishnaswami Aiyar says, ' It is difficult to measure the forces that act through unconcious cerebration '. As for the doctrine of Predestination, it can be asserted with positive certainty that it cannot have been borrowed from Christianity. That theory is based on a misunderstanding of what St. Paul had said and had been mentioned rather tentatively by Augustine (354-430). It was, however, banned as a doctrine by the

Synod of Orange 529. It only came into prominence when John Calvin (1509-1564) took it up much later. But it is now repudiated not merely by most of the other great Christian denominations but even by most Calvinists themselves. So if Madhva was borrowing, he had to borrow by anticipation ; but it was hardly worth the effort. In regard to the geographical argument, if Madhva lived near Malabar, Sankara was a native of Malabar. Above all, however, the whole question is irrelevant to our purpose.

Madhva's Stand

The stand that Madhva took up was looked upon with disapproval by the 'high-ups' of Hinduism, not because he was saying something very extraordinary or hard to believe, but because he was saying something very ordinary and easy to believe. It appeared too naive to merit serious consideration. It represented the outlook of the common man ; and the outlook of the common man is not usually taken seriously by those accustomed to philosophical speculation. The fascination that Sankara had exercised over Hindu thought was due to the fact that what he said was very extraordinary and difficult to accept. He had been willing to abolish the entire universe for the sake of an idea. The audacity of his philosophical effort excited awe ; it was accepted, because it was hard to accept. Madhva's philosophy, on the other hand, was not easily accepted, for the simple reason that it was easy of acceptance.

Nevertheless, Madhva's undertaking was also audacious, in that he was saying something very ordinary to those accustomed to and fascinated by the extraordinary. In doing this he was entering the lists to tilt his lance against a champion whose authority had been unquestioned for so long. So Madhva has come to occupy the curious position of being regarded as objectionable by certain people, because he was saying something very unobjectionable.

Sankara had based his whole system on non-Difference. He had asserted that Brahman alone was ; and that the concept of Difference was due to Ignorance. According to him, from an ultimate point of view the possibility of Difference was non-existent and unthinkable. Rāmānuja had, of course, allowed the concept of Difference ; but it was not a Difference of essence but only such as exists between a substance and its attributes. To him Brahman was

the material cause of the Universe ; and therefore, the Universe was merely Brahman in another form. Both, therefore, may be taken basically as upholders of Non-Difference.

Madhva founded his whole System on the fact of Difference. Everything and everybody was different from everything and everybody else. The very essence of a thing is in its difference from other things : *Padārtha sva rūpatvāt bhedasya*.¹ A pot is different from a chair ; and in the fact of their difference lies the essence of each. It may, therefore, be seen that the position of Madhva while it is opposed to that of Sankara diverges from that of Rāmānuja as well. The fact of Difference implies an infinitude of possible and existing differences. But Madhva brought them all under a five fold scheme ; that between the Supreme Spirit and individual spirits, that between the Supreme Spirit and the world, that between individual spirits themselves, that between spirits and matter and that between the various objects of matter. That is, according to him, *Bheda* (difference) could be classified as *pancha bheda* (five-fold difference).

However, Madhva had to get over the difficulty presented by the Identity verses of Scripture. His answer was that the Identity referred to in Scripture is not one of essence ; distinct things may be spoken as one in certain circumstances and in a certain sense. ' When we look at a picture of a lion, we say it is a lion ; surely we do not mean that the picture is really a lion. ' ² And as against the *abheda* verses, it must be remembered that there are many *bheda* verses also ; so Scripture cannot be taken to ignore the fact of Differences. And we certainly cannot expect Scripture to fall into self-contradiction by saying that things which are really and truly different are yet one. Therefore, he says the conclusion cannot be resisted that when Scripture does speak of such things as one, it does so only in a figurative sense.

Purpose

The fact of Difference in Madhva's philosophy is certainly basic ; but to think that the assertion of Difference was his chief

¹ B. A. Krishnaswamy Rao, *Outlines of Philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya*, p. 100.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

aim is to void it of its real meaning and to suggest that he was enunciating a philosophy of chaos. Brahman would have remained all by himself, and people and things also distinct and separate in themselves ; and the question would have been legitimate as to how they could so remain or why they should remain at all.

The insistence on the fact of Difference was necessary for Madhva for the sake of his assertion of the 'otherness' of the Deity ; this had to be established before he could come to his main thesis. His main thesis was that though men and things were distinct in themselves, they are *asvantantara* (lacking in independence. Only the Deity is *svantantra* or independent. So his philosophy of Difference was preliminary to a philosophy of Dependence. Everything and everybody, while distinct in themselves, are dependent on the Deity. The Deity is *nitya tādriśa chicchetya yantā* : the eternal controller of the animate and the inanimate.

The circumstances in which Sankara had lived and worked and the considerations which had weighed with him had long since passed away. Even with Rāmānuja, living well over two hundred years later, those circumstances and considerations seemed to have had a lingering influence ; so though he differed definitely from Sankara, he did so almost apologetically. When Madhva came on the scene the situation had changed entirely ; the enemies that Sankara had fought were not even ghosts ; and his polemics seemed to be a case of beating the air. Though Dualism was an old tradition, that tradition had to be stated in the light of the new situation that had arisen ; and the chief factor of that situation was the strident voice and the stern fact of the presence of Islam. So that the task that lay before him was to make the religion of the land stand face to face against it on equal terms. It could not, therefore, afford to appear as a hazy cobweb of elusive speculation but had to stand out in clear and bold outline. Therefore, what Madhva attempted was to demonstrate that what was inculcated in all Vedic literature was a complete and unified monotheism.¹

Sankara had spoken only of the Brahman. Rāmānuja, though undoubtedly devoted to the worship of Vishnu could speak frankly

¹ *Outlines of the Philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya*, p. 66.

about him only in his lesser works, while content in his major work, the Commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras, with introducing an occasional equation of that god with Brahman. Madhva's sole concern, on the other hand, was with Vishnu, the god that people worshipped. So he insisted that from the Vedas downwards all authorities, when they spoke about Brahman, had simply meant Vishnu. *Brahma sabdascha Vishnavaveva*.¹

This Vishnu is the Creator of everything and everybody from Lakshmi (who in Ramanuja's School is sometimes accorded equality with him) downwards. He is possessed of an infinitude of auspicious qualities. Release is obtained by a long and arduous path of discipline, consisting of eighteen steps, so much so, that it cannot be achieved in one birth at all.² The intercession of Vayu, the Son of Vishnu, is also needed. Even then it is not all souls which will finally obtain salvation, but only those predestined for it.

Madhva also professes to present a God of Grace, just as much as Rāmānuja had done. But it is obvious that Madhva's stress was at another point. As against Sankara, Rāmānuja had to prove that the Deity was personal and was a God of Grace. Madhva did not stress this; he assumed it; what he was concerned with stressing, however, was the majesty of God. This was something that badly needed doing in Hinduism; because even in its most theistic moments Hinduism had found it hard to get away from a lingering concept of a basic identity between the Deity and the Universe. Madhva wants to make short-shrift of all this covert Monism. His position is an unequivocal declaration that God is God and nothing else and nobody else is part of Him. This, of course, is an attitude necessary for all acts of worship. But so powerful had been the non-Dualistic interpretation of the Upanishads that till Madhva it had never been enunciated as tenable on the basis of the authorities. Madhva not merely enunciated it as a tenable creed, but did so on the basis of the very same authorities, contending that it was the only tenable creed.

His Method

If Madhva could arrive at conclusions different from those of the other great exponents on the basis of the same authorities, it is

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

obvious that the method of interpretation he used was different from theirs. What was it? In the first place, his treatment of the instruments of knowledge deviated from theirs. We have said that all Schools of Hinduism may be looked upon as forms of the Vedānta ; and by this was meant that they profess to be expositions of the Upanishads. But there had been other great systems beside the Vedānta, and each had its own *Pramānas* or instruments of knowledge.¹ The ones accepted by Vedānta were *Prathyaksha* (Perception), *Anumāna* (Inference) and *Sabda* (literally sound, but meaning Scripture). Sankara had relied only on *Sabda* ; and on the strength of what, he thought, it said was willing to reject what came through all other sources of knowledge. Rāmānuja was willing to use the other sources, because Scripture allowed him to do so ; but his final authority was always Scripture. Madhva dismissed this procedure of giving over-all a *priori* superiority to any one instrument ; an instrument of knowledge he said, must qualify itself for a particular field before it could be accepted : *Yathārtham pramānam* (an instrument must be reliable). So the question is whether a particular instrument, whatever be its status otherwise, is reliable in the particular field with which we may be concerned for the time-being. Therefore, he set forth the principle of a delimited superiority, for the instruments of knowledge ; that is, in each field a particular instrument is privileged and enjoys superiority, while the others are to be looked upon as subsidiary. The one which is privileged is called *upajīvyā* (which gives life) ; a subsidiary one is called *upajīvaka* (which derives life). Therefore, Perception has its own field, in which it is privileged and so has Inference. Scripture, however, is privileged in what cannot be known by the senses. We may see that Madhva starts from different premises and is, therefore, bound to arrive at conclusions different not merely from Sankara but from Rāmānuja also.

Madhva was, however, aware that he was in the field of religion, where Scripture was the privileged instrument. While, therefore fantastic theories like that of Sankara's Nescience or even Ramanuja's theory of Brahman being the material cause of the Universe could

¹ The other orthodox systems of Hindu Philosophy were : Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Sāmkhya, Yoga and Purva Mīmāsa. They were called ' orthodox ' because they acknowledged the Vedas. They did not become the basis of any religious School, though religious Schools drew from them.

be otherwise disposed of, still it had to be realised that in this field it was Scripture that had priority. But Madhva's conviction was that since the various instruments had each its own field, there would be no clash between them and no possibility of contradiction in their findings. Even in the field of Religion he said, Scripture could not contradict Perception and vice-versa. How then did contradiction arise in the past? Madhva's answer was that it was because Scripture had not been rightly interpreted.

Madhva, therefore, sets forth certain rules for the right interpretation of Scripture. They are as follows :

- (i) Interpretation should be according to the context.
- (ii) Since Scripture will not commit us to an absurdity, if an accepted text seems to do so, the possibility of a variant reading must be considered.
- (iii) A literal interpretation should not have automatic preference, since it might be contrary to the real sense of a passage.

It may be seen that Madhva here anticipates criteria which would today be considered almost beyond challenge ; and his second rule is one frequently used in the field of what is called 'Textual Criticism'. But the rules in general ran counter to the accepted methods of Hindu exposition of those days ; and the second rule, in particular, would be looked upon in Hinduism even today as a justification of *sruti-hāni* (text-torture) and therefore, as inexcusable vandalism.

Applying the first two rules to the *Mahā vākya*, '*Tat tvam asi*,' (thou art that), Madhva says that in the context the accepted text is unnatural. Svetaketu comes to his father Uddalaka, after his Vedic studies, in a very self-satisfied mood. Would the father have boosted his conceit further and told the son that he (the son) was Brahman? Would he not, on the other hand, have tried to puncture that conceit and said, 'You might have learnt your stuff all right, but you are not Brahman.' So he must have said *Atat tvam asi*, the opposite of what the accepted text says. Applying the third principle to the *Vākya*, *Ekam eva advitīyam*, (indeed everything is one), Madhva says, surely it is not meant to convey the sense that everything is actually one. What was meant was that everything

is dependent on one. Allowance, therefore, must be made for a figurative use of language. The *abheda* verses, in general, must be interpreted with a certain latitude; their meaning must not be tied down to Identity, but must be extended to Dependence and Similarity.

Transcendence in Madhva

Transcendence in Madhva is a matter about which there can never be any doubt or mistake. While noticing Rāmānuja's system, we said that the God of Rāmānuja was not 'high and lifted up'. Madhva makes every effort to see that there should be no such misunderstanding about the place of the Deity in his system. Sankara had felt himself bound hand and foot by the *abheda* verses; and even Rāmānuja himself was unable to get away from their awesome domination. Of all the teachers who look to the *Prasthāna Traya*, Madhva is the only one who gets away from their power. He does so by breaking that power. He accomplished this, as we saw, by showing that Scripture would on no account contradict the other instruments of knowledge and by laying down the criteria for the right interpretation of Scripture.

After this, Madhva was able to prove that the Deity was not merely distinct from everybody and everything else, but that He stood over and above them; for it is said that 'He transcends every thing by ten inches'. He interprets 'ten inches' to mean infinity. But it was not bare transcendence but a transcendence that carried with it an absolute and complete control over every realm. The Deity was not merely superior to the minor gods but over Rudra (Siva) and Brahmā, the other members of the Triad.¹ Everything everywhere and always exists or goes on because of His will; 'If a man has no horns, it is because He has willed it so; if Space and Time are the receptacle of all things, it is because He has willed it so. Eternal things are eternal because of His will, even as non-eternal things are non-eternal because of His will.'² From his attitude it is clear that Madhva is committed to the doctrine of Predesti-

¹ Though Vishnu and Siva are the two principal deities of Hinduism, by long tradition they are supposed to belong to a Triad of three gods, each associated with a particular function: Brahmā with creation, Vishnu with preservation and Siva with destruction.

² *Outlines of the Philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya*, p. 79.

nation of everything by the Deity, and that he should extend his teaching, therefore, to the sphere of Salvation and say that, in spite of everything to the contrary, only souls predestined to Salvation achieve it.

Immanence is always well secured in all Hindu Theism. In all Vaishnavite systems the doctrine of *avatārs* gives concrete expression to the Deity's intimate relation to the world. The danger, however, lay in the possibility that Immanence would swallow up Transcendence. This possibility Madhva definitely eliminated by stressing Transcendence to the very limit to which any Theisms will permit.

The system of Madhva has a pre-eminent right to be classed among the Theisms of the world, except for the fact that there is a Polytheism lurking in the background ; but it must be understood that Madhva's system is a Theism in a Hindu context. The abolition of the Pantheon of gods is impossible, if Hinduism is to remain Hinduism. But Madhva has clearly established the absolute supremacy of Vishnu over them all ; and this is as far he can go in Hinduism.

SAIVA SIDDHANTA

Siva and Saiva Siddhanta

Siva is one of the two chief Gods worshipped in India ; in fact, J. B. Pratt, an American Professor who visited India in 1915, says he is the favourite God of the country.¹ But Siva was not one of the original gods of the Aryāns who broke into India in successive waves, between 2000-1500 B.C. and have written their name large upon all its subsequent history. The languages spoken throughout the greater part of the country now are derivatives of the language that was theirs ; and the thought-forms used in all Indian Religion and Philosophy are theirs. It may be said that to a considerable extent the Aryāns moulded the culture of India. So much does the country owe them that it is often called *Aryavārtha*, the land of the Aryāns. They had many gods, but Siva was not one of them.

How then does Siva happen to be one of the chief Gods of the country ? It is because he was the chief God of the people who

¹ J. B. Pratt, *India and its Faiths*, (Constable and Co., London), p. 46.

dwelt in India when the Aryans irrupted into it through the North. Sir John Marshall, head of the Archaeological Dept. of the Government of India, who more than fifty years ago excavated the remains of the civilisation of that people who had lived in the Indus valley, concluded that Siva worship was prevailing among that people in that dim and distant age.¹ Such a God could not be ignored and was adopted into the Aryan pantheon, first under the name Rudra and later under his own name. The fact that while most of the original gods of the Aryans have faded into the background, and that Siva has not merely remained in the foreground but has become one of the two chief Deities of the land shows how deep-rooted has been his hold on people.

If Vishnu and Siva have been the two chief Gods of Hinduism, it means that not merely Hindu devotion but Hindu philosophy also should centre in them. While Sankara has a tendency to treat all specific religions rather patronisingly, the system of Rāmānuja and Madhva, which we noticed, and those of Nimbarka and Vallabha, which we did not notice, centre in Vishnu. Three existing systems centre in Siva *viz.*, Kashmir Saivism, Vira Saivism and Saiva Siddhānta.

Of the three Saivite Systems, Saiva Siddhānta, is the most important ; but it is far more. Dr. G. U. Pope has said of it that it is the most influential and undoubtedly the most intrinsically valuable of all the religions of India.² Sir Charles Eliot, whose range of knowledge was even wider, has said, ' In fact, it is one of the most powerful and interesting forms which Hinduism has ever assumed and it has even attracted the sympathetic interest of Christians. ' ³ Dr. Nicol Macnicol says, ' Perhaps nowhere else in Hindu theology have theistic ideas found fuller and nobler expression ' .⁴ And Dr. R. C. Zaehner, till recently Professor of Comparative Religion at Oxford, says ' Saiva Siddhānta presents perhaps the highest form of theism that India was ever to develop ' .⁵ We shall, therefore, be more than justified in choosing this School to comment upon amongst the Saivite Systems.

¹ The authors of an ' Advanced History of India ' (Macmillans-1961) agree.

² *Tiruvāsagam*, G. U. Pope (O.U.P.), pp. lxxiv.

³ *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, p. 216.

⁴ *Indian Theism*, N. Macnicol (O.U.P.), p. 214.

⁵ *Hinduism*, R. C. Zaehner (O.U.P.), p. 119.

It may look curious that while the systems of Sankara, to a greater extent, and that of Rāmānuja, to a lesser extent, have been known to the outside world for a considerably longer time, Saiva Siddhānta came to be known outside largely in this century. The reason is not far to seek. When Indology, which means the knowledge of Indian religions, culture, philosophy and literature, first attracted the attention of the Imperial rulers of India in Calcutta in the 18th century, it was through Sanskrit, the basic language of the Aryans, that they could have access to it; and so dazzled was Europe by what was opened up to it through that medium, that for nearly a century it was not imagined that there was anything lying beyond the field already revealed to them. Saiva Siddhānta, on the other hand, has had its vogue among the descendants of the original inhabitants of India, who are racially and linguistically outside that field. Though the language of these people, had been penetrated by Christian Missionaries earlier, it was only by the middle of the last century that their side of Indian culture began to attract the attention of European scholars.

The Siva cult is old, but no one can say for certain when the basic tenets of Siddhānta itself began to take shape. Dr. John Piet, quoting Nilakanta Sastri, says that the origins of Saiva Siddhānta lie buried in the obscurity of antiquity.¹ Dr. I. T. Thambiah is content to say that it must have had its beginnings before the 4th century A. D.; but by the 6th century its tenets certainly seem to have become fairly well crystallised, since a philosophic poet of that period called Tirumular, puts forward the system more or less as we know it today. As a definite system, however, it was formulated only in the 13th century. It was, however, a formulation of already existing beliefs.

Its Formulation

The formulation of a system in the 13th century involved certain obligations. In the first place, it was necessary to acknowledge the authority of the Vedas and to cite them as being in your favour. This would not involve any serious difficulty; because there were quite a number of Upanishads to choose from. We have found that

¹ J. H. Piet, *Logical Presentation of Saiva Siddhānta Philosophy*, (C.L.S., Madras), p. 2.

the three Schools we have considered so far also profess to derive their authority from the Vedas, and yet manage to extract from them different conclusions to suit their own position. In the second place, a certain terminology had become current and was inescapable. Unless it was used, your speech would have seemed irrelevant to the points at issue.

However, if these requirements were obligatory, what was not obligatory was the acceptance of the *Prasthāna Traya* as a whole. That was obligatory for the Vaishnavite Schools ; no Saivite School could accept the Bhagavad Gītā and remain Saivite. Instead, Siddhānta professed to derive its extra authority from a species of literature known as the *Āgamas*. The *Āgamas*, in general, are not the peculiar possession of the Saivites. The Śāktas have their own and Rāmaṇuja's School has its own ; but they are looked upon as subsidiary and not primary in regard to their authority. Siddhānta however, claims that the 28 Saiva *Āgamas* are a prime source of authority, next of course to the Vedas. It holds that there is no conflict of authority, because the *Āgamas* contain the essence of the Vedas. The extent of their original influence on Saivism is a matter of conjecture, since very little is known of them. They seem to have dealt largely with matters of ritual ; only four of them seem to have ever come out in print.¹

The system of Saiva Siddhānta is expounded in a series of 14 books called the '*Siddhānta Sāstras*'. These *Sāstras* are fortified by a set of 12 books of devotional, philosophical and biographical poetry. Of the 14 books of *Sāstras* the most authoritative is a little treatise of 12 cryptic formulas called the *Siva Jnāna Bodham*, written by one Meykanda. The other 13 treatises which constitute the *Sāstras* purport to be just commentaries on, or explanations of *Siva Jnāna Bodham*. However, the book most resorted to in all discussions and giving the handiest and most adequate statement of the system is a book entitled *Siva Jnāna Siddhiyār*, written by Arul Nandi.

Vis-a-Vis Other Schools

Like all Saivite Systems Siddhānta is based on a belief in the *Tri padārtha* i.e., three eternal entities viz., *Paṭi* (the Lord), *Pasu*

¹ Vide G. C. Diehl '*Instrument and Purpose*', (Gleerup—Lund), p. 47.

(the Soul) and *Pāsa* (bondage). This may seem to settle the question of the side it would take in the controversy between the three Schools treated earlier, because it seems to indicate a firm belief in distinctions. But the acceptance of the *tri padārtha* need not in itself be a guarantee of such a conclusion ; for the other two Saivite Schools also accept them but have allowed Sankara's influence to eat into them. The case, however, is different with Siddhanta. It divides all Indian religions into four groups : the Outermost, the Outer, the Inner and Innermost. Those which belong to the first group are religions like Buddhism and Jainism, which do not acknowledge the authority of the Vedas. It puts Sankara's System into the second group of 'Outer religion' along with the almost atheistic system of Sāṅkhya. Nevertheless it surprises expectations at two points :

(1) Though it rejects Sankara's position, it does not align itself with his rivals, Rāmānuja or Madhva.

(2) Though it rejects Sankara's position, it nevertheless adopts his slogans.

The matter certainly requires some explanation. It does not align itself with Rāmānuja or Madhva, because philosophically it is more dualistic or pluralistic than Rāmānuja ; and religiously it is more theistic than Madhva. What, then, was the reason that prompted it to adopt Sankara's slogans ? An element of discretion need not perhaps be altogether discounted. The systems of both Rāmānuja and Madhva were Vaishnavite, drew their inspiration from Sanskrit sources and their authority from the Prasthāna Traya and therefore, could pit themselves on equal terms against Sankara's system. Siddhānta enjoyed neither of these advantages ; so ordinary discretion might have dictated the adoption of the slogans of the most prestigious school.

But if discretion cannot be discounted, we shall find that the action was actually characterised by something very different, viz., by a spirit of supreme audacity. That Brahman was *Nirguna* was a position that could well be supported by the Upanishads ; and the doctrine of Advaita was capable of eliciting even better scriptural support. What Siddhānta wants to prove is that, on its part, it is faithful to the Scriptures and since these slogans seemed to represent the Scriptural position it accepts them. But to accept

slogans, is one thing ; to accept a particular interpretation of them is another thing. What Siddhānta wants to prove is that Sankara's interpretation of these Scriptural terms was wrong. This may appear to be an act of unbelievable foolhardiness, like one becoming a Communist to prove that Karl Marx was wrong in his interpretation of what Communism meant. But this is exactly what Siddhānta undertakes to do.

Brahman, Sankara had said, is *Nirguna* and not *Saguna* (as Rāmānuja was to say). Certainly God is *Nirguna*, says Siddhānta. But what does *Nirguna* mean? It means that Brahma is without the three *gunas* of *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These qualities are produced by *Prakriti* or matter. How can anyone expect the Deity to be possessed of qualities conferred by matter? Therefore, says Nallasvamipillai, the great Siddhānta scholar, what is meant is that the Deity is non-material or *chit*.¹ This explanation, however, does not go the whole way. Siddhānta does contemplate an ultimate stage, to which Siva can and does withdraw himself. But even in this state he does not cease to be personal, because it is in this state that by the interaction of *Parā Sakti* on him he reactivates a new cycle of time. So he is never above a concern for mankind. Above all, however, this is not the stage in which he usually is. For the benefit of human beings he takes form.² This form is the real form of Siva and not an imaginative fiction (which it would be according to Sankara). This is the Siva that people worship and to whom they attribute predicates. And the Deity to whom they do this is a real Deity. Therefore, Sankara's statement that Brahma is beyond worship and beyond any predicate is wrong.

And equally, the Vedic doctrine of *Advaita* is a sound doctrine and Siddhānta is willing whole-heartedly to stand by it. 'The word *Visishta Advaita* never finds a place in Siddhānta literature,' says Nallasvamipillai.³ The reason why Siddhānta disowns Rāmānuja's term *Visishta Advaita* is not because Siddhānta is nearer Sankara than Rāmānuja, but because it is much further away; Rāmānuja still clings to a relationship of Identity, only qualifying it. Siddhānta, on the other hand, takes its stand on a definite and un-

¹ *Studies in Saiva Siddhānta*, p. 297.

² *Siva Jnana Siddhiyar*, I-54.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 245.

qualified distinction between *Pati* and *Pasu*. It would, therefore, seem strange to us that Siddhānta should adopt the term *Advaita* to characterise its own position. Siddhānta explains the reason for its choice. The term *Advaita* presupposes the existence of two entities (Brahman or *Pati* on the one hand, and everything and everybody else on the other). It, therefore, simply means 'not two'. What is the point of saying 'not two', if, as Sankara says, Brahman alone is and nothing and nobody else is? Obviously what the Vedas had meant in using the term *Advaita* was to emphasise that, though the entities were two, they should not be separated, because the second entity is entirely dependent on the first.

To assert practically the same view-point, Madhva had called his philosophy that of *Dvaita*, while Siddhānta insists on calling it a philosophy of *Advaita*. Why does it do so? The reasons for this are two in number. In the first place, Sankara's interpretation had weighed heavily on Madhva. In the world in which Madhva lived *Advaita* meant Identity. He could neither accept that interpretation nor even Rāmānuja's interpretation of a qualified Identity. To prove that the Deity, on the one hand, and everything and everybody else on the other, were absolutely distinct from one another, he felt he had to declare war on a philosophy which could enable Sankara to make his stand. In the atmosphere in which Siddhānta had taken shape, however, the fact of Distinction did not have to be proved; it was taken for granted.

In the second place, Siddhānta is a religion of Grace, more interested in producing the right religious attitude than making good certain philosophical points. Its fear was that its people would stop with the obvious fact of distinction and not go further; in which case, the gulf between the *Pasu* and *Pati* would be unbridgable. So it was the fact of the inseparable association between the two that it wanted to stress; and the term *Advaita* served the purpose well. It indicated two entities inveterately distinct yet inveterately associated. The commonest illustration used to explain the situation is that of a vowel and consonant in a vowel-consonant (e.g. ki). The illustration is perhaps more telling in India than in the West; because, whereas in Western languages in such a case the letters are written separately, in Indian languages they are written as just one letter with a mark above, below or by the side of the consonant according to the vowel concerned. The consonant,

however, would remain without a soul (lifeless) if not for the vowel. The dependence of the consonant on the vowel is essential for its life. It is for this purpose Siddhānta says, that the Vedas use the term *Advaita* to denote the relationship between Brahman and the soul. 'The significance of the term is evaluative and not enumerative', says Dr. V. A. Devasenapathi. Siddhānta, therefore, holds that the Vedic use of the term is quite right : it is Sankara's interpretation of it that is wrong. Sankara, according to Siddhānta was expounding *Ekātma Vāda*, i.e., Monism pure, simple and not the Scriptural doctrine of *Advaita* or non-Dualism.

Tenets

Pati as God is supreme ; that is, while owing to immemorial tradition it is impossible to get rid of the vast number of gods that haunt the religious world, the gods themselves are all cut down to size; they are all subject to the cycle of births and deaths, whereas Siva is not. In their time they exist to serve the purpose for which Siva, the *Pati*, wants to use them. Though in Saivite poetry Vishnu and Brahmā are treated with more respect than the other gods, the Triad (which grants equal status to Siva, Vishnu and Brahmā) as far as Siddhānta is concerned, simply does not exist.

Siva alone is responsible for the *Panchakritya* i.e., the five actions of Creation, Preservation, Obscuration, Bestowal and Destruction. If the task of Creation is actually carried out by Brahmā and that of Preservation by Vishnu, it is at the behest of Siva. It is He who brings each cycle of Time into operation, and He who brings about its cessation. But fundamentally, it is He who is the Destroyer who can be the Creator and can also perform all the intermediate functions. But if Siva creates, He does not create out of nothing. All Hindu theistic systems are bound by the unbreakable Law of *sat-kārya-vāda*, according to which a material cause is wanted for the making of a thing. Rāmānuja makes Brahman himself the material cause of the Universe and souls. Siddhānta makes a primal, inexplicable stuff, called *Māyā*, the material cause; but this *Māyā* should not be taken to mean that which causes illusion.

The *Pasu* or soul is separated from God by the bondage of *Pāsa* and, therefore, undergoes the cycle of births and deaths. All

souls may be divided into three classes, according to the number and kind of *malas* or impurities which constitute *Pāsa viz., ānava, māyā and karma*. Some souls are in the grip of only one, *ānava*; some are in the grip of *ānava* and *māyā*, and others in the grip of all three. Redemption takes place when *Pāsa* is totally overcome and its power broken.

In regard to attaining this end, though Saiva Siddhānta professes to be a religion of Grace, it is also a strong believer in the principle that God helps those who help themselves. So it expects the devotee to work out his salvation through the four stages of *caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna*, the first consisting in doing menial tasks in temples, the second in worshipping according to proper rites, the third in contemplation and the fourth in the attainment of wisdom. If these are carried out with fervour, Siva himself comes to the help of the devotee. The four corresponding states attained by each of these steps are *sālokya* (same world as God) *sāmipya* (nearness to Him), *Sārūpa* (same form as His) and *sāyujya* (the highest state). This is a distinctive prescription of Siddhānta for pursuit of the path of *bhakti*. Since each School has the right to lay down its own prescription (Rāmānuja for instance, lays down seven qualifications to start with), this need not be considered a major difference that sets it apart from the other Schools.

On two other important points also, however, Siddhānta, differs from the Vaishnavite Schools in regard to Redemption. In the first place, though a religion of Grace, it does not accept the idea of God intervening in the Karmic process for the sake of the devotee. The process was instituted by God himself; and it is good for a soul to go through it; if a soul earns its release soon, so much the better. The process, however, remains inviolate. Secondly, Siddhānta totally rejects the doctrine of *avatārs*, one of the cardinal features of all Vaishnavite Schools. Though generally speaking, only ten of these *avatārs* are considered important, there is no limit to the length to which the doctrine may be stretched and for any great person at any time to be looked upon as an *avatār*. The term *avatār*, while it does not, as has been said earlier, carry the same meaning as the term 'Incarnation' in Christian Theology, neither does it mean merely assuming a temporary guise (as in Greek and Roman religions). It means being born into a certain form and keeping it on, as Rama and Krishna did. This Siddhānta

considers to be altogether below divine dignity ; instead it teaches that Siva may assume the guise of a *guru* (teacher) to help a devotee on to the final attainment of his salvation.

Transcendence in Siddhānta

As against the system of Rāmānuja, Saiva Siddhānta has, of course, suffered heavily, in not being known very much either in the West or even in India as a whole. Many good Hindu scholars themselves have confined their attention to the writings in Sanskrit and know scarcely anything of Siddhānta. If a Hindu scholar who does not profess the Siddhānta cares to study it, he may consider that it does not have sufficient Scriptural warrant. But those from outside who have made a close study of Indian theistic systems and do not set so much store by that qualification, have little hesitation in preferring Saiva Siddhānta to the other Schools and finding it fulfilling the requirements of Theism better than the others.

As has been pointed out earlier, Siva is not merely distinct from creatures and is God of Gods, he is also Lord of the Karmic Process which he himself has set up. Equally He is Lord of the Time Process through which the assets and liabilities of Karma are worked out. Siddhānta actually gives a better explanation of the cycles of Time than the other systems. Others say it merely provides a sport to the Deity. Siddhānta writers say that the alternation of *pralayas* (states of dissolution) with *yugas* is meant to give rest to souls in their laborious effort to attain Salvation ; it is a sport to the Deity in the sense that it is so easy for him to operate the scheme.

We have also seen how Siddhānta preserves its doctrine of Immanence. It insists that it is on the side of *Advaita* to see that the dependence of the soul on the Deity is never lost sight of ; but its explanation of the term never allows any misunderstanding to the effect that the *Advaita* is ontological. It does not over-emphasise the difference between the one and the other, as Madhva's system does, because it does not want to widen the gulf between the two ; but neither does it yield to the temptation to over-emphasise the connexion between the Deity and the soul, by saying as Rāmānuja does, that the connexion is one of essence.

Though the claims of Saiva Siddhānta to be classed as a Monotheism are very high indeed, there are certain reasons which stand in the way of its categorical classification as such. In spite of its valiant attempt to fight against its context, one cannot be sure that the fight has been completely successful. We are still in a polytheistic world. Besides, though Siddhānta severely denounces Sankara's view point and insists that Siva is a personal God, in its own formulation far in the background is the very concept it has disowned and denounced. And the energy that reactivates Siva at the end of each *Pralaya* looks almost physical. Also he requires something from which to perform his act of creation. Nevertheless, it is true beyond question, as Dr. Macnicol says that 'it has grasped and set forth in broader outline than elsewhere in Indian thought the basal conception that God is a moral being governed from first to last by a purpose of compassion'.¹

The Schools and De Facto Hinduism

It might possibly be said that we have been spending all our time on the airy arguments of Philosophers, between which and the religion that is actually practised in the homes and temples of India it is a far cry. We must, however, remember that there has to be a natural difference between theology and cult. It may happen that the cult may be a deviation or even in some respects a contradiction of the theology concerned ; but when that happens it does not usually indicate a difference in conviction but a difference in expression. For a cult is the expression of religion in one sphere and a theology its expression in another ; but both are expected to, and often do, express the same religious attitude. However, that expression may differ not merely according to spheres but according to levels. There may be a difference between the beliefs of a ploughman or a road-mender and those of a theologian ; it is simply due to the difference in levels. St. Thomas Aquinas was a Roman Catholic at one level and Newman's 'whining beggar of Palermo' at another. We cannot dismiss one sphere or level as unrelated to the other sphere or another level, simply because they are distinct ; they can be distinct and yet quite related and akin.

¹ *Indian Theism*, 212.

In the case of Hinduism, this relationship between the different spheres and levels is much closer than we might expect. In other religions, both spheres and levels look to the words and acts of the founders. There is, therefore, the possibility of parallel and independent interpretations. In Hinduism, on the other hand, in the last analysis the Schools are usually, trying to interpret and justify the beliefs of the people, of course, on what is conceived to be the basis of Scripture. Therefore, the expression of religion in the different spheres and at the different levels is not independent but interdependent.

The Schools of the North profess to base their conclusions on the Upanishads and Saiva Siddhānta on its own sources. But each School in the North or South has its own clientele. Sankara was speaking for the *yogis* and the *ascetics*, who detach themselves from their fellow-creatures and live in forests or caves or in communities pledged to special holiness, lost in contemplation. The ebb and tide of the world as such have all receded from them and ceased to have any meaning to them ; to them Ultimate Reality alone exists ; and they conceive themselves to be one with it. Rāmānuja and Siddhānta had worshipping communities behind them who drew their piety from abundant mythological and devotional literature. Therefore, remote as the Schools may seem from the religion as practised in the land, they are very closely related to them.

In the nature of things, it is necessary that the Schools should draw the lines of demarcation between themselves pretty rigorously and stress the differences that separate them one from another. But India is a vast country seething with people and irrepressibly religious. So a considerable amount of camaraderie may be expected at a popular level. It is a common sight to see the devotees of one God worshipping at the shrine of another. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that there should be a certain amount of interpenetration of beliefs and practices, and that those belonging to one context should occasionally appear in other contexts, where they do not fit. The definitions and arguments of the great Schools embody the efforts to disentangle and purify the basis of the beliefs that lie beneath all this phenomenon and state them in their stark outlines and, therefore, provide the only means of gaining an insight into that phenomenon.

TRANSCENDENCE IN MONOTHEISM

Transcendence in General and in Monotheism :

In the first chapter we were dealing with the Concept of Transcendence in general. We were trying to establish its legitimacy and to meet the arguments against it. We quoted Plato's saying that Philosophy began in a sense of wonder ; and said that the same might be said of the feeling of Transcendence. The point about such a sense of wonder or feeling is that it might also stop where it began. The sense of wonder and the feeling of Transcendence are in their very nature general, vague and even hazy. They may be indispensable to Religion ; but they are only preliminary to it ; no religion can be merely content with them and be satisfied with teaching their indispensability.

To make the term ' Transcendence ' religiously meaningful, we felt, we had to restrict its sense to that which transcends the senses. This is the starting point of any religion ; but from this it must go on to say what it is, in its opinion, that not merely transcends the senses but is in control over everything else, and is so eternally. In the second Chapter we discovered what the two main Schools of Buddhism had to say on the point and in the third what the various Schools of Hinduism had to say. It may be seen therefore that every religion makes use of the general concept of Transcendence by narrowing it down and making it particular.

In this Chapter we are dealing with Transcendence in Monotheism. The word ' Monotheism ' is self-explanatory, being derived from two Greek words, meaning ' one ' and ' God '. A Monotheism, therefore, is a religion believing and teaching the doctrine of one God. While, as we have seen, there has always been a belief in gods, and usually an admission that one of them had greater power than the others, Monotheism teaches that there is one God only. The term ' God ' has a very definite connotation attached to it in the context of Monotheism. It might be said that the term ' God '

always had a definite connotation even when it referred to anyone of the minor gods of primitive religions. But when people believe that there is only one God and one only, it is not that He is looked upon as having to a greater extent what those gods have or has collected within Himself all that all of them have; it is that when we are speaking of a One and only God we have come into a different realm; it is a realm where we hear a voice saying: 'I am the Lord, and there is none else; besides me there is no God.' In this realm even the faintest tinkering with the possibility of the existence of any other god is an act of gross disloyalty to the One and Only God. And the tendency of this realm is not to look upon the realm of Polytheism with a sense of good-natured superiority but with implacable hostility. The attitude is summed up in the much misunderstood phrase about the 'jealousy' of God.

It may be said that after all the term 'God' is of Teutonic origin that has come into English and is allied to similar words in the same family of languages. Languages other than English have other words to signify what the term means. The very term 'Monotheism' is Greek; but whatever be the language in which it is used, when used of God who is the One and only God, it acquires a particular connotation for which there is no substitute. Martin Buber calls it 'the most heavy-laden of all human words' and that is why Helmut Gollwitzer says that the word is 'irreplaceable and unsurrenderable.'¹ Heinz Zahrant in his book, 'The Question of God', however, records a revealing incident about Paul Tillich, the eminent theological thinker, to whom we shall have occasion to refer later in this chapter. Fredor Stepun, a friend of Tillich, was once speaking to Tillich and suggested that Tillich was all the time speaking about God but that he shied away from the word 'God' and was needlessly using such vague phrases as 'Being-in-itself', 'power of Being', 'ground and meaning of Being', 'the Unconditional' etc. It was as if he insisted using the word 'cotton', when he might as well have used the word 'God'. To which Tillich replied, 'As long as people do not understand the word "God", I shall go on using the word "cotton".'² When he thought that any word would do to denote what he meant, it is obvious

¹ H. Gollwitzer *The Existence of God*, (S.C.M.), p. 42.

² H. Zahrant *The Question of God*, (Collins), p. 301.

that he was not committed to what the word 'God' has come to connote. We shall see the reason for it later in this chapter.

What the qualities of the transcendent are in the context of Religion we have already seen. When the consciousness of the Transcendent takes shape in a rudimentary form of religion, and people begin to believe in gods, they always look upon them as personal. However, when they start looking for something beyond them and more ultimately transcendent, what they arrive at, as we have seen, may not always be personal. But monotheists who look upon the ultimately transcendent as an One and only God believe Him to be not merely personal but to be possessed of another fundamental quality. Those who believe in many gods do not look upon all of them as necessarily good; there may be good gods and bad gods. But those who believe in an One and only God regard Him as essentially good. With them even a morally neutral God will not count. To them the centre of their thought and devotion can only be a God who is both Personal and Good.

The term 'Good' is an extremely commodious term; and that is exactly the reason why, if we are to use one word for the purpose, we have chosen it. We may later have to stress more than one trait, all of which we have accommodated under the term 'goodness'. But the one identification mark of goodness is that it is on the opposite side of badness. Yet goodness, like any other quality, is one thing when considered by itself and another thing when it characterises a person. Its content will differ according to the person it characterises. In itself it is something into which we can put a content at our discretion; when attached to a person, the content is no longer at our discretion, it depends on the person concerned. Qualities take on a definiteness and will show a variety from person to person, without forfeiting their basic nature, being transmuted to a greater or less degree according as to who the person is. So to draw up a list of the qualities of God in Monotheism is not to sum Him up or even to describe Him. The Person you are up against is so much beyond your imagination, that the qualities you ascribe to Him have taken on a significance beyond your calculation.

Therefore, it is that St. Hilary (c. 315-367) said that to describe God is '*illicita agere, ardua scandere, ineffebilia eloqui*' (to do the forbidden, to climb steep heights and say what should not be said)

and St. Thomas Aquinas has cryptically observed that 'the summit of man's knowledge of God is to know that he does not know God'. When we have said all that we can say, we would have said very little. 'Canst thou by searching find out God?', asks the Book of Job. Fortunately, however, it adds 'Canst thou find the Almighty unto perfection?' So it is not that we cannot say anything at all in the matter, but all that we say will be pitifully inadequate; but speak we must. The Sacred books of the Monotheistic religions speak about Him. The great preachers of those religions have spoken much; and their great writers have written much; and St. Hilary and St. Thomas, while insisting on the foolhardiness of all speech about God, have themselves written voluminously on the subject. If God is of the kind that Monotheists insist that He is, He is a God who must be spoken about, and who in fact demands it; and that is why one of the greatest of monotheists said, 'Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel'. Only when we have said all that we can say, we must not presume to have said all that can be said, or known all that there is to be known about Him.

Because of what it is, Monotheism has always had a strange fascination to most people. Polytheists, though believing in many gods, in all exclamations of grief, dismay, anxiety or joy usually have a habit of calling upon just one God. Atheists themselves succumb to the practice when they lose consciousness for the time-being of their normal creed. H. G. Wells has recorded this of himself; and Sir Winston Churchill has recorded it of Stalin. When grief or anxiety is too great for human help to be of use, or joy too great for any human being to be thanked, most people automatically and almost unconsciously assume that there is one overruling God who can be resorted to. The French have a saying to the effect that there is someone wiser than Voltaire or Napoleon; and that is the world; in a crisis the world seems generally to vote for one God.

Objections to Monotheism

In this matter the predilection of the world has been questioned and attacked strongly by some philosophers. There are three grounds on which this has been done. The first may be termed psychological, the second metaphysical and the third moral. We must see to what extent these objections have validity.

From the psychological point of view, the argument against Monotheism is that the idea behind it is man's own projection of himself into the realm of the Infinite. This argument is an old one. Xenophanes (c. 570-480 B.C.) said, 'If lions could have pictured a God, they would have pictured him in fashion like a lion; horses like a horse and oxen like an ox' (though as has been rather devastatingly observed, none of them did). J. R. Illingworth refers to the same kind of argument as put forward by Mathew Arnold in the last century. But the person who has put it most forcibly is Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). He said, that 'man projects his being into objectivity and then makes himself an object to this projected image of himself converted into a subject; he thinks of himself not as an object to himself, but as an object of another being than himself. Thus religion is a dream of the human mind'. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud have given expression to the same idea; and it has been echoed by practically all psychologists who do not look upon Monotheism with favour.

This is an easy argument to advance; and also a very easy argument to demolish. It is easy to demolish because it is so easy to put forward. Its chief defect, as Lord Balfour and John Oman have pointed out, is that it is a 'question-begging' theory; that is, it assumes the very thing it has to prove. It has to prove that the idea or thought that Ultimate Reality is a person is false; and its objection is that it is false, because it is a projection of a person as Ultimate Reality. To 'project' is to 'throw forward'; therefore, every idea, every thought or concept is a projection, in that it is something thrown forward by the mind. In effect, therefore, what is said is that a certain concept is false because it is a concept. But why only this concept, why not other concepts also? And the question would apply not merely to ideas and concepts about the Infinite or even about anything particular in this world itself but to the very idea of a world existing outside ourselves; for, as far as we are concerned, the world outside of us is also a concept. We have certain impressions in our mind and we conceive or 'put forward' the idea of an ordered world. If every projection is false, the projection of our mind that there is an outside world is also false. If it be said that the concept involved in Monotheism is false because in this case the mind has thrown out a concept resembling a human-being, why cannot the same objection be made even

if the concept on this subject resembles anything else like a machine without a mechanic, or a chaos ruled by mere chance—if chance can rule anything—or is ruled by a number of beings, as in the case of polytheism? Why then should the concept of Monotheism, in particular, be false simply because it says that back of the Universe is a Single Being, who in some respects resembles man? It is therefore, difficult to see the validity of this objection.

From a metaphysical point of view, the charge against it is that what is associated with human beings would be a disqualification in the Deity. The first argument in favour of this view is that the nature of human beings leaves much to be desired. One's neighbours are not much of a model for the Deity; neither is human nature as is seen all around us in the world nor in history down the ages. How much crime and wickedness and injustice can be laid to the charge of human nature? 'Would you then liken the Deity to man as you know him?' we are asked.

As against this, it is necessary to realise that if there is crime and wickedness and injustice in the world, it is because we are possessed of personality that we see them in that light. An animal practices promiscuity, robs and kills but never knows that it is doing anything wrong. It is personality that lifts us high above the merely biological level. And that is why Shakespeare has said:

What a piece of work is man !
 How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculties ! . . .
 In action how like an angel !
 In apprehension how like a god !

And that is why the Psalmist says: 'Thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour'. The New English Bible translates 'angels' into a 'god'. It is obvious that personality is a great quality; it can be sorely abused; but the fact that it can be abused does not mean abuse or misuse is all that it is capable of; on the other hand, it is the tremendous potentiality of personality that makes it capable of misuse. Therefore, to think that personality, as such, would be a disqualification in God would be seriously to misunderstand the meaning of personality. And what makes man infinite in his faculties and like a God in his apprehension cannot be something

that down-grades God. In fact, God is God because He is a Person.

The second argument from a metaphysical point of view for holding personality to be a disqualification in the deity is that it imposes a limitation on Him. One human being is different from other human beings, because of his personality. If the Deity is to be considered a person, will He not be one person among others? So, for the greater glory of God Himself, it is felt that He must be taken out of the sphere of personality. The implicit solution is either to consider Him as supra-Personal or to consider Him non-Personal.

The first solution implies that we should cease to regard God as just one being among a multitude of other beings and regard Him as Being itself. Then the Infinite becomes free of the limitations of the finite. But no Monotheist will ever regard such a thing as God. Why should man so noble in reason and in action so like an angel stand in awe and bow before something that he knows is only a figment of the imagination of some people? As for a non-Personal God, a God without any qualities, we shall let Feuerbach himself answer them. Says he :

A God who is injured by determinate qualities has not the strength to exist. Qualities are the fire, the vital breath, the oxygen, the salt of existence. An existence in general, existence without qualities, is an insipidity and an absurdity.¹

Goethe, the great German poet, makes the whole attempt to withdraw personality from God a matter of supreme jest. Says he:

What boots me your aversion
To the All and One?
The Professor is a person,
God is none.²

Karl Barth, however, takes a more serious view of the matter. To Goethe it was a piece of unconscious irony; to Barth it was a piece

¹ Quoted in article by John Hicks from *Das Wesen Christentums*. (Macmillan)

² Quoted from *Der Pantheist* in 'Existence of God'. H. Gollwitzer. (S.C.M. Press), p. 187.

of deliberate and blasphemous presumption. Man wants to invest God with the attribute of Infinity and put Him away, while he the finite can remain master of the situation. Says Barth :

Behind and above His (God's) whole infinity there towers all the time the comforting certainty that the finite being itself, as subject of this infinite predicate is undoubtedly the person at work, supreme in thought and definitions over the infinite¹ . .

While the implication of the withdrawal of Personality from God suggested by Barth is certainly correct, I think we may agree with Goethe's charitable view that the Professor is largely unconscious of the irony of the situation.

The aversion to Personality in the Supreme Being also led to less ambitious theories. These are philosophical theories which we have noticed in the first Chapter. They are willing to accept almost anything else as Ultimate Reality except what is Personal. Some declare the ultimately real to be a Will and some an Unconscious Purpose or Life Force. It is innocently supposed that these are superior conceptions to Personality, without realising that they are actually abstractions from Personality itself.

The Moral objection to Monotheism is based on the presence of evil in the world. This objection has hardly been put better than by convinced Monotheists. Newman's well-known statement of it in his '*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*' is well known.² More vivid but much less well known is a passage on the subject from Charles Jefferson, a well-known American preacher of fifty years ago, which runs as follows :

The Universe which Science has discovered is a vast machine. Its wheels turn remorselessly. The winds are pitiless, the stars are cold. Not only is Nature indifferent to our cries, she shrieks against the Christian creed. History shrieks even louder than Nature. From the beginning, the life of man on earth has been a tragedy. The earth has been soaked again and

¹ *Church Dogmatics*—Vol. II—Part I, p. 290.

² See '*Apologia Pro Vita Sua*' (Everyman's), p. 218—So strikingly has Newman sometimes put the case against Christianity, that Thomas Huxley said that if he wanted to write a primer on Unbelief he would draw copiously from Newman's works.

again with blood. Empires have risen only to sink in smoke and agony. Races have flourished for a season and then vanished into oblivion. When one stands in the vast plain of human history, with the tombs of empires and races at his feet, and the past rises before him hideous and gory, it is not easy to stand between the vast machine of Nature and the vast slaughter-house of History and say with a voice that does not falter, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty'.¹

Certainly the pain, sorrow and evil in the world are not of recent discovery. The Buddha knew it all and decided against God altogether and so have many others. Some, however, have, as we found in the first chapter, taken refuge in the theory of a God of limited power, rather than a God of limited goodness.

Monotheism, therefore, has fought its way to its faith not in ignorance of the tragedy in the world but in the very face of it. An American Professor reported more than thirty years ago that the best sermon to which he had ever listened was that of a Jewish Rabbi on the word, 'Nevertheless'. The preacher had constantly referred to the sufferings and misfortunes that the Jewish race had encountered through the centuries; but he always wound up with the defiant declaration that nevertheless God is still God and the Lord of history. 'Ten thousand difficulties', said Cardinal Newman, 'do not make a doubt'. Centuries ago, the Prophet Habakkuk has said :

For though the fig tree shall not blossom
Neither shall fruit be in the vines ;
.... And the fields shall yield no meat ;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold
.... Yet will I rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.²

Those who reject the God of Monotheism on the ground of the presence of evil in the world are like those who give the verdict after listening to only one side of the case. There is also another side. On that other side, says Thomas Carlyle :

¹ Quoted by Dean W. Sperry from Report of the Council of Congregational Churches 1912.

² Hab. 3 : 17 & 18.

In this world with its wild whirling eddies and mad foam oceans, where men and nations perish as if without a law and judgment for an unjust thing is long delayed, dost thou think, therefore, there is no justice? It is what the fool hath said in his heart—I tell thee again there is nothing else but justice. One strong thing I find here below the just thing, the true thing.¹

The same opinion is echoed by J. A. Froude, a most competent historian :

The moral law is written on the tablets of eternity, for every false word or unrighteous deed, for cruelty and oppression—the price has to be paid at last, not always by the chief offender but paid by someone. Justice and truth alone endure.²

The point made by Carlyle and Froude is that, in spite of all evil and injustice we see, justice and truth triumph in the end. It must also be stressed that not merely at the end, but alongside of what is evil there may also be seen, at the same time, much that is good in the world. If there is selfishness, there is also self-sacrifice, if there is cowardice there is also heroism ; if there is grief there is also joy ; if there is cloud there is also the rainbow ; if there is ugliness there is also beauty. It is strange that eyes which are wide open to the evil in the world seem closed to what is good. Monotheism has always believed that what is good has more value as representative of Ultimate Reality than what is evil. It has believed that in spite of all the evil in the world, its faith is the most reasonable faith which can be held.

‘ Proofs ’ for Existence of God

If objections to Monotheism have been filed by its assailants through the centuries, it is natural that arguments in its favour would also have been filed by its defenders. However, they were not counter-arguments and therefore do not refute the objections we have considered and in fact, bear no relation to them. They were meant to uphold the belief that God does exist, even though he cannot be known by the senses. The older of them were not so much put forward as assumed.

¹ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*.

² Quoted in, ‘ Seven Ages ’ by a Gentleman with a Duster.

The older arguments are two in number and are called the 'Causal argument' and the 'Design argument', otherwise also known as the 'Cosmological argument' and the 'Teleological argument'. The first has also been called the '*Argumentum a contingentia mundi*'. (argument from the contingency of the world). In the 11th century a third and a more complicated argument was added called the 'Ontological argument'; and a fourth called the 'Moral Argument', was put forward by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century, not as an additional argument but as a substitute for the other three arguments, which he considered invalid.

The Causal argument is the older of the two original arguments and has always remained the argument of the common man. It must date back to the time when man first began to reason and has always had wide currency. The Hindu Scriptures use it frequently and Aristotle uses it.¹ William Blake (1757-1827) found it the best when dealing with little children and makes a child say to a lamb :

Little lamb, who made thee ?
Dost thou know who made thee ?
Gave thee life and bade thee feed
By the stream and over the mead.

And Napoleon at St. Helena, dealing with the sophisticated and sceptical General Bertrand, cut his discussion short by saying that if the latter did not realise the finality of the Causal argument, he as Emperor had made a mistake in making him a General. An astonishing case of one who found it difficult to get away from the power of the argument is that of Chairman Mao-Tse-Tung, who was almost equated with Communism in China. In one of his early poems, entitled 'Changsta', he says :

Eagles striking the sky
fish battling the currents of clear water,
All creatures fight for freedom
under the frosty sky.
Bewildered at empty space
I ask the great, gray earth
who controls the rise and fall.²

¹ A noted Muslim writer Moulana A. Kalam Azad has gone to the extent of saying that it is the one fundamental fact in which the Quran demands belief.

² 'One World' (A Magazine), May, 1976.

The argument has been attacked on the ground that it involves a *regressus and infinitum*; that is, if you say that the world had a cause, you may have to ask what caused that cause and so reason backwards unendingly. As against it, however it might be argued that the process applies only within the realm of the finite; here we are dealing with the realm of the finite as a whole, and saying that realm has been caused by what is more than the finite; and beyond the boundary line of the finite, the regress does not go. Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923), an outstanding metaphysician has said, 'The *argumentum a contingentia mundi* is the essential argument of metaphysics.'¹ Contingent things need a cause, not the things which are not. We shall also soon find that so strong is the power of the argument that it impresses not merely those who are in its favour, but that it can continue to haunt even those who want to dispose of it.

If the Causal Argument is one that appeals to the common man, the 'Design Argument' is one that appeals to the more sophisticated. Thus Archbishop William Temple favoured it as against the Causal Argument. We are also told that Thomas Carlyle waxed 'mightily enthusiastic' when he found that John Stuart Mill was willing to entertain it. Einstein couched his view in the quaint epigram, 'God is subtle but not malicious'; that is, the order is there even if you do not understand it. Even Kant, himself, in the very attempt to demolish the argument, cannot help observing, 'This argument deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and that most in conformity with the common reason of humanity' and rises to the height of eloquence in describing the magnificent 'spectacle of order, variety, beauty and conformity to ends', that we find in Nature.² However, Kant says that order is something we read into Nature and that after all the Design argument is another form of the Causal argument. And Radhakrishnan dismisses it with the remark that order depends on one's point of view; and even disorder may be regarded as order from another point of view.

The third argument to prove the existence of God is called the 'Ontological argument' (from Greek word 'On'; that which is)

¹ Quoted Pringle Pattison, 'The Idea of God', p. 251.

² *Critique of Pure Reason* (J. M. Dent and Sons), pp. 362, 363.

and was put forward by Anselm (1033-1109). This argument is expected to have its special appeal to philosophers (though it is not accepted by all of them). It can be put in many forms; the simplest is that we have an idea of Perfection; and since we ourselves are not accustomed to Perfection, only that which is Perfect, *i.e.*, God, could have put the argument into our minds. In answer to this, Kant asked whether our idea of having 100 thalers in our pocket would put the money there. If Anselm, had been living in the time of Kant, he might have replied 'But if you had 100 thalers in your pocket and had no means of acquiring them yourself, then somebody who had money must have put them there.'

Kant was the arch-foe of all the three traditional arguments. It was not, as we shall find, that he was an atheist by any means, but that he believed that these arguments could not serve the purpose for which they are meant. All the three arguments, he said, simply boiled down to the 'Ontological argument'; he might just well have said, that they boiled down to the Causal Argument. But the whole effort, he held, was fundamentally unsound because it demanded a leap from the Finite into the Infinite; and that leap was illegitimate. You could argue from effect to cause in physics, not in metaphysics. Arguments about anything in metaphysics are outside the scope of Pure Reason; if they are attempted you get tied up in knots. In our first Chapter we found how vividly H. L. Mansel pointed out the contradictions into which unaided Reason fell in such circumstances. Mansel was simply spelling out Kant's view in detail.

In place of the three traditional arguments, which he said were based on Pure Reason, Kant put forward an argument based on what he called 'Practical Reason'; this is, the argument which a little while earlier we called the 'Moral argument'. He says we find inside of us an insistent demand that we should always do the right thing; it is an unconditional demand, because we are called upon to do the right thing, whether we like it or not and whether the consequences of obeying the demand are to our advantage or not. It is also an absolute demand because it is insistent and refuses to be ignored. Because of its unconditional and absolute nature, Kant called it the 'Categorical Imperative'. If we are called upon to do the right thing, whether it suits us or not, obviously it does

not arise in us because of our own wish ; it has been planted in us from outside ; that is, it has been planted in us by God.

Kant thinks he has knocked out the basis of the three previous arguments and erects a new basis on which the argument for the existence of God could stand with unshakeable firmness. But is he not doing exactly what he accused those using the other arguments as doing—arguing from the Finite to the Infinite? Is he not after all repeating the Ontological argument or even the Causal argument in another form? He is ; and is aware of it. We said a little earlier that the Causal argument has continued to haunt even those who have tried to dispose of it. Summing up the whole discussion in his treatise on ‘ Practical Reason ’ he says:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe . . . the starry heavens above and the moral law within. I have not to search for them and conjecture them, as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond my horizon.¹

Try, however hard he might, we see Kant could not get away from the method of arguing from effect to cause. In effect, therefore, he is almost saying, ‘ follow my precept, do not follow my example ’.

The Relevance of Proofs

Why does Kant want to knock out by precept (if not example) ‘ proofs ’ for the existence of God? The reason is that since the process of logical deduction is devised to apply to the realm of the Finite, it cannot be used to cross the boundary line between the Finite and the Infinite. When it was pointed out that though the process of logical deduction was devised for the realm of the Finite, it could be used for deriving that whole realm from something beyond itself, *i.e.*, the Infinite, Kant refused to accept it—in theory at least.

In view of Kant’s dismissal of the three old Proofs as valid arguments for producing a belief in the existence of God, it becomes necessary for us to consider what the role of any proof in general is in human thought and, more particularly, to consider the role

¹ I. Kant *Critique of Practical Reason*, (Longman’s), p. 260.

of these proofs in regard to a belief in the existence of God. To start with, as a matter of hypothesis, we are faced with the fact that the role of a proof is not to find the truth, but to demonstrate (or prove) that truth has been found.

Truth may be found in a hundred (or more) ways. Cardinal Newman has described in a vivid passage the way in which the mind works: 'how one fact may suffice for a whole theory, one principle may create or sustain a system, one minute token is a clue to a large discovery, and the mind ranges to and fro and spreads out and advances with a swiftness that has become proverbial' and how it passes from point to point, going sometimes by an indication, at other times by a probability, or association, sometimes by falling back on a received law, sometimes by an impression or instinct or obscure memory, etc. Darwin arrived at his Theory of the 'Survival of the Fittest', when he was looking at the lushness of the vegetation in his garden. Newton is supposed to have arrived at the Law of Gravitation by seeing an apple falling to the ground (instead of rising into the air). And Archbishop William Temple has recorded how he belongs to the class of people to whom sudden enlightenment on things comes by looking into the fire or walking about their room. Logical deduction is one of these many different ways of arriving at the truth.

Though truth in practice may be arrived at in many ways, what is the guarantee that what is arrived at is the truth? A proof is the method of demonstrating that what has been arrived at in whatever way is logically deducible. Logic is a man-made science; and people believe that what has passed through the sieve of the process of logical deduction can be relied upon as true. Schopenhauer (1788-1860), the German philosopher, subjects to a withering attack the whole science of Geometry, which uses the logical method of deduction to prove what is already known, comparing it to a 'cowardly soldier who adds a wound to an enemy slain by another, and then boasts that he slew him himself.'¹ The attack is entirely misconceived; because the aim of geometry is not discovering but proving (e.g., that the three angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles etc.).

¹ *World as Will and Idea* (Routledge and Kegan Paul), Vol. I, p. 100.

What, however, is inherent in the whole function of proof is that an ignorance of its method or a failure to use it successfully need not be a reflexion on the truth concerned. Thus when Newton enunciated the Laws of Planetary Motions to Halley (the discoverer of the Comet that bears his name), Halley asked him what his proof for it all was and Newton said, ' Oh, I have known it for a long time ', and he produced his proof only two years later (but the planets in the meantime moved as they had always done by those laws). And when Ramanujan, the famous Indian Mathematical genius, arrived in Cambridge in 1913, T. H. Hardy found that though he had in many respects advanced far beyond all European mathematicians, he did not know the elements of proof ; and Hardy had to teach them to him. An ignorance of the method of proof, therefore, is no reflexion on the truth that is sought to be proved, nor, as every schoolmaster knows, does a failure to use it successfully.

But a more important question than the failure of particular proofs, is the general question about the applicability of the whole method of proof. Proof is the method of showing logical deducibility. Is that method all-comprehensive in its application ? Logic is a man-made science and it covers a wide field ; but the field is one over which human thought is master. Beyond that human thought falters and feels helpless. That is why F. H. Bradley has said that all arguments in metaphysics are bad arguments.

In dealing with the subject with which were concerned therefore, we are in a field in which the laws man has laid down do not apply and our arguments do not carry weight. Hence it is nothing but impertinence on the part of man to think that he can prove or disprove God. And the poet W. H. Auden has warned us that:

All proofs and disproofs we tender
Of His existence are returned unopened
To the sender.

But the supreme arguments against the status of ' Proofs ' in regard to God is that a God who must first be deduced logically before He is worshipped is not worth worshipping after He has been deduced.

Have these proofs then no relevance to the sphere in which they have been put forward? We have found that particular Proofs have an appeal to a particular class of people and they put them forward. And why do they put them forward? Because they already believe in God and think that the Proof they are putting forward best explains their belief. Anselm, who put forward the Ontological Proof, has himself said that his purpose in doing it was not to produce a belief in God but to help those who believed to understand. So fundamentally, these Proofs must not be treated as arguments but as expressions of faith, a faith in a subject too large to be put into human terms, but which seeks its best to accommodate itself to them.

Sources of Knowledge According to Monotheism

We shall find that while much of our correct knowledge, though not always arrived at by deduction, can still be proved by that method. And that is because we were dealing with the finite world, a world which we have mapped out, for which we have drawn up all rules of constitutional, legal and intellectual procedure. For our knowledge of what is beyond it, we must cross the boundary line. And the act by which we do so is in religious language called 'Faith'.

Because Faith cannot accord with the patterns of what we have known as reason, do we in crossing the boundary line jump into a world of wild fantasy? Is Faith the antithesis of reason, a permit for unreason and the right to imagine anything and everything we please? 'Faith', says Principal Jacks, 'is neither a substitute for reason nor an addition to it. Faith is nothing else than reason grown courageous, reason raised to its highest point and expanded to its widest vision'.¹ It is needless to say that it is not unreason; it is nothing but reason willing to adjust itself to wider horizons, to the necessity of making new beginnings, and of thinking in bolder terms. When, therefore, we say, as we often do, that Faith functions beyond the realm of reason, what we mean is that it does so in a realm which we have not mapped out and never can and where the rules of intellectual procedure we have laid down do not apply. It is not a world where reason has to stand on its head,

¹ L. P. Jacks, *Religious Perplexities*, p. 21.

but where it must brace itself to march forward into a region which it has not tamed, nor can ever hope to tame.

If, however, Faith is all that we can depend upon, monotheism would still be on insecure ground ; for, after all, faith is something human ; and if in a matter so important man should in the final analysis be left to his own resources, it would not merely mean that he is always left unsure, but it would also be a reflexion on God Himself. It would mean that during all the time man was trying to find out about God, God Himself has kept silent, has given no guidance and spoken no word. In a passage of wistful pathos in 'Phaedo', one of the Dialogues of Plato, a friend of Socrates says that in all matters outside his immediate ken a man 'should take the most irrefragable of human theories and let that be a raft upon which he sails through life, not without risk, I admit, if he cannot have some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him.'¹ The words 'if he cannot have some word of God etc.', were added more or less as a condition incapable of fulfilment. But that such a word has been spoken is a fundamental assumption of all monotheisms and is called 'Revelation'.

It is quite possible that those who do not accept the stand-point of monotheism in the matter will simply equate Revelation with the fallacy that in Deductive Logic is called *argumentum ad verecundiam* (argument from authority). In certain circumstances, of course, the argument is considered to have its uses. In courts of Law it is often the chief and only valid argument. That in a similar case, the Highest Court of the land had on a previous occasion pronounced a certain opinion is sufficient for a judge to base his own judgment on it. Or when a man wants to do something in a certain situation, to be told that the Law had forbidden that kind of an act is sufficient argument (if he is sensible) to make him refrain from it. But in a purely logical argument merely to quote somebody else's opinion is not enough to make him win.

Revelation is something different from an *argumentum ad verecundiam*. The latter simply introduces the dictum of another man into a debate in which men are the only participants and the issues

¹ W. C. Green Ed. *Dialogues of Plato, Selections* ; (Liveright N. Y.) p. 83.

are purely human. But Religion is not a process of debate in which men are the only participants nor the fundamental issues purely human. Aldous Huxley's remark that Revelation is not quite playing the game and that it is something like a man in a game of cards suddenly producing three aces from up his sleeve would have been a legitimate observation, if religion had been concerned only with man and religious issues could finally be settled by men ; but since it is not, the remark loses its point. Here we are in a field where only an intervention from outside can clinch an issue. In monotheism, therefore, the words, 'Thus said the Lord', have a finality about them that is completely decisive.

Emergence of Monotheism

We have considered the objections to Monotheism and the defence on its behalf. This would indicate that Monotheism was already existing before it could be attacked or defended. The origin of the monotheistic religions which exist now can all be dated ; but when the monotheistic insight first appeared in the history of the human race cannot of course be dated with any certainty, for the reason that recorded history is not long enough or wide enough to cover all that has been thought by man on earth.

There is of course, the dim and isolated figure of the Egyptian Pharaoh called Akhnaton (C. 1365-1358 B.C.) who was a monotheist of sorts. In his own country he was considered a heretic and his religion died with him ; but he cannot be called a monotheist in our sense of the term ; for his one God was the sun. If Zoroaster had lived about the earlier date of circa 1000 B.C. that used to be assigned to him, he could be considered one of the earliest monotheists ; for he taught a monotheism centering in Ahura Mazda ; but modern authorities are not willing to place him beyond about 650 B.C.

The Old Testament, as it has come down to us, makes it out that at the beginning of the world the population was homogeneous, and that the sovereignty of one God was accepted by all ; but the account of the Creation and the times that immediately followed could not have been written then. Therefore, a certain amount of reading back into that stage an idea of later times may be assumed. By the time of Abraham, the first figure with definitely human line-

ments, the population is represented as heterogeneous and he is called out from his people, because they were evidently polytheistic. But even here, we are in a legendary period. With the Exodus of Israel from Egypt in the 13th Century B.C., we are in definitely historical times. Though the five books attributed to Moses were not written by him, they have behind them a very old tradition; and we need not doubt that in Mosaic times the worship of Yahweh, and obedience and loyalty to Him, were made obligatory in Israel. But nor can there be any doubt that Israel also believed that though Yahweh was more powerful than the other gods, even as Yahweh protected them, so the other gods protected the people who worshipped them, and that for long there was a common tendency to pay them occasional homage.

And among the children of Israel the belief in the existence of other gods died hard. It lived through the times of David, Solomon and even of Elijah and Elisha. It was only in the beginning of what is called the 'Prophetic Age' *i.e.*, the 8th century B.C., that Israel was brought face to face with the idea that God was God not merely of Israel but of the whole earth. Prof. C. H. Dodd says that Amos (flourished c. 760-750 B.C.) created a revolution when he repudiated the older view and proclaimed that Yahweh was God of all nations.¹

If it was, however, during the period of the Babylonian captivity (586-538 B.C.) that the idea became a belief and the realisation took firm root among the Hebrews that Yahweh was not merely God of their own land, but of Babylon as well; and from thence onwards a clear and indisputable Monotheism became their creed. And it was in the words of the prophet, called Second Isaiah, who exercised his ministry about the end of the Captivity, that a declaration of it rang out unmistakably and beyond all doubt: 'I am the first and the last, beside me there is no God; Lord the Creator of the ends of the earth.' It was Yahweh who had raised up Babylon and who, when she became arrogant, pulled her down and raised up Cyrus, the Persian, to punish her.

After the return from Babylon there was no looking back. Yahweh was the one and only God and His glory, majesty and absolute transcendence began to be magnified more and more. His personal name ceased to be pronounced and instead the Jews

¹ *Authority of the Bible* (Nisbet), p. 109.

always said 'the Lord'; and in place of the proper name of God certain old honorific epithets began to gain greater currency and He began usually to be called 'El Shadday', (God Almighty), 'El Elyon' (the Exalted God) and 'El Olam' (the everlasting God). And increasingly there was a tendency to minimise the contact of God with man; it was the 'angel of Yahweh', 'the Face of Yahweh', 'the Glory of Yahweh' and 'the name of Yahweh' take the place of God Himself in His dealings with man. To such an extent had the concept of Transcendence begun to be stretched among the post-exilic Jews.

Dr. Yehezkel Kaufmann of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in a massive book on 'The Religion of Israel' written in Hebrew and condensed and translated into English into a mere 450 pages, strongly, and with great learning, contests the view taken by Christian Old Testament scholars that the early religion of Israel was monolatry and that monotheism emerged only later.¹ His contention is that the temptation of Israel in the early centuries was not to backslide into the worship of other gods than Yahweh, but to worship idols. Referring to their worship of the golden calf in the wilderness, he says, 'The sin is not that the people present Yahweh in the figure of an ox. . . . this image was not the image of a God, but a God in itself, the Bible embodies the conception of Israelite idolatry as fetishism.' That is, they did not worship the gods behind the idols, but only the idols. They knew nothing of the history of Baal, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom etc.; they saw Dagon the idol worshipped but they knew nothing of Dagon the god. Their sin was not that they worshipped other divine powers but that they worshipped men's handiwork. 'Idolatry', he says, 'entered Israel with the advent of silver and gold, horses and chariots.' He says, 'Despite appearances, Israel was not a 'polytheistic people'. According to him right from the start the religion of Israel was not monolatry or henotheism but Monotheism. That is, it was not that Israel merely worshipped only God but that it had always believed that there was only one God to worship.

It is hazardous to attempt in a paragraph to dispose of an argument that is set forth with such learning and such elaborateness. But three things may be said on the point: In the first place,

¹ Translated by Moshe Greenberg (1961). Allen and Unwin.

it would mean that Israel alone of all the races in the world in ancient days was free of Polytheism. Secondly, as Paul Tillich used to tell his classes at Union Seminary, symbols are never bare ; they always symbolise something. Thirdly, Kaufmann himself admits that appearances are against him. That is, the Bible tells us in no unmistakable terms that Israel did recognise and without doubt did worship the gods of other nations for a long time, and did so pretty frequently ; and we may, therefore, be excused for taking the Bible at its word.¹

It may perhaps be considered that there has been an undue concentration of attention upon the emergence of monotheism in one particular religion and that a very small religion, and one not even receiving separate treatment in this book. It must, however, be remembered that Mohammad always insisted that the religion he preached was simply the religion of Abraham, the Jewish Patriarch ; and that he treated all the great figures of the Old Testament from Adam, Noah, Lot, Ishmael and Moses right through Hebrew history as the prophets of Islam. And as for Christianity, the Old Testament, which is the Scripture of Judaism, is part of its own Scripture. So that in spite of the differences between Judaism, Islam and Christianity, the history we have just traced is a history to which the chief monotheistic religions look back.

The Divine Nature

We have noticed that the central idea behind monotheism has always had a fascination about it, not merely for those who have accepted it but even for those who have rejected it or have had nothing at all to do with it. The Buddha spent most of his life in trying to dissipate the idea of God ; and Buddhism is based on that teaching. Yet we have found that popular Buddhism has a tendency to clothe the Buddha with the very characteristics he denied. Nor is that tendency of recent origin. Dr. Conze tells

¹ The Aswan Papyri, discovered early in this century, reveal that the Jewish community in Egypt about the time of the Exile were worshipping other gods, besides Yahweh and their names are all Canaanite ; did the community bring Canaanite images with them into Egypt ? It had also no conception of a written code. It is clear therefore that an absolute monotheism is read back from a later time into an earlier time. Vide W. F. Lofthouse (O.U.P.), p. 218.

us that it started 250 years before Christ, in the time of the Emperor Asoka himself, who was the first to launch a nation-wide campaign on behalf of Buddhism. 'The Buddha', says he, 'became a kind of God, the highest God of all. The adoration of the Buddha was rendered the more concrete by the representation of the Buddha in human form.....'.¹ Karl Marx, the founder of Communism, looked upon all religion as superstition and thought it detrimental to the progress of mankind. Yet when his daughter came upon the Lord's Prayer for the first time, she was enthralled. 'If there be such a God, I can believe in Him', she said.²

But what is amazing about the matter is that it is the very points because of which objections were raised to the monotheistic conception which have been the ground of its appeal. Personality in the Transcendent was, we found, the subject of much criticism. Those who were satisfied with merely criticising it were content to say that a personal God was the projection of man's own self on a wider canvas. Those who were not satisfied with mere criticism were eager to suggest alternative concepts. The other point to which objection was taken was to the possibility of goodness in God, the reason for it being the presence of evil in the world. Yet these are the very characteristics in the monotheistic conception which constitute its attraction.

Personality is integral to the monotheistic conception. As we have seen the objection to it was that it embodied a natural and automatic act of man whereby he projected himself into a higher sphere and that it, after all, represented a piece of wishful thinking on his part. We have pointed out that it is a question-begging objection. It also betrays an ignorance of the phenomenon of Religion in the world. Rudolf Otto's observation on the subject is pertinent: 'If oxen (as Xenophanes said and many others after him have repeated) do seek to imagine their gods as oxen, man would seem to have an opposite ambition, having the strange predilection to see his gods as half or whole cattle, as calves, horses, crocodiles, elephants, birds, fishes, hybrid monstrosities etc.'³ So if we consider that personality is integral to the mono-

¹ E. Conze *Buddhism*, (Bruno Cassirer) p. 87.

² *Expository Times*, Aug. 1938.

³ Quoted H. H. Farmer, *Belief in God*, (Macmillans), p. 44.

theistic conception, it is not an automatic act ; neither is it a case of mere wishful-thinking. It may be said that it is there, because it represents the highest and the best possibility and it represents a piece of discriminatory thinking. So there is a coincidence of wishful thinking and discriminatory thinking. Does such a coincidence, in the case of man, point to anything beyond ? Even if it does, shall we not be still within the range of Zenophanes, joke ? For an animal may also think that it is doing its highest and best in thinking of its god in its own form.

Why then should it be different in the case of man ? It is because monotheists think that God first created man in His own image and breathed His own spirit unto him.¹ Therefore, as Emil Brunner points out, man himself is theomorphic, and in thinking of God as a Person, he is not making God anthropomorphic but, what He always has been, theomorphic. Man is giving God back His own.

The objection to Personality in God was an objection to the quality itself ; the objection to goodness in God, on the other hand, was not to the quality itself but due to another reason. That is, in the one case the objection was intrinsic to the subject, in the other extrinsic. In the case of Personality it was based on a 'should not be' ; in the case of goodness it is based on an 'it cannot be'. Nobody would object to goodness in God ; only, they say since there is evil in the world it cannot be that God is good. If they were speaking of a man, they say you can reconcile the presence of evil around him or even an occasional evil action on his own part is reconcilable with his innate goodness ; but because they are speaking about God they say the reconciliation is impossible. God cannot be a God of goodness and allow evil to prevail ; but since it does prevail it cannot be a good God who allows it.

Why then does monotheism believe in a good God, when it is aware of the presence of evil in the world ? We have said earlier that it does so in spite of its awareness of it. But behind the 'in spite of' there lurks a 'because of'. It is very presence of evil that makes men believe that in this world with so much evil in it, at least God must be good, and that He certainly can be relied

¹ Genesis 1 : 27 ; also Quran Sura-XV-29. Al Ghazzali, the famous Muslim theologian, also comments on the point.

upon. This is the argument that seems to be constantly uppermost in the mind of the Psalmist who in one place says, 'The nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing. The (evil) kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together.' Surely this will not do ; therefore, he says, 'He, that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall hold them in derision'¹. The writer is vexed and puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked. 'They are not in trouble as other men.'² Is wickedness to rule the earth ? The conviction forces itself on the writer : No, there is a good God in charge; He will not allow this wickedness to go on very long. The goodness of God was, therefore, looked upon as the one bulwark against evil.

However, if monotheists believe in the goodness of God for the sake of God, it may have to be pointed out to their opponents that on their own part they would do well to believe in the goodness of God for the sake of goodness. The monotheists believe in the goodness of God, in spite of much evil in the world ; but how can their opponents believe in any goodness at all, even if there is no evil in the world ? What is goodness, or right or justice ? Why should anyone prefer them to their opposites ? If goodness and right do not find their validation in God, they may well be considered figments of the imagination. Those who ask, 'How can God be considered good, when there is so much evil in the world ? would, therefore, do well to ask themselves, 'If God be not considered good, what do we mean by "goodness ?"'

It is the presence of Personality and Goodness in a Being of absolute transcendence that has been responsible for the fascination that Montheism has exercised over men and for their instinctive response to it. That there is something eternally transcendent over the world man has usually believed. But what invests the transcendent with its appeal, its relevance and power is that the transcendent is also personal and good. A concept of such power, he feels, cannot be very wide of the mark.

Yet, when we have said all this, it is very little we have said about God. It is recorded that Moses covered his face because

¹ Psalms : 2 : 1-4.

² Psalms : 73.

it was impossible for human eyes to behold the majesty of God ; and in the vision of Isaiah also, we read of the seraphim covering their faces with their wings before the throne of God. The Scriptures of the various monotheistic religions all speak in the same strain about Him. The Old Testament says ' I am the Lord, there is none else; besides me there is no God '. The New Testament refers to Him as ' the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God etc.' And the opening lines of the Quran pay tribute to

' Allah, the Beneficent, the merciful . . .
 Lord of the worlds
 Owner of the Day of Judgment. '

Yet having said all this, we are only too conscious that it is not much we have said ; and that is as it should be. If we can say everything about God, He would not be God. He stands before us and is around us in His awful majesty and ineffable mystery, utterly and infinitely above and beyond all possibility of human measurement and description. It is very little we can say about Him ; yet that little must be said.

However, monotheistic religions are certainly aware of the utter indispensability of the concept of the Immanence of God as otherwise He would not be relevant to us. Why then do they heighten the degree of stress on His Transcendence so much ? Because it is His Transcendence that makes His Immanence meaningful. ' God is our refuge and strength. A very present help in time of trouble ', says the Psalmist. ' Therefore, will we not fear ; though the earth do change and the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled etc.'¹ God is our refuge and strength and a very present help in time of trouble, precisely and solely because He can be depended on, though the mountains be removed and cast into the sea. That is, the Immanence of God has meaning only because of His Transcendence. The concept of Transcendence highlights the sovereignty and supremacy of God, because without it the worship of Him would be quite useless.

¹ Psalm : 46.

The Two Interpretations of Transcendence

While all Monotheism is agreed on the clear and undoubted Transcendence of God and His sovereignty and lordship over the universe, it has been possible to interpret this sovereignty in two different ways. Both are well meant ; but while the one brings us nearer to God the other takes us further away from Him. The one gives purpose and relevance to religion, the other imposes an obligation but makes that obligation aimless.

According to the first interpretation, the sovereignty of God is such that it can be used in our favour. In Greek and Roman religions, and in Hinduism, authority over the universe is often departmentalised. Though there is a supreme God in the background, prayers and intercessions are usually made to particular gods who have authority in the departments concerned. A Greek caught in a storm would appeal to Poseidon ; a Hindu desiring learning would appeal to Saraswathi, one desiring prosperity would appeal to Lakshmi. This delimitation was not always strictly observed and there were constant encroachments of one god into the sphere of another ; and the mutual jealousies, rivalries and favouritism among the gods often led to complications and upset all human calculations. In monotheism all such rivalries and jealousies are eliminated. The writ of one sovereign Lord runs through the universe. When in trouble or distress, devotees call upon just one God to intervene on their behalf.

And the witness of a countless number of men and women through the centuries is that God does often intervene ; such intervention is called a 'miracle'. A miracle is often construed to mean an interference with the course of Nature. While such interventions were believed in among polytheisms also, they did not have to face the challenge of modern science; and the gods were considered capable of breaking into Nature whenever they pleased. Now nature is treated with far greater deference. Modern Science would insist that Nature's rules are unbreakable ; and therefore, from a scientific point of view it is possible to insist that miracles do not happen.¹ This would set up an antithesis between

¹ Long before modern Science had developed to its present stage, David Hume also held that miracles do not occur, since they would produce a breach in the Law of Cause and Effect (which, of course, according to him does not exist).

God and Nature ; but according to the conception of monotheists God is sovereign Lord over Nature. Nature therefore according to them is not independent of Him but His servant ; and if this is so, it does not matter how God works, what He does cannot be unnatural. What Science means by 'Nature' is the chart it has drawn up of observed regularities. An intervention of God, however, may fall outside or inside it. Since according to Monotheism, Nature is the servant of God and under Him, nothing that He ever does can be contrary to Nature. While Science has no right to restrict the term 'Nature' to its own chart ; people, on the other hand, have no right either to withhold the term 'miracle' from what falls within that chart.

Generally, when men say that God has intervened they are not saying that they have seen the heavens opening and angels descending to earth. They are merely saying that in response to their prayer something has happened which otherwise need not have happened just then. John Richard Green records the following incident in the life of John Wesley. One day Wesley was utterly tired ; and to make things worse, his horse had developed lameness ; and Wesley thought, 'Cannot God heal either man or beast by any means, or without any?' and immediately, according to Wesley, 'My headache ceased and my horse's lameness in the same instant'¹. It is not out of the ordinary for a headache to cease without aspirin or for a horse's lameness to disappear without a suitable drug or injection from a veterinary surgeon. But it was certainly out of the ordinary that both should have taken place without such means, at the same time, and exactly when the man concerned wanted it. And when he says that it was in response to something (his inarticulate prayer), his opinion is entitled to some weight.

There is also an incident recorded in the life of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, sending one of his monks to buy some salt in the market ; when asked for the money he replied 'My treasures are in heaven'. And strangely enough, the monk was escorted on the way by a priest who gave him half a bushel of salt and fifty shillings. That the monk should have encountered a person who was favourably disposed to him and who also happened to have the very thing he

¹ J. R. Green *A Short History of the English People*—Ch. X : p. 719.

wanted at the time is difficult to explain except on the hypothesis that would have been assigned to it by Bernard himself. Whether Bernard prayed on the subject is not known : but his whole life was in an atmosphere of prayer in which the occurrence of miracles was fairly ordinary.

What makes men believe that God intervenes in response to prayer ? The reason is that the number of such reported incidents which otherwise need not have occurred, occurring at various levels, high and low, through the ages is practically illimitable. While such occurrences are difficult to account for on any other premise, to the monotheist the explanation is obvious. To say that the intervention of God in these cases cannot be verified is to ignore the fact that neither can His non-intervention. If it is asserted that they were mere coincidences, it would imply that, whereas in any other field these things would be looked upon as the effect of a cause, in the field of Religion they can only be 'coincidences', *i.e.*, inexplicable. In other words, it is held that the science of induction which operates in all other fields does not operate in the field of Religion. To stretch the term 'coincidence', which is resorted to only on very rare occasions, to cover such illimitable lengths is to deprive the term of the one meaning it has. Those who dismiss such interventions, because they are miracles, on the sole ground that 'miracles do not happen' are begging the question ; *i.e.*, asserting the very thing that they have to prove.¹

Monotheism, however, by no means asserts that all prayers are answered. One reason is that if we can manipulate God as we like, we become the masters and He the servant. If we have that power, we can just as well also dispense with Him. Secondly, it is not every prayer that should be answered.

What a World

Were this, if all our prayers were answered. Not
In famed Pandora's box were such vast ills

¹ It is said that once a man, who would on no account admit the occurrence of miracles, was asked what he would say if a person fell from the third storey and was not hurt. He said he would call it an accident ; when asked what he would call it if it happened a second time, he said he would call it a coincidence. Asked what he would say if it happened a third time he said he would call it a habit. The question was being begged under three different names.

As lie in human hearts. Should our desires,
Voiced one by one in prayer, ascend to God
And come back as events shaped to our wish
What chaos would result.¹

Even the prayers that should be answered are not often answered at the time and in the manner we want. If a prayer is worthy of being answered, Monotheism believes that it is answered in God's own good time and in His own way.

The second interpretation of the sovereignty of God is that it is such that He is beyond the reach of any influence of any sort whatsoever. Therefore, everything that happens or has happened has been due to God's own decree irrespective of any influence. In Hinduism also we found a similar inevitability about things that happened, that was incapable of being changed ; but there it was due to the Law of Karma, which impartially brought up the effects of a person's deeds, in life after life. Here it is said to be due solely to God's own decree, which in religious terminology is called 'Predestination'. Against such an interpretation of God's sovereignty some strong arguments can be brought forward :

- (1) To say that God decrees things, irrespective of human needs, situations, hopes, longing and prayers is to assert that God glories in His own arbitrariness.
- (2) It would put upon the shoulders of the Almighty the responsibility for all the evil and wickedness that history records or which we witness.
- (3) If God is not accessible to human prayer and intercession, all theistic religion which is founded on the possibility of such accessibility loses its meaning.

Among monotheisms, Islam has a strong tendency to favour this Theory ; but it is also aware of the dangers of accepting it in full. In the next chapter we shall see its struggle with the question and the solution at which it finally arrives. In Christianity, Augustine in the early centuries toyed with it somewhat ; but as a full-fledged theory it is associated with John Calvin, the 16th century Reformer. However, Christianity as a whole has never espoused it. Calvin

¹ Ella Wheeler Wilcox—*World's Great Religious Poetry* (Macmillan), p. 418.

still has many followers, but most of them keep clear of this Theory on this subject. Their reason is what H. R. Macintosh called the 'intolerable duplicity' it leads to in Christian thinking. This may be illustrated by the curious expedients resorted to by those who still cling to it. A Calvinistic preacher who realised the moral hazard, of attributing to God everything that happened in the world got over the difficulty by saying. 'The Almighty is compelled in His official capacity to do many things which He would scorn to do in his private capacity.'¹

However, even apart from all religious or moral considerations, the Theory of Predestination is a difficult Theory to sustain. If everything that is to happen in the Universe is simply to be a reproduction of God's own will, it seems rather pointless for Him to have created anything or anybody. The Law of Karma in Hinduism at least provides a logic for the inevitability of things; the theory of Predestination by God of everything that happens provides none. That God should want His will to be done always is one thing; but to say that what is actually done is always according to His will is another thing altogether. If the latter be true, it does not seem to be correct to think that God was actually engaged in Creation, when He was supposed to be doing so. If all possibility of valid and purposeful existence on the part of anybody and anything except Himself is dismissed, it would mean that the Universe is a piece of mere make-believe and that when God was supposed to be engaged in the act of Creation He was merely engaged in a piece of play-acting: a theory that wants to make God such a sovereign that only His will does actually operate renders meaningless all necessity of obeying His will.

The Goodness of the Transcendent and the Problems it Poses

If the Transcendent is a Person, we have seen that He must be considered good. If the Transcendent were not a person, of course, no problem arises. If it were like a 'Law of Nature', or a Process that goes on working like a machine, indifferent to the issues of life, or a blind will or a Life Force, or like Sankara's Reality beside

¹ Dealing with the Scottish Confession of 1560, which accepts Calvin's interpretation, Karl Barth in his Gifford Lectures says that Calvin's mistake was to consider God's decree apart from the fact of Christ. 'Knowledge of God etc.', p. 78 (Hodder & Stoughton).

which there is nothing or nobody else, there is no question to be asked and no point in asking it, even if there was. But if, as Monotheists do, we are to consider that the Transcendent is Personal and good, we run up against certain problems.

If God is good, we have to ask what goodness is, because there seems to be a lot of difference of opinion that exists among people as to whether a particular action, practice or custom is good or bad. And when we are not sure whether it is good or bad, how can we be sure on which side God is? If we are not sure then, what is the use of saying that God is good? Polygamy is considered wrong by Christianity; but is approved of in many other religions. About 50 years ago Harry Emerson Fosdick said that if he did not drink beer in Germany, people would have looked askance at him; but that if he did so in America they would have looked upon him exactly as they would have looked on a bank-robber. A light-house keeper in Britain, about forty or forty-five years ago, refused to light his lamp on a Sunday, as he would have been breaking the Sabbath if he did, and thus committing a sin. Sailors would have taken a different view of the matter, as did the Government of the day. Immanuel Kant tried to solve the problem by saying that the criterion of right and wrong is that of noting the effect of universalising it—and asking what would happen if everybody, everywhere did it.

About many such questions, there may be doubts and controversies among men, perhaps to the end of time; because each person or group in a particular place or time considers them in the context of its own heritage and environment, situation and circumstances. And perhaps the situation and circumstances do make a difference. Jesus did not break the Sabbath needlessly; but he did break it when necessary. For me to shut up a man in a cell may be wrong, but not for a judge in the case of a man who has committed a burglary. But through endless labyrinths of differing circumstances, there is a thread of what is right and good running through. We may not always be sure of what is right or good in particular circumstances, but we may be sure that God is.

However, the chief problem posed by a belief in a good God is something else. We have seen that Monotheism maintained its belief in spite of the presence of evil in the world, and to some extent

because of it. But we have not faced the problem of why a God, who is both transcendent and good, should allow the existence or operation of what is clearly and indubitably evil. Why should there be in the world so much that is criminal, wicked and unjust? Why should there be so much tragedy and sorrow? Why should there be so much room for disillusionment and frustration, why so much to cause hopelessness and despair? Monotheism, on its part, may be willing to hold on to its belief in the goodness of God, in spite of, or even because of, difficulties. But the question is why should there be these difficulties? Why should God allow them? The Theory of a Limited God does not answer the question, because such a God is not a transcendent God. There are, however, other answers which are put forward.

In the first place, it can be said that much of the evil in the world is due to man himself. Man is not a puppet but has a valid existence of his own and, therefore, has the liberty to defy and disobey God. In the second place, it can be held that God has not completed His work with the world; and, therefore, there are bound to be shortcomings and defects about it. The first answer does place the blame where it mostly belongs; because it cannot be denied that much of the tragedy in the world is self-induced by man himself. Nor can the second answer be easily dismissed. However, it must be admitted that neither answer, either in itself or together, constitutes a complete solution. Man does bring upon himself most of the trouble and tragedy in the world; but there would be still a good deal more to be accounted for. As for the second answer, though the world, as it is, may still be incomplete, we cannot contemplate with equanimity the idea that God should be trying an experiment at man's expense through endless centuries.

Are these the only possible answers? If they were, we would be assuming that God, on the one hand, and man, on the other, are the only agencies involved. We would be assuming that if anybody is warring against God, it is only man. Could man do it all by himself? Soon after the end of the Second World War, I was talking to an American Professor of German origin, and I said to him 'Do you think that Hitler and his henchman could by themselves have let loose all this tragedy on the world?' 'That bunch of paltry fellows!' he exclaimed in scorn. Though man

can work much mischief all by himself, as the sole explanation of the staggering totality of evil in the world he looks pitifully inadequate. Has not man often felt himself, as St. Paul did, doing the evil that he did not wish and unable to do the good that he did wish? That is, has not man often felt himself an instrument rather than the source of evil? Is not, therefore, another power besides man also responsible for it a distinct possibility?

And the answer of all Monotheisms is that such indeed is the case. They say there is such a power and that power is not of man's creation or dependent on man; but man, on the other hand, may become dependent on it and be its slave. And that power is not a mere tendency, an urge, a principle or a law but a person, and since he can be everywhere and always, a cosmic person.

In the Old Testament he is called by the Hebrew name 'Satan', which means 'the Adversary'. In the New Testament he is called both by that name and by the Greek name of '*diabolos*.' In Islam he is called 'Shaitan' or 'Iblis', both of which seem obvious modifications of the earlier words. In Zoroastrianism he is called *Angra Mainyu* or *Ahriman*. In the Old Testament, he seems to have begun his career not so much as the Devil but as the 'Devil's Advocate'. It seems to have been his duty merely to go about among people, on the look out for acts of sinfulness and to bring up accusations against them to God. In course of time his function seems to have undergone a change; it is as if the prosecuting counsel had turned into a criminal. By the 10th Century B.C., when the tradition of the 'Fall' embedded in the book of Genesis came to be committed to writing he seems to have taken on this character.¹ How long that tradition had prevailed in Israel before that, however, it is hard to say.

In the time of the New Testament the idea is taken for granted. Much physical, intellectual and moral evil is believed to be traceable to Satan. Once he is called 'Beelzebub'. One of the principal functions of the Messiah is believed to be the destruction of the work of Satan and his subordinates. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to pray for deliverance from the Evil One. St. Paul

¹ Peake's Commentary on the Bible (1962 Edition) T. Nelson & Sons, p. 175.

not merely makes constant references to Satan but refers to the powers of darkness arrayed against us. The writer of the First Epistle of St. Peter compares the devil to 'a roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour'.

Nevertheless, while Monotheisms are committed to the belief in a personal devil, quite a few monotheists now generally tend to regard his existence only in a figurative sense.¹ They cannot, of course, shut their eyes to the presence of evil in the world; but they cannot bring themselves to believe that the devil as a person does actually exist. The attitude of Paul Tillich, of whom we shall have something to say later, can certainly be understood. While he speaks constantly of the 'demonic powers' in the world, he never refers to the devil; he is almost saying 'These things are due to the devil, who, of course, does not exist'. It is like eating a cake one does not have. But Tillich's case is explicable; if he does not want to concede personality to God, how can he concede it to the devil? What, however, about the others whose monotheism is above suspicion?

The unwillingness to admit that there can be a personal devil is due to two reasons. In the first place, it is considered that such an admission will mean the recognition of a rival to God, which will be highly derogatory to God's majesty and dignity. In the second place, the attempts in the past to give a concrete representation of the devil have been such as to make people convinced that such a person has no right to exist.

It must be admitted that the first reason is well-intentioned. But it is the very sources which are most concerned with upholding the majesty of God, which also speak about the devil, viz., the sacred books of monotheisms. Evidently then, the existence of the devil does not automatically guarantee his capacity to be a rival to God. Does the discovery of a criminal, who wants to break the law prove the existence of a diarchy in the country? The possibility of such a diarchy must not rest merely on the fact that there is an agency contrary and detrimental to the Government, but on the fact of its equality in power and authority to what it is contrary and detrimental.

¹ For the rise of 'Covens' and the recrudescence of Satanism, however, vide article in the *Christian Century*, May 10th, 1972.

The second reason for an unwillingness to believe in the devil though not so well-founded as the first, has had a strong psychological effect on the situation. The physical appearance with which the devil had always been invested in popular art has led to a conviction that such a person had forfeited all right to existence and, if we could do anything about it, he should be abolished.¹ But a little reflexion would have shown that in view of the long record of success that the devil can show through the ages, if he was to be represented concretely at all, he was deserving of a far more alluring form than the one with which he has been invested.

But the point is, that if there was a devil, our unwillingness to recognise him could by no means abolish him. In fact, it would on the other hand, greatly further the success of his activities. To carry on without the fear of detection is the wish of anyone engaged in any kind of nefarious enterprise; to do so without even his existence being suspected will represent the acme of his ambition; God requires an open and unreserved acknowledgement of His existence; the preference of the devil would be to remain strictly incognito.

Monotheisms take the view that though the devil might never cease to be active his bolt has been shot. St. Paul says that we are living at the meeting point of two ages: when the dominion of Satan has come to an end and the dominion of God has begun to assert its undoubted superiority.² Karl Barth compares the situation to that in which a defeated enemy is still keeping up a sporadic fire or an occasional skirmish. Christian pronouncements on the subject of course, refer to the coming of Christ as marking the beginning of the subjugation of the devil and the initiation of a new age; but the power of the devil has never been considered by any monotheistic religion to be on a par with that of God.

So that while monotheisms believe in a devil, it is in a devil who has never been an equal of God. The fact of his mere existence does not attenuate the dignity and majesty of God. That it is

¹ It has been suggested that the modern representation of the devil is a throwback to the horned god of the stone age and other pagan deities. Vide article quoted above.

² I Cor. 10:11.

the will of God that will finally prevail in the Universe is the assertion of monotheisms and the bed-rock of human hope.

The Modern Incursion

There are, of course, very important differences between the respective monotheistic faiths ; but there is also a common element. It has been repeatedly said in this book that while, like all Religion in general, monotheism assumes a belief in the Transcendent standing over and against what it transcends and having control and direction over it, what distinguishes it from Religion in general is that it conceives of the Transcendent as Personal and Good.

Against this conception, there has in recent times been a fairly large-scale and violent incursion launched from various quarters. Though launched from different quarters all the attacks have two factors in common which entitle them to be looked upon more or less as just one movement. The first factor is that, unlike the attacks on Religion or God made in earlier times which were from without, this onslaught has come from within. No doubt, even in the last century Heinrich Heine, the German poet, unduly disturbed by the new theological movements of his day, had said, ' In Germany it is the theologians who want to put an end to the good God ' ; but the onslaught which he saw was different from what we have witnessed. The second common factor is that all of it professes to be made on behalf of the modern man.

The inter-connexion between the two factors and the difference it constitutes between the old-time attacks and the modern enterprise will be readily understood. The attacks in the past were inspired by a hatred of Religion and a scorn for it ; the attacks in recent times have been launched by theologians who claim to be inspired by a devotion to Religion. Their case is that Religion, as it is, is couched in out-worn and out-moded terms and categories, and must be restated in terms intelligible to the modern man. Major Fred Brown of the Salvation Army stating the case for them, said that to preach old-time religion to the modern man is like trying to sell binoculars in a school for the blind.¹

¹ Quoted by W. Barclay—*Expository Times*—Nov. 1970.

The restatement of Religion from time to time in terms intelligible to that particular era is, in principle, not merely legitimate but necessary. Karl Barth, the stoutest champion of orthodoxy in modern times, has himself said that one should preach with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. The Christian message was not to be looked upon as having been preached merely to people of the Middle East in the first century but as a living message and as meant for every period of time. Therefore, it may go without saying that the message of a living religion must always be intelligible to those who hear it.

It might, of course, be objected that the 'modern man' on whose behalf these champions want to wage their struggle is a figment of the imagination ; for where is he to be found ? But if we cannot find the modern man, we can find modern men ; they are all round us. Men of the Middle Ages differed from those of the first century ; and men of the Age of Enlightenment (18th century) from those who had lived a hundred years earlier. So that it can be taken for granted that those in the 20th century are, in a number of respects, not like those who lived in earlier times.

But a difference does not exist merely on the basis of time but may exist also on the basis of place. People in India or the Middle East even at the present time do not in many matters think as those in Europe and America ; and none of them in terms of those in New Guinea. Neither do time and place form the only basis of difference. We cannot say that people in the same era, and the same country and culture all think alike. As has been rightly pointed out, of three men working shoulder to shoulder in the same laboratory, one may be an atheist, one an agnostic and the third a fervent believer. So, however, necessary the task of reinterpretation or restatement may be, it will be seen that those who undertake to speak to modern men in particular have an extremely difficult task in locating their audience. But since the task has been undertaken by Western Theologians and since their restatements are very radical, we shall see that those they have in mind are Westerners who have come under the influence of modern Science and, these, they think, can no longer accept the Christian formulations because of it ; but though it is natural that they should be concerned particularly with Christianity, it

would be seen that the import of their message applied to other monotheisms also.

Though the task of locating the persons to be spoken to may be difficult, we have acknowledged that it is incumbent on those who are entrusted with a particular religious message to restate it from time to time. But theologians must realise that they are not in the same position as those who attack Religion from outside; the latter were bent on destroying religion, theologians have the task of preserving it; that is the whole point of their undertaking. So it must be expected that, it is towards that purpose that they will address themselves, it does not matter how strange and revolutionary be the form in which they express themselves.

For the fulfilment of this purpose it may be said that we have a right to hope that two criteria would be observed:

- (1) They should expound the message of the religion they are concerned with and not their own particular theory or philosophy, however disguised. They have the right to translate the message; but not the right to transform it; and certainly they do not have the right to substitute something else for it.
- (2) That while they have an obligation to their audience, their primary obligation is to their message. In other words, they must aim not so much at pleasing their audience by telling it what it wants, as putting forward their message in such a way as to please it.

If these criteria had been fulfilled by those whom we shall be considering in this section, we would not be looking upon their teaching as an incursion into the conception of monotheistic faith. In regard to the first criterion, we shall often find that the 'modern man' is just a pretext; for as Mr. Ronald Goety says in an article 'In turn in each case the modern man bears an uncanny resemblance to the individual theologian describing him'.¹ In regard to the second, it must be realised that the approval of an audience, while it is heartening, may often be dangerous and therefore, should hardly be valued as an end in itself. Particularly, it is

¹ *Christian Century*—Nov. 10th, 1971.

religious matters that the observance of this criterion is necessary ; for a religious message may have an intrinsic unacceptability about it which if eliminated will void the message of its whole point. Imagine what St. Paul's speech to the Athenians would have been, if he had been more anxious to accommodate himself to his audience, than he was.

The purpose of laying down these criteria is to remind those who have undertaken the task of restatement that when that restatement has become a transformation of the original message, they can no longer claim to be spokesmen for that message.

It must be borne in mind that though the teachings of those we shall be considering in this section may impinge on monotheism, they come from those who have been active in the field of Christian Theology. The incursion may be said to come from four different sources, *i.e.*, from the teachings of four major authors or their Schools, *viz.*, those of Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Van Buren and those of T. J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton. Van Buren is commonly associated with the last School and is actually claimed by it as its own ; but he is listed separately here for a sound reason.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965)

Paul Tillich was born in Germany and served as a Chaplain in the German army during the First World War. Having taught in that country in the Universities of Marburg, Dresden and Leipzig, in 1933 he transferred himself to the United States, where till his retirement in 1955 he was Professor of Systematic Theology at Union Seminary, New York. After that Harvard took him on as a Professor-at-large. He has written much ; but his views find their fullest expression in the three volumes of his 'Systematic Theology'. No one can fail to be impressed by what Dr. David Cairns calls his 'encyclopaedic knowledge and intellectual power' ; and Cairns, who is severely critical of his views, yet says, 'intellectually some of us do not reach much higher than his knees'.¹

Tillich sets out with a clear declaration that the Christian gospel should be made meaningful to modern men ; the average sermon,

¹ D. Cairns, *God Up There* (St. Andrews Press), p. 55.

he says, no longer reaches the man of today and it is utterly profitless to keep hurling theological bricks at him. To those who may have doubts as to what he is driving at he says that he is merely expounding what the Christian gospel wants to say and that it is not at all his intention to sell that gospel 'at a cut price'. Misgivings may arise in the minds of many as he goes about his task, because he is doing it in a way in which it has not been done before ; but he says that it is the only way to make the gospel meaningful in modern times.

Tillich calls the method he is following the method of 'Correlation' ; *i.e.*, it is a method of questions and answers. The gospel must answer questions that are asked ; answers to questions that are not asked may just as well not be given, nor should the questions themselves be irrelevant but must be derived from an analysis of human existence ; this, in effect, means to him the philosophy of Existentialism.

Heinz Zahrant says that even as Kant regarded Mathematics as the good luck of the human reason, so Tillich regards Existentialism as the natural ally of human reason.¹ The purpose of the philosophy of Existentialism is to rediscover and interpret human existence. Its emphasis is on man ; but men differ and this gives Tillich ample scope for discovering the men he wants. According to him the first question a man asks is why he should exist, instead of not-existing. And it is against the background of such a question, Tillich says, that the meaning of 'God' ought to be understood. What then is the meaning of 'God' ? Tillich says, He is 'The infinite power of being which resists the power of non-being'. Tillich does not profess in so doing to be saying anything new ; for, he says, that according to classical theology 'God is Being itself'. He insists that basically this is the one non-symbolic, statement that can be made about God. He uses other cognate terms besides this, to denote God, such as, 'the Ground of Being' 'Power of Being', 'Ground and Meaning of Being', etc.

Tillich also takes another step which is far more important than it may seem. He deliberately drops the immemorial figurative association of God with height. Of this association Edwyn Bevan

¹ H. Zahrant, *The Question of God* (Collins), p. 308.

says that 'the idea of height, as an essential characteristic of worth, was so interwoven in the very texture of all human languages that it is impossible even today to give in words a rendering of what was meant by the metaphor'.¹ And so important does Bevan consider that association that he devotes no less than fifty pages of closely printed text in his book to expounding its significance. Tillich shifts the association to depth not because, he says, he wants to suggest that God should be sought at the lowest level and not the highest but to declare that He is the really real among all things and events that offer themselves to us as reality.

Tillich is not evasive about the point he is driving at. He is categorically rejecting the ordinary theistic conception of God and gives his reason for it. Such a conception, he says, makes God 'a being besides others and as such a part of reality— He is seen as a self which has a world, as an ego which is related to a thou— as a cause separated from its effect—He is a being and not Being itself'.² Two competent writers use two different illustrations to clarify Tillich's meaning. Stewart Brown says that Tillich looks upon the God of Theism as a part of the picture, whereas to him (Tillich) it is the picture itself. Nels Ferre says that to Tillich the God of Theism is like one of the colours in a spectrum say red, for example, whereas the spectrum itself, which takes in many colours, is white.³ H. Zahrant, himself an ardent defender of Tillich, says that in Tillich's system 'God and the world are so closely interwoven that men can no longer tell the world from God and God from the world'.⁴ Tillich considers that his system transcends Theism; and many have preferred to use the term 'a-theism', when referring to it; this is a non-committal term and is simply meant to signify that, whatever it is, it is different from theism.

If Tillich's system is different from theism, where exactly do we place him? It is recorded that at the Annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, held in Chicago in 1960, the topic for discussion was, 'Is Tillich an Atheist?' A question in

¹ Edwyn Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (Fontana), p. 25.

² 'Courage to Be', p. 184—Quoted 'Do Religions Claims make Sense?', Stuart Brown (S.C.M.), p. 161.

³ Nels Ferre, *Searchlights on Contemporary Theology* (Harpers), p. 123.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

itself is not a verdict ; but the fact that it could be asked by a body of responsible scholars is itself significant. Alan Richardson, however, has no doubts on the point ; he says ' Tillich's fundamentally atheistic position is concealed by his incurable religiosity '.¹ And Helmut Gollwitzer also wants to make no bones on the point ; a-theism, according to him is nothing but atheism.²

Can we agree with such an attitude ? Can a philosophical difference from theism be equated with the stark and the simple position of atheism ? An atheist is a person who denies that there is a God. The Sanskrit term for one who denies that there is a God is *nāstika*. *Asti* means ' He or It is ' ; and the word *nāstika* denotes one who says that ' He is not '. Tillich by no means denies that God is. In a philosophic sense he no doubt says that the word ' exist ' does not apply to God ; but that is because he holds that the word ' exist ' refers to a lower plane. He does not, however, by any means say that there is no God. He may ' bury Him in undifferentiated Reality ' ; but that itself implies that he is there for Tillich to perform the act. In trying to reach out to a position higher than theism he may fall down to a position lower than theism ; in trying to be transpersonal he may merely be arriving at the impersonal ; but that is another matter.

Two questions, nevertheless, we are entitled to ask of Tillich :

- (1) Why should he imagine that he has discovered a new way of speaking to the modern generation, when what he is saying is as old as Parmenides, the Greek philosopher, who lived close to the 5th century B.C. ?
- (2) Where did he get the idea that he is speaking more intelligibly to modern men than the average Christian preacher ? Would it not be truer to say that the man is yet to be born who will find Tillich more intelligible than the average Christian preacher ?

But what exactly is Tillich's disservice to Monotheism and why should his teaching be considered an incursion into the mono-

¹ A. Richardson, *Religion in Contemporary Debate* (S.C.M.), p. 54.

² H. Gollwitzer, *The Existence of God* (S.C.M.), p. 47.

theistic conception of God? The disservice consists in his making use of his position as theologian to demand of us the acceptance as an exposition of the Christian Faith a view which he holds as a philosopher. We could not have found fault with him if he had used his status as a philosopher for doing it; but that view is expounded in his volumes entitled, 'Systematic Theology'. The fact that the 'hand is the hand of Esau' makes it inexcusable that 'the voice is the voice of Jacob'. An a-theistic and transpersonal view of God may not be atheistic, but it is obviously not theistic and personal, which is the Monotheistic conception of God. The matter could have been left alone, if he had been content to leave monotheists alone; but he does not want to do so. Monotheism says that (whatever else about God may be outside our ken), He does exist at the level that matters most to us, where we can approach Him and speak to Him. Tillich says it is atheistic to say so.¹ We do not want to call him an atheist, but if he insists on calling us atheists, we cannot be expected to call him a theist.

Tillich has certainly broken the first criterion we laid down. That he does not break the second criterion is not due to any lack of desire on his part, but due to his total inability to do so. He simply cannot speak intelligibly to the modern generation; if Christianity speaks a strange language to it, he speaks a stranger one. No one wants to contest his claims as a scholar and a thinker; but in the circumstances, that is what makes his disservice the more grievous.

The Disciple

Tillich has many readers, admirers and disciples, both among those who understand him and those who do not. But the most well-known among them is J. A. T. Robinson, formerly Bishop of Woolwich. The reasons for his accession to public notice are two viz: the advance publicity that he got in the secular Press with a summary of his book under the title, 'Our Image of God must Go' and secondly, the views he was putting forward, while little calculated to cause a stir if they came from a philosopher of Religion, were breath-taking when they came from a Bishop. Both circumstances, it will be noticed were purely adventitious and fortuitous.

¹ *Systematic Theology*, Vol. I. 238. (University of Chicago).

Robinson goes full tilt not merely against the older idea of a 'God up There', but against the later idea of a 'God Out There'. In effect, this means that he is against the idea that God is someone apart and distinct from the Universe. He wants to have nothing to do with supernaturalism in Religion and desires to regard as purely mythological most statements made about God. He approves of Feuerbach's statement that 'to predicate personality of God is nothing else than to declare personality as the absolute essence'.¹ He agrees at various points with Thomas Huxley, the famous agnostic, and his grandson Julian Huxley, the well-known naturalist. He is in agreement with Spinoza's position as endorsed by Tillich that God is another name for Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) in the sense of *natura naturans*.² And of course, he fully endorses Tillich's own stand that God is not a being but Being itself. He is only sorry, as he says in the Preface to his first book 'Honest to God', that he has not been radical enough.

Robinson, however, seeks to distinguish his position from ordinary Pantheism by calling it 'Panentheism', literally meaning 'God is in everything'; but he gives his case away by the example he gives to illustrate his position. He quotes a passage from an ex-Communist Rumanian writer, called Patru Dumitriu, in which the author says, 'God is in everything'. 'He is also composed of volcanoes, cancerous growths and tapeworms' and goes on to say, what for an ex-Communist is a difficult thing to say 'that the Central Committee and *Securisti* are also faces of God'.³ It is impossible to equate Robinson's 'Panentheism' with what we mean by 'Omnipresence'. Robinson's exposition of his system and the illustrations he uses to clarify his meaning contradict the name by which he wants to call it. If he wanted merely to remind the world that God is omnipresent, he need not have written a whole series of books to prove such a universally accepted idea; nor need his writings have caused such an uproar. If his system means anything, it seeks to abolish the distinction between the Creator and His creation.

Robinson, however, suffers from the constant habit of cutting the ground under his own feet, leaving considerable doubt in the

¹ *Honest to God*, p. 49 (S.C.M.).

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³ J. A. T. Robinson *Exploration into God*, (S.C.M.), p. 90.

minds of others as to where exactly he wants to stand. For example, having identified himself sufficiently with Tillich's position in his first book, he yet says in the Preface to a later one, where he was going to identify himself with it still further, that because of the influence of the Neo-orthodox theologians of the Continent on him 'an impersonal immanentism of a pantheistic kind for which I have been thought to be arguing has never been to me a living option'.¹ Having preached in a whole series of books that God was nothing but the 'depth of Being', when asked whether he prayed to 'the depth of his Being', he replied innocently, 'I pray to God as Father'.² Having written the Preface to the book, 'The New Essence of Christianity', by the 'Death of God' theologian, William Hamilton, with an untroubled conscience he writes the Foreword to the last work of that pillar of enlightened orthodoxy, his old teacher, C. H. Dodd.

Evidently, the procedure adopted by Robinson does not seem to pay. It is intelligible that when the Church is looking for an accredited spokesman it would not pick on him; but the 'unkindest cut' of all came from Tillich himself. For we are told that one of his last acts was to disown Robinson.³ People just do not seem to know which side he is on; but in fairness to him it may perhaps be said that he himself shares their ignorance.

Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976)

Rudolf Bultmann, born in Oldenburg in Germany, is chiefly associated with the University of Marburg, where he was Professor of New Testament Studies from 1921 to 1951. After leaving Marburg, he taught at Breslau and Giessen also. He was already a considerable figure in European theology from the early twenties but shot into the limelight chiefly after the end of World War II. Even in his nineties he was still continuing to write till his recent death (1976).

Like Tillich, Bultmann is also concerned with speaking to the modern generation. But unlike him he is speaking in terms which are intelligible to it. The chief difference, however, between the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.

² *Expository Times*, Feb. 1968.

³ D. Cairns *God Up There*, (St. Andrews Press), p. 76.

two lies in the fact that whereas Tillich completely disavowed the God of Theism and has even been accused of atheism, Bultmann is a Theist beyond doubt. Yet we have had to include him among those whose writings have caused an incursion into the monotheistic conception ; and the United Lutheran Protestant Church of Germany in 1952 came very close to a public condemnation of his theology and refrained from doing so only at the last minute. This means that in spite of his undoubted Theism there is still something about his teaching that gives rise to grave misgivings.

Nels Ferre, the American theologian, calls both Tillich and Bultmann complete Naturalists ; that is, Tillich is a Naturalist, because of his avowed a-theistic position ; Bultmann is a Naturalist in spite of his undoubtedly theistic position ; and for that reason he calls Bultmann 'our greatest hope and our biggest danger among Christian thinkers'.¹ Earlier in this chapter we came across Alan Richardson's pronouncement that Tillich has wrapped his atheistic philosophy with his incurable religiosity ; it may be said of Bultmann that he has wrapped his theology of Transcendence with an inveterate Pragmatism. Between a figure and the particular wrapping with which it is clothed there is of course a difference ; but the wrapping also says something of the figure ; and that is, that it is capable of being clothed in that particular wrapping. If Bultmann's teaching about Transcendence and Revelation can be wrapped in sheer Pragmatism, it is of the sort that can be so wrapped.

Curious as it may seem it was the very length to which Bultmann carried his Transcendentalism which made this not merely possible but natural and almost inevitable. He considered that all predicates and speech we used about God were 'not merely error and folly but sin'². To take up this attitude he required a special kind of philosophical basis ; and this is found in the writings of (the earlier) Martin Heidegger. It has been said that Tillich was only half an Existentialist and that Bultmann is a full one. It would be truer to say that he is a follower of the Existentialism of the earlier Heidegger in full.

¹ *Search-Lights of Contemporary Theology*, p. 108 ('Harpers').

² H. Gollwitzer Quoted *Existence of God*, (S.C.M.), p. 17.

We have seen a little earlier what basically is the aim of Existentialism. As a philosophy it had first been started by Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a brilliant and passionately committed Danish theologian, as an attack on Hegelianism, which threatened to dissolve man into the vastness of the Absolute Spirit. He wanted to safeguard the existence of man and prevent it from becoming a metaphysical entity hovering on the brink of nothingness. But to emphasise the existence of man could have more than one result ; and Existentialism began to be pulled in different directions, even as Hegelianism had been.

It is significant that the other great Existentialist of the 19th century was Nietzsche. This pull of Existentialism in contrary directions has continued into this century. Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre in France have definitely enlisted it in the cause of atheism ; whereas such eminent Christian theologians as Emil Brunner and Gabriel Marcel have used it for the opposite side. The Existentialism of Martin Heidegger took no side in the matter. He was not satisfied with atheism, nor did he feel that the question of God could be settled by philosophy ; so he pitched his philosophy beyond the issue of theism and atheism. He was concerned with man and his struggle for authentic existence.

This was just the kind of philosophy that Bultmann wanted. We cannot, he believed, talk objectively of God. If my child is ill, he said, I pray and it recovers, only I know why the tide has turned ; nobody else does. I cannot, therefore, say God has healed my child. If, on the other hand, I want to say that a doctor has healed my child, it is different. In the former case it was an inter-subjective experience ; in the second, it is an objective fact. Bultmann applies this even to our belief in God ; even here it is man who is at the centre, it is with him we are concerned. 'The understanding of God', says he, 'is genuine only when I understand myself here and now as the creature of God. . . . Belief in the almighty God is genuine only when it takes place in my very existence, as I surrender myself to the power of God'.¹ That is, our relationship to God and His relationship to us are matters of our own experience. They may be facts, but they are subjective

¹ R. Bultmann *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, (S.C.M.), p. 63.

facts and not facts of history which can be identified by others. He had found in Heidegger's philosophy a suitable wrapping for his teaching. But what is inside that wrapping is not what most people would call 'religion'.

Of course, Bultmann did this with the best of intentions, because he considered that what was actually presented as religion was a hindrance to the true purpose of religion, which as Martin Heidegger had said, was a struggle for our authentic existence in the world in which we live and which we know. And what is that world? Have you read, he asks, anywhere in the newspapers, 'that the political, social and economic affairs are performed by supernatural powers, such as God, angels or demons? Or have you read of such things in the novels of Thomas Mann, Ernest Junger, Thornton Wilder or Ernest Hemingway etc.?'¹ So though Bultmann believes fervently in God, he has shut the doors of the world in His face.

We, therefore, are shut up in this world with our own experiences. Bultmann has only himself to thank, if his view is often equated with that of Feuerbach, who looked upon all Theology as anthropology and all talk about God as talk about man. The difference is that Feuerbach did not believe in God but Bultmann does. However, the unbeliever and the believer talk the same language. But we may ask of Bultmann why he wants to confine this kind of an Existentialist attitude merely to God and the Transcendent and why it cannot be extended to the Scientific world-view itself? Man knows that he exists, but what guarantee is there that the world that the scientists, newspapers and novelists talk about exists? Sigmon Von Fersen, who deals with Existentialism in Rune's 'Dictionary of Philosophy' says, that according to it, 'Both the sources and elements of knowledge are sensations as they "exist" in our consciousness. There is no difference between the external and internal world as there is no natural phenomenon which could not be examined psychologically; it all has its "existence" in states of the mind.' So psychologically if the Existentialist attitude is to be applied consistently, even the world of Science and newspapers vanishes into thin air and we are left not with a

¹ *Vide Ibid.* (S.C.M.), p. 37.

closed world but with a closed self. So if Existentialism means business ; it cannot distinguish itself from Solipsism.¹

Our purpose here, however, is to deal with Bultmann's conception of God ; what is Bultmann's approach to the subject ? He sets out from man, his interests, his outlook, his preoccupations and the cultural and intellectual world in which he lives. This 'pragmatic way of thinking that sets out from man's interests', says Helmut Gollwitzer, 'leaves no room for the importance of the question of God Himself, of God's own interests, of God's own reality in Himself'.² Are we then to conclude that what is wrong with Bultmann's treatment of the subject is that there has been a lack of a sense of proportion ? We know of lecturers who, billed to speak on certain subjects, finish up without referring to certain aspects of those subjects which we consider important. Why do they do it ? Because to them those aspects are not important ; they feel that their lecture would be none the worse for what they had left out.

So we have to conclude that Bultmann's God is a God who can be left out of things. He is not the living God of monotheism, the creator and lord of the Universe, who can break into it at any time. All accounts that say that He did so or does so he calls 'myths' ; and most of his time is spent in knocking them out, and for that reason in theological circles he is chiefly associated with his programme of 'demythologisation'. From the point of view of monotheism, it is obvious that Bultmann's conception of God is an emasculated conception ; his God is a powerless God, who seems to exist merely by sufferance. Bultmann seems to have been overpowered by the temptation to say just what would please his audience and thus breaks the second criterion we laid down earlier in this section, and in doing so he also breaks the first criterion and substitutes his own view in place of what he is expected to expound.

If then God is one who can be left out of the world's calculations, what guarantee is there that He exists at all ? We have

¹ Solipsism (from Lat. *solus* (alone) *ipse* (himself) ; the theory that knowledge is confined to what is in one's own mind and does not extend to the world outside.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

only Bultmann's own guarantee ; but how does he himself know ? So people who leave his personal convictions alone can draw their conclusions only from his constantly reiterated teachings. Fritz Buri suggests that Bultmann's talk of God is itself ' a piece of illogically retained mythology '. Herbert Braun has felt himself free to pursue the matter still further to its logical conclusion. At the end of his ' Essay on Understanding the New Testament ', he informs his readers that he has managed to carry out his task without once using the word ' God ' at all.

Obviously this is the conclusion that may be drawn from his theology, when one is not aware of Bultmann's personal conviction or is prepared to attach sufficient weight to it. For it is reported that when a ' follower ' of Bultmann was expounding the master's teaching at a Conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches, a Russian delegate took him into a corner during an interval and said to him, ' We have such people in Russia also ; but we call them atheists '. Bultmann is certainly not an atheist, but the road that he has spent his life in paving may well lead others to atheism.

Paul Van Buren

Van Buren is not like Tillich or Bultmann seeking to be the founder of a distinctive School of Theology. He is the follower of a School of Philosophy which we have already considered, in the first Chapter. His claim to be included here is that, in the first place, he is a Theological Professor and, in the second place, he undertakes his commission on behalf of the modern generation. It is common to include him in the School which we shall be proceeding to consider next, *viz.*, the ' God is Dead ' School ; but he himself refuses that status. ' Today ', he says, ' We cannot understand Nietzsche's cry that God is Dead ; for if it were so, how could we know ? No, the word ' God ' is dead. '¹

It is clear what Van Buren's affiliation is ; he belongs to the School of Linguistic Analysis. He considers not merely any one particular conception of God or any one particular talk about God meaningless, but all talk about Him whatsoever. ' Whereof

¹ Van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel*, (S.C.M.), p. 103.

one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent', said Wittgenstein the great master of that School.¹ If Van Buren is obeying the master's instruction, he takes a clear 200 pages to do so.

Van Buren's test of meaningfulness, of course, lies in the possibility of Scientific verification. We have earlier dealt with its status and validity as a test at all in the field of religion. There, however, we were dealing with the contention of a School of Philosophy; here we are dealing with the contention of one who is by profession a theologian. But whoever may bring up the test, our criticism of it stands.

The method of Scientific verification is a reasonable criterion in the field knowable to Natural Science, where the senses are the only organs of knowledge; but a criterion devised to apply to that field cannot be used to judge anything outside that field. What those who talk about God hold is that the principle of scientific verifiability does not apply to discourse about God. To attempt to use it in this respect is like trying to apply the rules of Calculus to the Grammar and Syntax of the English Language.

'Finitum non-capax infiniti.—the Finite is incapable of (understanding) the Infinite'—said the ancients. If anyone now says 'But there is nothing like the Infinite; there is only the finite' the reply is, 'You mean the Infinite is not the Finite; that is exactly what we also mean'.

'The Death of God' School

Dr. E. W. Shidler traces the first appearance of the idea inspiring this School to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness.² This, however, is to strain history a little too much. The cry, however was raised in these very words at the end of the last century by Friedrich Nietzsche. But in the first place, Nietzsche was an atheist and there have been many atheists since the beginning of the world; secondly, he ruined his case by the extravagant fury that seemed to possess him and under the influence of which he was even willing to adopt such a hazardous method as the 'reversal

¹ Quoted *'Theology Today'*—July 1966, p. 183.

² *'Theology Today'*—July 1966, p. 183.

criterion' and saying, whatever a theologian feels to be true must be false; this is almost a criterion of truth'.¹

The School we are now considering is of far more recent origin. When Bishop Robinson's book, 'Honest to God' came out in 1963 some young men in America decided that Robinson was not radical enough and began to put out some literature of their own. Early in 1966, the Religious Editor of the 'New York Times', feeling that there was nothing on the Protestant side attracting as much attention as the *II Vatican Council*, spot-lighted this group of writers. On the 8th of April of that year the issue of the 'Time' Magazine came out with a lurid cover page, bearing the words, 'Is God Dead?' printed in bold red letters against a black background and containing inside an article on the subject running into five, three columned pages and illustrated by various pictures.

The School had been born. For sometime it monopolised all talk in theological circles. And even outside those circles it was common to hear the imaginary reactions of various prominent individuals on receipt of the dire news. It would not be true to say that there was any real alarm caused by the message that the School was trying to proclaim; but there was considerable surprise that there could be a body of responsible theologians who could proclaim such a message.

The 'Time' Magazine included three persons in the group: T. J. J. Altizer, Associate Professor of Religion in Emory University, Georgia; William Hamilton, Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Colgate Rochester Divinity School and Paul Van Buren of Temple University. Gabriel Vahanian is also often included in the list. We have seen why Van Buren should be left out and we shall soon see why Vahanian should also be left out. Speaking of himself, Altizer and Van Buren, Hamilton says that they represent a definite cross-section of society. 'The group', he says, 'has a strong sense of being in a particular place, urban America, and at a particular time; born in the twenties, just old enough (usually) to get into the Second World War, products

¹ Quoted from 'The Anti-Christ' in James Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul), p. 267.

of the affluent society, very conscious of being white'.¹ The information is sociologically interesting but does not seem pre-eminently to qualify the group to be the recipient of the news it wants to report.

If the School was brought to birth by the tremendous publicity it received, it is equally true that it was killed by the very same cause ; for that publicity drew upon it a tremendous volume of crushing high calibred criticism. The highly prestigious theological journal 'Theology Today' alone, in its July issue of 1966 devoted no less than four massive articles to the School. All its weaknesses and inconsistencies came in for sustained scrutiny and exposure. In particular, so copious was the ridicule poured upon it by Robert McAfee Brown, then of Stanford University, in what was called an 'uproarious' article that the School found it difficult to survive it. Three years later, the 'Time' Magazine came out with a cover page which asked, 'Is God Coming Back to Life?' But the obituary notice of the School was very belated ; it had died much earlier.

Altizer's position on the 'Death of God' is somewhat curious. It is as follows :

- (1) That the death of God is an actual historical event ; it is not that He has withdrawn or has been eclipsed ; He is dead.
- (2) The death may perhaps have occurred at a particular moment of history.²
- (3) That He died in Christ, *i.e.*, when Christ died on the Cross.³
- (4) Yet we must will the death of God.⁴
- (5) That at the crucifixion, God by an epiphany transformed Himself into Satan.⁵

All these statements on the same subject are hard to reconcile with one another ; and we can understand the savage hilarity

¹ T. J. J. Altizer and W. Hamilton, *Radical Theology of the Death of God*, (Penguins), p. 43.

² T. J. J. Altizer, *Gospel of Christian Atheism*, p. 103.

³, (⁴), & (⁵) *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 136, 113.

with which it was possible for McAfee Brown to fall upon Altizer's book and deal out such summary treatment to it. It is evident that to Altizer it was God the Father who had died on the Cross. But besides the epiphany referred to above, Altizer seems to believe that God having died also mingled with humanity (in what capacity is not certain). Commenting on his friend's position Hamilton says that 'we must be willing to stand on the grave of the God who is the symbol of transcendence, and participate in the utter desolation of the secular and profane and undergo the discipline of darkness, the dark night of the soul.'¹ This would not seem to be much of a gospel; but this is the gospel which Altizer wants to proclaim to the world.

Hamilton himself, is less blood-curdling than Altizer. His chief arguments are two; in the first place, the world, as it is, does not point to God; there might have been a time when it did, but not now, because of the problem of evil. In ancient times Elijah asked of the prophets of Baal where their God was, whether he had gone on a journey etc. Now we are compelled to join those prophets and ask of Elijah where his God has gone.² Secondly, there does not seem to be any need for God. However, Hamilton would like to encounter Him, not to use Him, but to enjoy Him.

Where both writers are entirely at one is in a 'No-saying' to God, i.e., to the transcendence of *Sein* (Being) and a 'Yes-saying' to human existence—*Dasein*, i.e., the total existence of the here and now. 'Absolute transcendence', says Altizer, 'is transformed into absolute immanence; being here and now (the post-Christian existential 'Now') draws into it all those powers which were once bestowed upon the Beyond.'³ Hamilton agrees: 'This combination', he says, 'of a certain kind of God-rejection with a certain kind of world-affirmation is the point where I join the Death of God movement.'⁴

What is, therefore, obvious, is that both writers are pure Immanentists. But the call of Immanentism is nothing new; it has

¹ W. Hamilton *New Essence of Christianity*, (Association Press, N.Y.), p. 55.

² *Radical Theology of the Death of God*, Altizer and Hamilton (Penguins), p. 105.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴ 'Theology Today', July, 1966, p. 278.

always been there. There has always been enough in the world to keep people occupied. And if Science has made a difference in making the whole world seem one vast machine absorbing all attention and regarding men as interchangeable parts, there has also been a growing refusal on the part of man to give up his individuality and be swallowed up into this immanentist machine; hence the desire for shorter hours of work, more leisure and the extravagance of various youth movements.

And the claim that the School is speaking for the modern man is badly undercut by certain authentic figures. The 'Time' Magazine itself in the article covering the School reports that in America, with which both the School and the Magazine were concerned 97% of the people confessed, according to a poll, to a belief in God; and that 120 million people in that country had claimed some Church affiliation and of these 44% reported weekly church attendance. Making all allowance for all the attractions offered by the modern world and the possibility for consequent religious indifference, we wonder if the percentage ever was very much higher, except under compulsion or because of convention. More significant than this is the fact that in the very generation for which the School claims to speak (1926-1950), while the population of U.S.A. increased by 28% the membership Christian Churches increased by 59.6% (Handbook of Christian Theology—Fontana, Collins, p. 285).

Vahanian shares in the School's belief that Immanentism is the prevailing tendency in modern culture. His point, however, is not that God is dead but that a certain conception of God is; and that the conception of God in any one era gets out-dated in the following era, and that therefore new forms and categories of expression are required, as one era succeeds another. Organised religion in its very attempt to make religion relevant to one era automatically reduces its relevance to the next era. Dr. David Willis in summing up Vahanian's position calls it a 'healthy iconoclasm' but adds that since religion is meant for men and not angels, institutional and cultural expressions are always quite necessary.¹

¹ *Theology Today*—July 1966. p. 278.

The Incursion Summed up

We said at the beginning of this whole section that the recent incursion into the monotheistic conception of God had been launched from various quarters. We took into account the fact that all of it, however, had been undertaken on behalf of the modern generation ; and we have found that it assumed that man living in the midst of modern culture was hostile to Transcendence. Therefore, it was all undertaken with just one end in view and that was to whittle down, if not eliminate, the concept of Transcendence in monotheistic religions, so that it would suit the modern generation. Because of this, though undertaken from various quarters, it can be looked upon as just one movement or enterprise.

Tillich is the most towering figure in the whole enterprise. He had the mistaken belief that a very old philosophy which he believed in represented the mind of 'the modern man'. According to that philosophy, Transcendence and Immanence meet and mingle into one whole ; and therefore Transcendence as such is *ipso facto* eliminated, as there is nothing standing over and above anything else. Tillich, however, is very loyal to the Christian Gospel, but feels that he cannot go against his rooted conviction that Theology must answer the questions asked by life ; but since these questions are raised by his philosophy, he is landed in Immanentism. He is thus an unwilling Immanentist.

Bultmann is an extreme Transcendentalist. Early in his career he had fought shoulder to shoulder with Karl Barth ; nor has he ever given up his transcendentalism. But owing to the support he had derived from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, the Existentialist Philosopher, and his own pre-occupation with what the 'modern man' is thinking, he has been willing to relegate God into the background. So extreme is his transcendentalism that he does this almost without noting it. If Bultmann's resulting position is Immanentism, he is an unconscious Immanentist.

Altizer and Hamilton, on the other hand, are defiant Immanentists. If perhaps Altizer has any grievance, it is that Nietzsche had lived a little before his time and had not permitted him to be the first on the scene to proclaim the sensational news of the death of God. As it is, he can only endorse what Nietzsche has said

in his 'Antichrist' that God had become a contradiction of life, a declaration of war against life, against Nature and the will to live.

But it was one thing for Nietzsche to say all this and another thing for Altizer and Hamilton. He was a wild and weird figure, hurling his diatribes against God and man in the interests of his imaginary superman. These are sober and accredited Professors of Theology. But the case has a still more curious element in it. Nietzsche was an acknowledged enemy of religion; these, on the other hand, say what he did, but claim to do so on behalf of religion. Dr. John Baillie used to relate the story of an atheistic friend of his who was strongly opposed to the Scheme of Church Union that was being mooted between the Presbyterians and the Anglicans, in Britain. When asked why he an atheist should be interested in the matter, he said, 'But I am a Presbyterian atheist'. That is, he was Presbyterian in spite of his atheism. Altizer and Hamilton, on the other hand, say that they have to deny God because of their Protestantism. Protestantism, says Hamilton, not only permits but requires this denial.¹ One may be permitted to observe that it requires some nerve to hand out this kind of teaching from day to day in Theological Seminaries.

Immanentism, as we have said earlier, has always been a live option in the world. There has always been enough in the world to make people think, 'This is all we need to be concerned with; and the chances are there is nothing more to be concerned with'. It is not merely that Monotheism has continued to proclaim its message in the face of such a situation, as we found in the first Chapter, it was this very situation that led men's minds to thoughts of the Transcendent. We saw that the age-long argument for the existence of God was entitled *argumentum a contingentia mundi*—the argument from the contingency of the world; where everything seems to pass away, surely there must be something that does not pass away.

They drift away. Ah God !! they drift for ever
 I watch the stream sweep onwards to the sea.
 I watch them drift—the poets and the statesmen;
 Ah God ! my God ! Thou wilt not drift away !

¹ *Radical Theology and the Death of God*, p. 32.

So sang Charles Kingsley. If this is based on an assumption that is logically challengeable it is based on an ineradicable faith that is much older than the science of logic.

Immanentism is a possible creed ; but it is also a creed that has a habit of landing you in Transcendence. Anyway, if it is to be proclaimed, let it not be proclaimed as a new creed, unknown till our Professors came on the scene.

V

ISLAM

PART I

SUNNI ISLAM

The Basic Declaration

It is difficult to find a more uncompromisingly defiant declaration of the basic tenet of monotheism than the chief part of the Adhān—the Muslim call to prayer: 'There is no god but God'—*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*. Five times a day from the minarets of hundreds of thousands mosques from Morocco to the ends of the South Eastern islands of Indonesia this declaration is flung out to the world. There are many things that Islam may tolerate or even excuse; the one thing it will not tolerate is anything that may even remotely be construed as an attempt to tinker with what is called *Tawhīd* or the 'Unity of God'. Therefore, the one unpardonable sin in Islam is *shirk* or 'Association'; i.e., associating anything with Allāh, so as to suggest equality with Him.

For an Arab standing alone with his camel, surrounded on all sides by endless stretches of desert, without a shred of vegetation or any other form of life or sign of movement anywhere within sight, to think of the Reality behind everything as one Supreme personal Being seems so natural. Therefore, Ernest Renan, the famous French savant of the 19th century, thought that he was but expressing the obvious when he said that monotheism was the natural religion of the desert. The prevalence in particular regions of the various types of religion now to be seen in the world seems to give support to the conclusion that the physical and geographical characteristics of a country have a determining influence on the religion prevailing there. The dense forests of Africa seem to suggest their being the proper environment for crude and uncontrollable types of polytheism; and the vast forests, the great rivers and mountains of India for the kind of polytheism that prevails there.

However, the effort to establish such a necessary connexion between the physical features of a country and the existence of the religion that prevails in it breaks down when it is faced with a little history. If India produced polytheisms, it also produced the two great atheistic religions of the world, Buddhism and Jainism. And Palestine, the country north of Arabia, and not essentially different from it in many of its features, produced a good deal of polytheism among the ancient Semite tribes : the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hittites, the Jebusites etc. We also know from the Bible that the Old Testament prophets had to wage an almost endless struggle against the temptation of Israel to lapse into idolatry.

More than all this is the simple fact that Islam itself is unintelligible except as a struggle against polytheism and idolatry. The spirit and the words of its insistent declaration show that it is a declaration of war, a relentless war. If there had been no enemy, there would have been no need for a declaration of war. Of the time when Islam began Ameer Ali says that the religion of the majority was of the lowest kind. 'Animals and plants, the gazelle, the horse, the camel, the palm tree and inorganic matter, like pieces of rock, stones etc. formed the principal objects of adoration.'¹ There were also various divinities that were worshipped ; the Quran itself mentions some of them.² For twelve years Muhammad waged an unsuccessful fight against the prevailing worship in Mecca and had to flee from it to the neighbouring city of Medina. He came back as conqueror only eight years later. So that, it may be seen that to call Islam the natural religion of the desert is an *ex post facto* judgment, like saying that Communism is the natural form of government that will suit countries like Russia and China, simply because they are there now and ignoring the fact that both countries had for long centuries been under Emperors.

The severe monotheism of Islam is a religion introduced into Arabia, almost imposed upon it, by Muhammad in the 7th century A.D. However, it is wrong because of that reason to call it 'Muhammadanism'. In the *Kalima* (the short creed) a part of which is

¹ Ameer Ali *The Spirit of Islam*, (Methuen), p. lxvii.

² L III—19 & 20.

embodied in the call for prayer, the declaration that Muhammad is the prophet of God is put along side with that which says that there is no god but Allah, almost suggesting that the second declaration has the same status as the first. The *Kalima* has long been fundamental to Islam and its words are whispered into the ears of every new born babe in the Muslim community. Though Muhammad hoped that the faithful 'would not turn their backs on him', in that very Sura itself in which he expresses that hope he is careful to say 'Muhammad is but a messenger'.¹ *Hadiths* (traditions) on the point notwithstanding, there is reason to believe that the second part of the short creed was added to the first, when in succeeding generations Muslims, confronting the Jews and the Christians had to distinguish their own religion from those which looked somewhat like theirs but were different. Even this would historically seem to be a deviation from the injunction he gave to those he sent out among them that the way in which they should distinguish themselves from the others was by testifying to God and doing good. Therefore, it is clear that in his own life-time, Muhammad could not have given the same creedal standing to belief in the *Risālat* (Prophethood) as he gave to the *Tawhīd*.

Very clearly and repeatedly Muhammad had insisted that he was only a 'messenger', and there had been many messengers before him. According to tradition there were, 124,000 of them, 25 of whom are mentioned in the Quran; 18 are from the Old Testament and 3 from the New Testament. The one place he reserved for himself among them was that he was the last and he corrected the others where they went wrong. Therefore, any suggestion that he himself had been devising the religion that Allah had through all time been trying to communicate to the world would have made Muhammad shudder with dismay.

The one stern uncompromising declaration that Islam makes is, 'There is no god, but God'. With this basic tenet as its battle cry it went forth on its career of conquest North and South, West and East. A short and categorical declaration has the advantage of easy intelligibility, ready impact and wide appeal.

¹ Quran III : 144.

The Simple and the Complex

But this very characteristic can also be made a ground for complaints from opposite sides. G. K. Chesterton, on the one hand, complains that 'Islam was a reaction towards simplicity, it was a violent simplification which turned out to be an over-simplification'.¹ On the other hand, it can also be subjected to criticism from another side. The dictum of Tacitus, the Roman historian, is well known 'Wanting to be brief', he said 'I became obscure'. Because much is left unsaid, the explication of what has been said requires more to be said ; so more has to be brought in ; and in the process more may be brought in than was intended. Therefore, the question arises as to how much should be brought in and how much left out. These points can always be subjects of doubt and dispute. That is, simplicity may often be the means of leading to complexity.

Rather innocently, on the same page of his book, Chesterton makes the remark that the simplicity of the Muslim declaration 'does not find its level in a larger philosophy'. He hardly knew that it was this very simplicity that led to a strenuous attempt towards achieving a larger philosophy and that this attempt engaged some of the acutest intellects of the day and led to a tremendous outburst of intellectual power in the Middle Ages. So much was this the case, that Roger Bacon (c 1214-1292), one of the pioneers of the European Renaissance, said that there could be no proper knowledge without a knowledge of the Arabic language.² And speaking of the times when Spain was under Muslim rule, Washington Irving, the 19th century American essayist, who had been in diplomatic service in Spain, says that, 'The Universities of Toledo, Cordova, Seville and Granada were sought by the pale student of other lands to acquaint himself with the sciences of the Arabs'. He records that in the 12th century, the University of Seville alone had no less than seventy 'illustrious Professors'. It is interesting to know that Pope Sylvester II (999-1003) had been a student at Cordova. Ameer Ali holds that Averroes influenced Abelard and was the precursor of Descartes, Hobbes

¹ *New Jerusalem* (Thos. Nelson), p. 35.

² The remark was occasioned by the massive contribution of the Arabs to Medicine, Astronomy, Philosophy and Mathematics (cf. Algebra from Al Jeber and Arabic numerals).

and Locke, and contends that if Charles Martel had not defeated the Muslims (in 732 near Poitiers) the European Renaissance would have taken place much earlier than it did.¹ So the simplicity of an original declaration not merely may not shut out the possibility of an attempt to find a larger philosophy ; it may actually lead to it.

All this was quite sometime after Muhammad. He himself had been too busy to devote time to finding a larger philosophy and had died a worn-out man at 63. Even the Quran, which embodies his message to the world, is not a systematic composition. It was dictated at white-heat and taken down on such material as was at hand ; it was only some two years after his death that the task of bringing it together into one book began.² D. B. Macdonald, the famous Islamic scholar, was fond of saying that Muhammad was a Prophet and a Poet and not a theologian or legislator.³ It may be said that he was the first two by nature and not the other two by temperament. It must also, however, be realised that theology and legislation require time and leisure and these Muhammad did not have. So the task of drawing out the implications of what he had and had not meant had to be left to those who came after him.

Nor could the task be done by any authoritative body. The Buddha had left behind the Sangha, towards which he had commanded the highest veneration, which in Thera Vāda it still enjoys. Its authority on points of doctrine always evokes respect. Christianity has the Church. In Islam the Companions of the Prophets, who had also belonged to his family circle, and who succeeded one another as the Caliphs, also enjoyed that power ; but all of them passed away within twenty-four years of his death. The Caliphs who were in power after them for the next 83 years had neither the qualifications nor the desire to give judgments on religious questions. Those of the next dynasty laid no claim to be theological arbiters either. The task, therefore, of spelling out what Islam was, had to be settled by long drawn out controversies,

¹ *Spirit of Islam*, p. 397.

² Orthodox opinion, however, holds that the book is a systematic composition, put together in the prophet's life-time.

³ The prophet did lay down many laws. What is meant is that he did not compile a code of comprehensive legislation.

the very brevity of Muhammad's basic message proving to be a breeding ground for problems that seemed insoluble.

The Setting for the Controversy

When in 41 A.H. (661 A.D.) the Caliphate passed into the hands of the Umayyad dynasty, Islam entered into a new era.¹ In the first place, the aura of religious sanctity which attached to the office, inherited from the Prophet, as long as it was occupied by his Companions could no longer exist. The mere passing of the office outside the circle certainly might not have made much of a difference, if not for the fact that the Umayyads also insisted on dissipating every vestige of that sanctity that might linger about the office they had wrested by violence from Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. They poisoned Ali's eldest son, Hasan, and murdered his second son Husain. Such acts, regarded as heinous by most Muslims, would show what view they took of their office. Of Mu'āwiyah, the first of the Umayyads, Ameer Ali, fearing that his own words as a Shi'a may be discounted, quotes the blistering words of Osborne who characterises him as astute, unscrupulous, pitiless and murderous. His son Yezīd if anything was worse than the father; it was he who put Ali's second son to death. The Umayyad line reigned from 661-745 A.D., but, except for Omar bin Abdul Aziz, there seems to have been little to choose between them.

Some Sunnis, however, hold Mu'āwiyah could not have been as bad as he is represented to be, since he was brought up by the Prophet. And Guillaume makes a strong protest against the view held about the Umayyads in general. He says that their service to the Islamic community in carrying Muslim power from the Atlantic to India was enormous; and that all the works of Arab historians about them were written under the succeeding dynasty, which had a strong interest in blackening their character. He says that researches in recent years have shown the debt the Muslims owed to them.² If he wants to say that under the Umayy-

¹ The letters A.H. mean 'After the Hirja' (Muhammad's evacuation from Mecca to Medina) which took place in 622 A.D. But the task of converting the years of the one era to those of the other cannot be done by merely adding or subtracting 622; for the Muslim year is lunar; and 100 Muslim years equal 97 years of the Christian era.

² Alfred Guillaume *Islam*, (Pelicans), p. 82.

yads Muslim power fanned out on both sides of the Middle East, not much research is needed to prove it. But that is not the point at issue.

About the political, administrative and military prowess of the Umayyads, there never was any doubt; but we are here concerned with something else. And about that the incidents, events, tendencies and situations within the kingdom speak only too plainly. There seems to be no doubt that in carrying out their policies they were very cruel, and that during their regime religious and moral standards were lax, if not low. Whether they openly avowed that they were not concerned with fasting and prayer, but only with ruling, that certainly seems to have been their attitude. Anyway, it is clear that they evoked no love on the part of their subjects.

The second reason why it must be said that when the new dynasty came to power Islam entered upon a new era is that the capital of the Muslim world shifted from Medina to Damascus. This represented an important change from two points of view. In the first place, Medina was the city where Muhammad had lived and worked for the ten most important years of his life. It was and would always have been full of his memories. Even in later times the association of his words and acts with definite spots in the city or its neighbourhood would have continued to be handed down from father to son. In such a physical environment, it would have been easy to have walked in the path laid down by Muhammad. To all such associations, Damascus was utterly alien; and because of this the compulsive power of these reminiscences would no longer be operative.

The geographical shift was also very important for another reason. Mecca and Medina had been in the heart of Arabia which was inhabited by the same kind of people and used to the same customs and traditions. Formerly, these people had been pagans; after Muhammad they had become Muslims. But Syria was at the frontier bordering another kind of world, in which people of different races, cultures and religions met and mingled. This would be particularly so in the capital city of Damascus itself. Coming into contact with individuals who came from these different backgrounds and an examination of their books made contact

with fresh currents of thought inevitable. Problems would arise where there had been none. The Islam of the Arab tribes could hardly be expected to remain just what it had been. In particular, Islam was now at close quarters and face to face with Greek thought and the Christian religion.

Greek thought was a thousand years old when Islam was born. Its audacity and freshness had swept the Roman conquerors into complete submission. It is still after the passage of 2500 years a potent force in the world of thought. What is called 'Greek thought' was born with Socrates (c 469-399 B.C.) and its basic assumption was to take nothing for granted, but to keep on asking questions, then keep on questioning the answers one after another, till one was satisfied beyond doubt that one had arrived at the truth. The meeting with Greek thought was an eye-opener to the Muslim intellectuals. They ran into Plato; also some of them later on dabbled with the neo-Platonic thought of Plotinus and Dionysius the Areopagite; but it was Aristotle, in particular who appealed to them. A little earlier we quoted statements to the effect that it was the contact with Muslim thought that stirred European intellect in the Middle Ages. But it must be admitted that it was contact with European thought that first stirred the Muslim centuries earlier. So that it may be said that while it was Muslim thought that stirred Europe to re-activate its spirit of inquiry in the Middle Ages, it was European thought that made Muslim thought to activate its own spirit of inquiry many centuries earlier.

The second thing that Islam confronted in this new world was the Christian religion. It may be seen from the Quran, that Muhammad himself had had some contacts with Christians and knew something of Christianity. But such contacts and knowledge could only have been gathered incidentally on his business trips to and from Mecca and could only be fragmentary. Here in Syria, however, one not merely met with Christians coming and going along the highway between the East and the West, that ran through Damascus, but one met with the fact of the Christian Church. Damascus had been a Christian city till the Muslims captured it in 635 A.D. Even after that the Christians were a considerable element in the city. Many of them were employed by the State; and so influential was the community that it had an official representative

at the court. St. John of Damascus (c.675-c.749) a theologian and 'a Doctor of the Church', held that position before he entered the Church and his father had held it before him. The Muslims must have seen three forms of the Church there: the Byzantine, the Nestorian and the Jacobite Monophysite. Christianity though a monotheism like Islam, apart from its difference in content, also had intellectual overtones that would have looked new and strange to the Muslims, who came from a closed community and were accustomed to the implicit acceptance of the beliefs that prevailed around them.

The Origins of the Controversy

The first question that arose in this new and different world was, 'Who is a Muslim?' And the question arose because of the very person who should have been the one to have answered it, viz.: the Caliph. The rulers of those days (like some even now) were not accustomed to having their deeds questioned or criticised. Malcontents and those of doubtful loyalty were dealt with rather summarily; and the commonest (and of course the easiest) form of summary punishment in those days was simple death. And the Umayyads could certainly have been expected to conform to the pattern all right. So people were not accustomed to raise inconvenient questions; and as the repercussions might have been decidedly unpleasant, they left them alone. If a man called himself a Muslim, it was enough for them; why pursue the matter further?

But a sect called the 'Khārijites' (literally — seceders; because they had seceded from Ali) were not willing to abide by the convenient wisdom of the majority. They insisted on asking the question, 'Who is a Muslim?' And they held that a Muslim must be characterised by absolute purity of conduct in all respects; the others were 'infidels'. In particular, they applied the test to the Umayyad Caliphs and found them wanting. On the other side, were the Murji'ites who said that it was not for us to judge whether an act was right or wrong; that was God's business; and how could man do anything God does not decree? If a man said he was a Muslim, we should accept him as such. Both parties soon passed from the scene, the one because it would leave nobody alone, the other because it wanted to leave everybody alone, the one because its standards were too strict, the other because it had no standards.

The dispute between the Khārijites and the Murji'ites had, however, dragged into the open a question far more fundamental than the original one. The original question was one about man ; but the question that had now arisen was primarily a question about God and only and incidentally about man. The Khārijites had held that each man was responsible for his own actions ; their opponents, on the other hand, had maintained that what a man did was what God had ordained ; and nothing that God had not ordained could happen. So the question that now stared Islam in the face was whether the doctrine of the sovereignty of God was violated, when it was said that a man was responsible for his own acts ? If it could be held that it was man who was responsible, did it not detract from God's absolute sovereignty ? In other words, what called for a decision was the implication of the doctrine of *Tawhīd*.

When the original sects passed away, their places were taken by others, Schools succeeding Schools, under different names. And they were led by men of far greater learning, skill and sense of responsibility than were possessed by the original disputants ; but the issue still remained the same. The controversy was carried on with unrelenting vigour and dragged on, with success veering from one side to the other. It was settled *de facto*, as far as Islam was concerned, about 250 years after it had started and *de jure* only after another 150 years had passed. But as far as non-Muslims are concerned, it may hardly be said to be considered settled as yet. And even Muslims themselves do not, in all cases, look upon the matter as settled once and for all, and from time to time come out with explanations and interpretations of the official solution, suggesting that much can still be said on both sides.

The first School which put on a theological basis the thesis adumbrated earlier by the Murji'ites were the *Jabariyyah* (jabr = compulsion). It was founded by Jahm bin Safwan. This School held that a man is not responsible for his acts, and that man has neither the will nor the capacity for acting on his own. Therefore, it held that man acts in a certain way, only because God has decreed that he should do so and he is, therefore, compelled to do so. This School soon merged into another called the *Sifātiyyah* (Attributionists). The difference between them and their predecessors was that the second School insisted on attributing to God certain qualities which the first did not ; both, however, held to the

doctrine of predestination. From the *Sifātiyyah* sprang the *Mushab-bihah*, who further claimed, that though God, as God, has His own peculiar qualities, yet in respect of many of His other qualities, like seeing, hearing etc., He is a being very much like us: i.e., that God is anthropomorphic.

The English word 'Predestination' translates the Arabic word *Taqdir*. It raises two questions : by whom and when ? In Hinduism what happens is decided by *Karma* or the consequences of the good and evil deeds done by the persons concerned in their previous births. In Islam with its strict monotheism and its lack of the doctrine of transmigration, the first question can refer only to God. If predestined, when ? The Quranic verses in support of Predestination cannot be stressed too much, since other verses may often be produced against them. But the Canonical Schools which came into being after the controversy had gone on for a considerable time, demand the belief, which is now popularly held, that the decrees of God are written down in the *Lawhul Mahful* or 'the Book of Destiny' ; i.e., long before the events themselves happen.

The *hadīth* or traditions, which have come down on the subject are in overwhelming support for very anterior decrees by God. One *hadīth* declares that the Apostle of God said, 'God wrote down the fate of men 50,000 years before He created the heavens and the earth'. Another common *hadīth* is to the effect that the very first thing God created was the Pen. And God said 'Write' ; it said 'What shall I write ?' and He said, 'Write down the divine decrees' ; and so it wrote down all that will be for all eternity. There are also certain gruesome traditions, one of which says that it has been decreed that 999 out of 1000 will go to Hell and that God does not care who goes where. A story of a higher quality, but strongly supporting the doctrinal position concerned, is about the Angel of Death and a man of whom he was in search. King Solomon, who had control of the winds, knowing what was afoot, caused the man to be carried off to China ; and the Angel, who had been ordered to get his man from China and had been puzzled as to why he should go to China for a man living in the Middle East, was agreeably surprised to see the man whom he had wanted in the very place to which he had been ordered. While these *hadīth* may be a warning that a tradition should not be taken at its face-value, they are an indication that if a strongly held doctrinal position

is considered to derive additional weight by traditions on the point, then such traditions may be depended on to spring up in abundance to supply the demand.¹ This, however, need not cast doubts on all *hadith* as such.

It has been maintained that the idea of Predestination was a heritage from Pre-Islamic times of a people who were by nature fatalistic. Ernest Renan holds that it was the misfortune of Islam that it should have fallen into the hands of races that were by nature fanatical. Both opinions make it out that the belief is a racial characteristic. Muhammad Ali, on the other hand holds that it was borrowed from non-Arab sources.² In either case, the suggestion is that it is not intrinsic to Islam as a religion.

The word 'Predestination' does not necessarily imply a decree from eternity; but if it means anything at all, it means a decree or decision anterior to the event. And since the doctrine of *Tawhīd* can be interpreted to mean that God as Sovereign decides everything that should take place in the world, the idea of Predestination certainly has found strong support in Islam from the earliest times. There might have been a difference of opinion about the exact time of the decree, but there seems to have been a strong and common tendency to believe in its priority to the act or event concerned.

The first accredited figure who took up the anti-Predestinarian view was Ma'bad al Juhani (d 699 A.D.). 'The kings who shed blood', he complained to a friend, 'say that they are doing God's work'. Obviously he must have repeated it to others, who were not his friends. The Umayyad ruler, Abdul Malik, though not concerned about theological niceties, could distinguish between any doctrine that invested his actions with divine authority and any that did not. Therefore, he promptly caused Juhani to be put to death. But the cause was taken up by his friend Imam Hasan to whom he had first complained. One great advantage that Hasan had was that he was living at Basra in Iraq, which though in the King's domain, still geographically allowed scope for sufficient

¹ Two of the *Hadith* quoted are from 'Islam and Christian Theology' Part I. Vol. 2 (Lutterworths), pp. 163 & 164 and one is from the Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden). In regard to the fecundity in the field of *hadith* Ameer Ali says 'The supply was in proportion to the demand', p. 436.

² 'Religion of Islam', p. 318.

physical manoeuvre to evade his reach. Here he carried on a class to propagate his views. One of his pupils, Abu Huzafa Wasil bin Ata (83-151 A.H. ; 700-748-'9 A.D.) withdrew from his class to found a School of his own, which thus acquired the name 'Mu'-tazila', meaning 'Dissenters'. Wasil's School in time became more famous than his master's, which therefore became merged in the pupil's.

There were three sources which gave an impetus to the School of Wasil : (1) the reaction from the misdeeds of the Ummayyad sovereigns, (2) the influence of the doctors of Medina and (3) Greek Philosophy.¹ The Ummayyad sovereigns could have been depended on to harden the views of all anti-Predestinarians. The doctors of Medina, who had inherited memories of the Prophet and his Companions, did not at all like the turn that theology was tending to take at Damascus. As heirs to the traditions of the genesis of Islam, they felt their views should be regarded as authoritative in all religions and theological matters. And Ameer Ali can make bold to say 'There can hardly be any doubt that a moderate Mu'-tazilism represented the views of Caliph Ali and the most liberal of his early descendants and probably of Muhammad himself'.² As for Greek philosophy it was a fresh wind blowing in the face of Muslim intellectuals ; for the right of human reason to inquire and think, and the freedom of man to act as he deemed proper were presuppositions of Greek thought. They, therefore, began to ask 'Were this right and freedom confined to a race that had lived a thousand years ago ? Are they not the common human heritage of all mankind ? Can an intellectual discipline that denied or ignored this be regarded as a pathway to Truth ?'

The Criteria of Judgment

Whatever might have been the sources from which the inspiration was derived, Sunni Islam had four criteria of varying degrees of authority by which the correctness of a conclusion was to be judged : (1) the Quran, (2) *Hadith* or—Tradition, (3) *Ijma* or consensus of the community and (4) *Qiyās* or analogical reasoning.

¹ Ameer Ali, *Spirit of Islam*, p. 415.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 415-416.

The Quran, considered to contain the *ipsissima verba* of God, has the highest authority. It consists of 114 chapters of uneven length and are divided into 6420 verses, (also of uneven length) without the *bismillah* or opening formula which is always the same and is omitted just once. If the authority of the Quran is overriding, should not a relevant quotation from it settle the point at issue in any dispute? The question draws our attention to the hitch involved in all religions when an attempt is made to settle disputes from the sacred book. Either both sides are able to produce different quotations from it, each to suit its own point of view or both sides are able to give differing interpretations of the same text. That is why quotations from the sacred books do not always conclude controversies. This need not be wondered at, as we daily find lawyers drawing arguments for opposite sides and judges arriving at different conclusions on the basis of the same legal enactment.

Next to the Quran, to the *Sunni* Muslim the *Sunna* has the highest authority. *Sunna* literally means 'a path or manner of life' and came to mean the body of the reported acts and words of the Prophet or his Companions: that is, the accepted Tradition about them which had come down. The *Sunna* is composed of particular *hadīths*, or statements of incidents; nevertheless the word *hadīth* as a collective noun, is often used interchangeably with *Sunna*, to denote the body of tradition. There are good reasons which account for the fact that a *hadīth* is not as authoritative as a Quranic text. In the first place, it is not considered inspired like the latter. Secondly, a *hadīth* did not in every case end up in an act or deed of Muhammad but might end up in those of one of his Companions. But the chief weakness of a *hadīth* is that, though it professes to go back to the origins of Islam, in every case a *hadīth* acquired anything like even a minimum acceptance, only after it had been in oral circulation for generations. For this reason every *hadīth* has to be preceded by a long *isnād* or chain of authorities to establish its credentials.

From very early times Muslims seem to have been well aware that they were treading on very slippery ground when they were dealing with this kind of a source for their religion. Hanbal (b 780 A.D. d 241 A.H.) seems to have found himself confronted with 700,000 *hadīths* and felt himself justified in selecting only

30,000 ; Al Bukhari (d 870 A.D.) seems to have been faced with only 150,000 ; but his conscience did not allow him to admit more than 2,762 into his collection. Though there are other collections, Al Bukhārī's is considered the best, as far as any collection can be.¹

But, however difficult it may be to decide on the genuineness of any particular hadīth, when it has been decided, *Sunni* Muslims will firmly abide by it on the principle that they are believers in what has been believed always. Nor is this trait peculiar to *Sunni* Islam. All religionists like to think what they believe is what has always been believed in. The Roman Catholic Church gives just this meaning to the word 'Catholicity'. But Dean Inge makes the devastating comment that what is meant in the case is, that which was laid down by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). That is, Tradition is at the mercy of those who say what it is.

Since the dispute that arose in Islam took place in the *Sunni* fold, it is obvious that next to the Quran both sides would have quoted *hadīth*, perhaps, one side more plentifully than the other. In the circumstances, therefore, it may seem strange that such a noted writer on Islam as A. J. Wensinck should say that Tradition has not preserved a single *hadīth* that favours *liberum arbitrium* (free-will).² The reason is obvious ; that the *hadīth* that favoured Free-will did not find favour with those who compiled the *hadīth* for *Sunni* Islam. This does not at all mean that such *hadīth*, were entirely lost to the world; They found their way into the collections of the other branch of Islam.

The third criterion recognised from the earliest times for judging the correctness of doctrine is *ijmā ul ummat* .. (unanimous consensus of the community). This is a sound rule for guiding an individual unable to reach a conclusion, on his own ; but it breaks down completely when a controversy arises between two parties, both of whom vehemently believe that they are right. In fact, the break down of *ijmā* is the very cause of the controversy ; and what is the cause cannot be prescribed as the cure. It was a rule that

¹ The work of compiling *hadīth* seems to have continued indefinitely, but those accepted as canonical besides the above are those of Muslim (d 875), Abu Da'ud (d 888), al Nasāi (d 915), al Tirmidhi (d 892) and Ibn Majah (d 896),

² A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed its Genesis and Development*, (Camb. University Press), p. 51.

could have held good in the time of the Prophet and his companions ; but once disputes arose later it lost its value.

The fourth criterion is *quiyās*, analogy. The locus classicus for *quiyās* is in an incident, where the Prophet approved of the answer of one Mu'adh, who was being sent to Yemen. Asked what he would do if he failed to find guidance for his conduct either in the Quran or the *Sunna*, he said he would find it by making a logical deduction. This does not in the least mean a blank cheque for the use of Reason ; it simply means an approval of the use of common sense in 'a tight situation'. The use of that faculty in such situations is not a distinctive Islamic practice. Even the ancient Polynesians would have resorted to it and the bush tribes of Africa would do the same thing. The other point about the use of *quiyās* is that it is a rule meant to apply to conduct and not to subtle points of theology. In a theological controversy both sides would claim to be guided by common sense.

Our examination of all the four criteria seems to leave us with the conclusion that in a controversy none of them seems to give absolute guidance. This does not mean that the issues at stake are not important, or that there is no possibility of judging anything, and everything is swinging loose. What it means is that in every controversy, both sides usually claim that all the criteria are on their side.

The Controversy

We found a little earlier that the whole controversy in Islam was sparked off by some people asking whether the Ummayyad sovereigns and those who condoned their acts could be called 'Muslims' and how the question had transformed itself into a question about God, and that what made the whole debate so vehement and prolonged was that, what was at stake was the most sacred principle of Islam, the principle of *Tawhīd*. If either of the two sides was shown as violating that principle, then it would not merely lose the battle, but would be put outside the pale of Islam. But either side, violently opposed to the other, held and had to hold with fervour, if not fury, that it alone was defending and espousing the sacred cause of *Tawhīd*. Nor is this to be greatly wondered at, since we find that each side in international disputes

at the present is usually holding that it is trying to preserve the peace of the world sacred to all men, while the other side is endangering it.

We also saw earlier that in Islam the most accredited party that was willing to assert that a man's actions were his own was called the 'Mu' tazilas'. This is the name by which they are known to history ; but the name owes its origin to a historical accident, in that its leader Wasil had separated from his master. Theologically, the position they took up was called the Quādrīte position (Quādr = power) ; that is, they believed man (also) had power. During the early stages of the controversy, they were also called *Mu'takallimūn* by their opponents, because they used the then new science of *kalām* or logic instead of quoting, as was proper, Quranic verses. In course of time, however, the use of this science became common if not indispensable to both sides.¹ But among a hard core of the ultra-orthodox or fanatical people the use of any such a human science in religious and theological discourse has always remained suspect.

The arguments that went back and forth between the two sides may be said to have taken place on the following lines : The Mu'tazilas said : God is great ; He created the Universe and all things therein ; we bow down before Him and adore Him. How then can you say that all the evil and wickedness that you see all around you every day comes from Him ? The other side retorted by saying : Yes, God is great. He created the Universe and all things therein. That means He alone really is and can be the creator of all that is in the Universe ; they are His handiwork, not His partners. If you say that evil comes from man or that he creates it, what is to prevent somebody else from saying man creates the good also ? You cannot pick and choose from among His handiwork and say He has created this and not that. The moment you say that, you admit that there is another creator besides God. You will then have created a 'partner' to God : you would have committed the ultimate sin in Islam, *shirk*.

The Mu' taziles would reply : Of course, we do draw a distinction between good and evil ; and we are expected to. Does not

¹ The term *Mu'takkallim* is one of the names used of God ; but there it is used non-technically, merely to mean 'the Speaker'.

God in the Quran constantly ask us to do good and avoid evil? Has He not appointed a Day of Judgment on which He will award reward and punishment according to our good and evil deeds? Is it not one of the articles of our faith that we should believe in that Day? If then the distinction between good and evil seems so fundamental in the sight of God, how can we ascribe the authorship of evil to Him? As to your charge that by attributing the authorship of evil to man, we are making man a 'partner' to God, is it not rather naive? If God is great, is He not great enough to create creatures who on their own volition can do things both good and evil? Is it not because of the very fact that He has put such power into man's hands, that He has appointed a Day of Judgment to award reward and punishment according to the way that they have used that power? Is not this a more reasonable way, in fact, the only way, of accounting for evil in the world and the appointment by God of a Day of Judgment? Man may do evil, God will not. Man may be unjust, God cannot be; for He is a God of Justice.

The orthodox party would reply: Now we see what you mean. You not merely want to make man a 'partner' of God, you also want to make certain abstract principles like Justice His 'partners'. Do you seriously suggest that Justice is something over and above God to which he should subject Himself? Do you mean to say that God is a slave to a thing like Justice, which is something which cannot even be properly defined? You seem to have ceased to believe in the absolutely Almighty God of Islam and have set up a God of your own, who should obey your standards.

The Mu'tazilas would retort: You say we are setting up a God not recognised by Islam and that we are making Him a slave of principles like Justice. You, on the other hand, are well on your way to making God meaningless. You are taking Justice outside God, you are separating God's character from God. Justice is of the very essence of God; you cannot conceive of God without it. The orthodox party would make reply saying: You seem to think that you can pack whatever you like into God's Essence. Do you not see that ex-hypothesi it would void the term 'Essence' of its meaning? The Essence of God is His very Being or self. If you say that God should necessarily be possessed of this or that quality you make Him the slave of such qualities. What then does

the Quran mean, the Mu'tazilas would ask, by characterising God with so many qualities? The other side would say there is nothing to prevent God from taking on qualities; but they do not belong to His Essence.

It is obvious that the two parties had begun 'to play on two different Tennis Courts'. The Mu'tazilas were on a court dealing with a concept of God, which included His character in His Essence; the other party were on a court dealing with a concept that had place only for His Being. The orthodox party held that God in His very Being simply is; He may take on qualities or may not. His Essence is that He simply is. But what is it 'to be'? Descartes in Europe in the 16th century placed it in thought: '*Cogito ergo sum*' (I think, therefore, I am). Somebody has pertinently observed on this that it does not prove that I exist, but that thought exists. With surer precision the early Muslim theologians placed it in the Will. '*Volo ergo sum*' (I will, therefore, I am). If you will, you are. But the fact of existence carries with it certain basic implications. It means 'Life, power, will, knowledge, hearing, seeing etc.' These are not optional to the ultimate Will that constitutes existence; they are 'existential' qualities, without which the will of a living person cannot be conceived. Schopenhauer in the 19th century could conceive of the Will as entirely bare. But he was frank enough to confess, 'My philosophy is not so constituted that any one can live by it'. No one can. Schopenhauer was blowing a philosophic bubble. The Muslim theologians were discussing Almighty God. So while they held the Will to be basic to the being of God, they took the existential qualities for granted.

The Mu'tazilas had taken their stand on the character or nature of God. They had talked knowledgeably about His Essence, as including various moral qualities, like Justice; and now they began to ask themselves what they actually knew of His Essence. The orthodox party could leave the subject alone; the Mu'tazilas, or rather the hot-heads in the party could not or would not leave it alone.

In the meantime, note must be taken of the entirely new atmosphere in which discussions were now taking place, of the changed political and intellectual influences at work and the new and powerful

impulses that were in the saddle. Gone were the days when free thought had to lift its head hesitantly, fearfully and at great risk while despotic and blood-thirsty rulers sat on the throne. The Abbaside dynasty that had ousted the Ummayyads in 127 A.H. (745 A.D.) was descended from Bani Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, who had stood by him in his darkest hour. Their claim to the Caliphate was accepted by most Muslims and did not need the support of the Predestinarian party. For nearly 500 years they enjoyed unchallenged supremacy.

Apart from this fact, through the greater part of their regime the Abbasides were genuinely anxious to bring the cultural standards of their people into line with the races and nations that they were encountering on their borders. With this end in view, they sent out emissaries into various countries to find out their cultural secrets. One Muslim went disguised as a Brahmin, into India to learn the secrets of Indian culture ; perhaps more than one did it. In fact, the name of their capital, Baghdad, itself is considered to be of Indian derivation.¹

Most of all, however, it is Greek Philosophy and Sciences that the Abbasides wanted their people to master. Translations were encouraged or commissioned on a wide scale by Mamun (813-833 A.D.) and his nephew Mutasim (218-227 A.H. ; 833-842 A.D.) ; and al Kindi (d 260 A.H.) the philosopher is said to have translated 265 books from Greek on all conceivable subjects. As said earlier, Aristotle was the chief passion of the Muslim intellectuals ; but they were attracted by Plato also. Sometimes they seem to have been led astray rather badly. In the reign of Mutasim, we are told, a Christian of Emessa translated the *Enneads* of Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist philosopher, into Arabic and called it, 'The Theology of Aristotle'. 'It was', says Macdonald, 'a piece of mischief that was far-reaching in its consequences'.

In theological matters, the sovereigns probably did not understand all the intricate points under discussion. But they were only too keenly aware that Mu'tazilas stood for progress and enlightenment and usually relied on Greek Philosophy. So they cast their

¹ From *Bhagavan* = God or Lord. The writer heard this affirmed by a Professor of Arabic.

weight solidly on their side. Speculation was, therefore, free and unfettered. The *avant garde* of the Mu'tazilas therefore felt free to range far and wide out after every will-o-the-wisp of Greek speculation. The difference was that the Greeks were philosophising without any religious obligation; the Mu'tazilas were supposed to be theologising and expounding the Islamic conception of God.

The advanced guard of the Mu'tazilas took up the argument where Wasil had left it. One of them named Abu Hudhyal Muhammad Al Alaf (d.c. 226 A.H.) asked what was meant by this Essence of God. The Mu'tazilas had said that God was omnipotent, because of his omnipotence, omniscient, because of His omniscience, just, because of His justice etc. That is, all that could be predicated of Him was already in his Essence. But Hudhyal said that the positive method of description would involve a subject-object relationship and that therefore, the only safe method of describing God was negatively. The Mu'tazilas had put so much into the Essence of God, that any description of it seemed inadequate. Therefore, he and his friends felt that the best description could be done only by denying the opposite of any quality, e.g., God is not unjust, God is not merciless etc. They did not realize that by the method of describing the Essence of God by sheer, un-ending negatives they were emptying it of all content. But having once begun they had to go on. So An Nazzam (d. 231 A.H.) who followed Hudhyal said God could do no wrong, not because He would not, but because He could not; His nature could not enable Him to do anything wrong or right; so bare had the concept of God become.

The *avant garde* of the Mu'tazilas were not following the guidance of Aristotelianism but of neo-Platonism and it was certainly turning their heads. M' a 'mar ibn Abbad took the line of thought which had been started to its logical conclusion. He spelt out the implications of what his predecessors had said and held that God merely could not do anything, He could not know anything either. For if what was known was inside Him, it would create duality within Him; if it was outside Him, it meant He would be dependent on it. This, of course, would violate the cardinal principle of *Tawhid*.

We see how the discussion has tended. The orthodox party had stressed the Will of God and to preserve the principle of *Tawhid*,

had stripped it bare of everything else. But however one might disapprove of the absoluteness and despotism that devolved on such a God, the God of the orthodox party was a living God. The Mu'tazilas had stressed the Essence or character of God to heighten His moral grandeur; they had, therefore, included His moral qualities in His Essence and made them inseparable from it. The advanced guard of the party wanting to invest that Essence with an unassailable philosophical status had merely succeeded in denuding the term of all meaning. The God that was allowed to remain was a philosophical and religious irrelevance.

Of the whole venture of these Mu'tazilas into the realm of metaphysics, D. B. Macdonald pertinently observes :

Thrown into the wide sea of Greek thought, their ideas expanded to bursting point and more than even the German metaphysicians, they had lost touch of the ground of ordinary life with its reasonable probabilities and were swinging loose on a wild hunt after ultimate truth.¹

We cannot, however, compare the *avant garde* of the Mu'tazilas with the German metaphysicians of the 19th century or with the Greek metaphysicians of an earlier time; for neither of the two latter groups pretended to expound religion, whereas these Mu'tazilas were supposed to lead a religious party. Their ultimate source of reference was what the Quran had said and Muhammad had meant; and setting out to prove that neither Muhammad nor the Quran had meant to wipe out man, they had almost wiped out God.

Though the ideas of the *avant garde* of the Mu'tazilas may loom large in the writings that have come down to us, their wild and weird speculations were confined to the lecture rooms of Basra, and were probably not known or understood by the bulk of the people. They certainly had little influence on any considerable section. The main body of the Mu'tazilas must have considered the advanced guard a nuisance and a liability and did not get lost in the speculations of their 'progressive' brethren. Their views, though

¹ D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional History*. (George Routledge & Sons), p. 140.

influenced by Greek Philosophy, were entirely reconcilable with sound Islamic thought. Nevertheless, they stood in clear opposition to those of the orthodox party.

The main body of the Mu'tazilas believed that evil cannot come from God ; that it comes from man, who is an effectual causal agent, capable of both good and evil ; and that man is born with an inherent right to freedom of thought. They believed that God does not do evil, because He is moral by nature ; and that to separate His moral qualities from Him would be to violate His unity ; they, therefore, called themselves ' The Party of Unity and Justice '. They believed that the God who created Heaven and earth should not be conceived of as man on a bigger scale ; that is, that He should not be conceived of anthropomorphically. And they believed that it was totally un-Islamic to think of the Quran as uncreated ; it came into being when God revealed it to the Prophet. To say that it was uncreated was not to honour God's word, but to violate God's unity and make a created thing equal to its creator.

We have seen already how the fortunes of the Mu'tazilas had changed for the better with the accession of the Abbaside dynasty to power. Unfortunately, however, the sovereigns believed that it was not enough merely to favour their views, but that it was also necessary to enforce them by law, i.e., by force and with all the resources at their command. The world, however, is such that there are certain limits to the power of the State ; the State can dictate, forbid, control or modify human action ; it cannot do the same with human thought. A thought or belief that is enforced by law and backed by force breeds suspicion about its validity and, in any case, provokes hostility against itself. And any party that is behind such action forfeits respect and invites virulent unpopularity.

This was exactly what happened to the Mu'taziles. They had not merely acquiesced in the action of the State, they had given it their strong support. The Abbasides had made the Mu'tazila tenets the religion of the State. This meant little to the people ; they went along as usual attending their mosques and reciting the Quran. Many theological doctrines and issues though important are often too rarefied to provoke violent feelings for or against.

Some, however, are simple enough to be easily understood and capable of arousing deep emotions. Mamun (198-218 AH ; 813-833 A.D.) a great political genius, who evidently over-rated the power of the State or did not understand mass psychology, brought such an issue to the fore. In 202 A.H. he gave orders that everybody should believe (as the Mu'tazilas did) that the Quran was created. The State officials could not be successful in an attempt to enforce belief, but their authority to do so was liable to much misuse.

Mamun's order evoked a storm of protest and intensified the prejudice and hatred that had been building up against the Mu'tazilas for a long time. The situation brought to the forefront one of the most heroic, though not one of the most likeable figures in Islam, Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d 241 AH). In other circumstances Hanbal might have spent his life as the teacher of a rather crude and naive conservatism, popular in the villages. Mamun's political indiscretion gave him the opportunity of being one of the most heroic figures. But a crisis in itself does not actually create a hero ; it merely gives him the opportunity. Thus during the French Revolution some ordinary persons became great figures, while others continued to be ordinary. Anybody who becomes a hero in a crisis must have it in him to be a hero, when the time comes ; and Hanbal had it in him ; he was cast in a heroic mould.

As leader of a cause, Hanbal had a great advantage ; he knew exactly where he stood. As the champion of the fight against the Mu'tazilas, there could be no doubt about his own position. His religion was of the crudest and most literalistic kind ; so he was against everything the Mu'tazilas stood for. But he was not merely against Mu'tazilite conclusions, he was also against the Mu'tazilite procedure in arriving at conclusions. '*Aql* (reason) had no place in religion : *naql* (revelation) was the only organ of knowledge in religion. Therefore, '*aql* should not be used even for refuting heresy ; because such a refutation would lead people to study the heresy itself. We may see, therefore, that while the greater part of the orthodox party had become convinced that the only way of meeting heretical conclusions arrived at by science of *kalām* was by employing that very science against them, Hanbal still retained in the most vehement manner the old hostility of the orthodox against *kalām*. His procedure in debate was to slam down

the time honoured views of religious authorities and say, 'Accept *bilā kayf wala tashbih*' (without question or comparison).

Hanbal had zeal ; he had fiery eloquence and above all he was hyper-orthodox. This was just the stuff the populace wanted and he gave it to them without stint. He did not have to preach to convert the populace ; he was merely voicing their own sentiment ; and they on their part were extremely happy to have found such an eloquent spokesmen. The seething resentment against the new doctrines forced upon them now broke into open revolt. Mu'tazim, the reigning Caliph, did just what was necessary to make things worse for the doctrine. He put Hanbal in prison and stamped out the revolt with the utmost severity. Unfortunately for him, Hanbal died in prison and practically the entire city of Baghdad lined the streets when his bier passed. And government's handling of the riots had only steeled the hearts of the populace.

As for the Mu'tazilas, they had to learn that a religious party that enlists State support to uphold its position has embarked on a very risky venture ; it has subjected itself to chances and changes that it may be totally unable to control. The Roman Catholic Church in France discovered it in the 18th century and the Orthodox Church in Russia discovered it in the 20th century. The State means those who are in power or the system that prevails ; therefore, the religious party that depends on either finds the ground cut under its feet when there is a change. What happened in Islam now was that the administrative system remained the same ; but the rulers had changed sides ; that is, the Abbaside dynasty remained in power, but the reigning monarchs had ceased to be Mu'tazilas. They had begun to cleave to the faith of the orthodox party. The Mu'tazilas already had the people against them ; now they had the rulers also against them.

The Solution

In argument, however, the Mu'tazilas still remained undisputed champions. Hanbal had merely hurled defiance at them. He would have thought that even the act of defeating them was below him. Such an attitude is the surest way of leaving victory in the hands of one's opponents. But the hour of doom for the Mu'tazilas had come ; and it came unexpectedly and was embodied in the

career of one Abu'l Hasan al Ash'ari. He was a descendant of Abu Musa al Ash'ari, who 200 years earlier had fought on the side of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. He was born at Basra in 260 A.H. ; 874 A.D. and was brought up as a Mu'tazila of Mu'tazilas ; he had been trained in their schools and undergone all their discipline in logic, philosophy and dialectics. One day in 300 A.H. he ascended the pulpit at Basra, tore away from him the Mu'tazila garments he wore and announced that he had embraced the faith of the fathers, i.e., the orthodox faith, and that not in a general way but in the way expounded by Hanbal, who was considered even by the orthodox as carrying orthodoxy beyond all reasonable limits. Al Ash'ari said that he had taken this action because of a vision, in which the Prophet had asked him to defend the traditional views ; he had inquired whether he should also drop his logic and the Prophet had replied, ' I did not ask you to drop your logic but to defend the traditional views '.

There had hardly been a more sensational event in the history of Islam for many years past and hardly anything more sensational for many years to come. It was an event that changed the whole course of Islamic history ; for Ash'ari was not merely a man with the right education and training to meet the crisis that had arisen in Islam, he was not merely a man of extra-ordinary ability, he was a genius. Ameer Ali, always quick to pick holes in the orthodox side, puts down Ash'ari's change of views partly to vanity and partly to ambition, because he knew that he was embracing the views of both the populace and the Sovereign.¹ But why cannot a man be given a little credit for sincerity, even though he is on the opposite side from yours ?

The long dominance of the Mu'tazilas was now over. When Ash'ari's old teacher Jubbai faced him, it was almost like Napoleon at Leipzig facing his old Marshal Bernadotte, who in the meantime had become King of Sweden and was therefore, on the other side, with a knowledge of all of Napoleon's manoeuvres and tactics. Henceforth the Mu'tazilas would be met with their own weapons ; it would be a battle between *Mu'takallimun* on either side. So in the matter of using *kalām* we see he certainly was not on Hanbal's side ; and he would cite the highest authority for it, for had not

¹ *Spirit of Islam*, p. 441.

the Prophet himself asked him to stick to *kalām*? But not merely on this point but on other points as well, though he could undoubtedly call himself orthodox, he was hardly entitled to call himself a Hanbalite, certainly not in the sense that Hanbal had used his words.

We have seen that while the advanced guard of the Mu'tazila party had strayed into weird speculative paths, the main body had stood solidly by the issues which had been at stake between them and the Traditionalists from the outset. And the crucial issue between them was the relationship of God's will to man's. The Traditionalists or the orthodox had firmly maintained that it was derogatory to the dignity of the Almighty to suggest that anything in the world could take place which was not according to His decree. The Mu'tazilas, on the other hand, had continued to hold that God was so great that he could create beings, who could exercise their will and even defy Him; and this was why the Quran had laid so much stress on the pursuance of the good and the avoidance of evil and why God had fixed a Day of judgment to reward and punish people according to their good and evil deeds.

Ash'ari was now the acknowledged leader of his party and, therefore, had to do his best to defend its tenets. But because of his acquaintance with Greek and Christian thought, he realised that as long as his party clung to its view in the form in which it did, it was laying itself open to unending attack; that, in fact, it was trying to defend the indefensible. The best remedy against attack always is to prevent it; the best way really to win a war is to avoid the possibility of further war.

On the chief issue between the two sides, Ash'ari put forward a solution, which is usually regarded as a compromise, as 'steering a middle path', and a transaction which allowed for a give and take for both sides. Whether this was so we shall soon see. What he said was that sovereignty and creativity were unchallengeably God's, but to make man a zero was to make all life meaningless. Man certainly was possessed of a will with which God had endowed him and which he could undoubtedly use. Ash'ari said both these positions were unchallengeable; but they were not irreconcilable. This implies that we acknowledge that creation is God's and that choice is man's. What does this mean when applied to the issue

under discussion ? It means that God creates the acts (as He alone can) ; and that man chooses his acts, good or bad, as he wills. God creates the acts ; man acquires whatever act he pleases ; this act of acquisition is called *kasb*. The orthodox could not say that God's sovereignty had been violated ; and their opponents could not say that man's will had been set at naught.

Outsiders who have tried to examine Ash'ari's formula have always wondered in what respect it could be regarded as a solution. Kenneth Cragg applies to it the same formula that Edward Caird, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, at the turn of the century, applied to Immanuel Kant. Caird said that Kant had handed back, wrapped in a parcel as answer, what he had received from Hume as the problem. Says he, ' In the early tenth century the discussion reached its term in the classical solution associated with Al Ash'ari. It gave the questions back in the form of an answer.'¹ If it was still held that God had already created whatever you might choose to do, one may ask, how much further has the solution progressed in regard to the problem of the relationship between God's decree and man's free-will. Ash'ari knew that going further would reopen the whole thing once again ; at one point all discussion must stop, because you are up against divine mystery. Here he said is where Hanbal's dictum should operate in acceptance : *bila kayf wala tashbih*.

Did, however, Ash'ari mean to make any substantial concession in the matter ? It would look as if Sweetman really goes to the heart of the matter. ' As a compromise ', says he, ' it is difficult to understand or interpret ; and in some directions, it is no compromise at all. On the other hand ', he says, ' it expresses the most uncompromising absolutism in its doctrine of the power of God, denying nature to things and lending itself to be the germinating ground of a devastating atomism '.² Ash'ari, in fact was making no compromise, he was merely making an explanation. He was explaining that the point of view of his party had been badly misunderstood. His party never denied man's free will ; what it had always held was that man had free-will, but it was a will exercised under God's sovereignty.

¹ *The Call of the Minaret* (Oxford University Press), p. 52.

² *Op. cit.*, Part 1—Vol. 2, p. 7.

Ash'ari's determination, however, was to uphold the basic position of the orthodox party not merely on this point but all along the line. And his procedure was to defend with full force only what could be defended and to make defensible what seemed to him indefensible, as it was ; that is, make explanations and, if necessary, modifications of existing formulations, but taking care that the basic intention of the doctrines was retained. In regard to God's Essence and His Qualities, he knew that his opponents were no more knowledgeable than he and that he could, therefore, defend the orthodox position as it was. So he stuck to the orthodox position that moral qualities did not belong to His Essence ; they were eternal ; they were there always, but they were not of His Essence but outside. The implication is that God is ; these qualities were there for God to choose from.

The 'existential' qualities on the other hand, clearly demanded a different treatment. What was the basic intention of the insistent declaration of the orthodox party that God sees, hears, knows, that he sits on a throne etc. ? It was to affirm that God is a living personality and that He cannot be reduced to a mere idea or a logical presupposition, as the Mu'tazilas, under the influence of Aristotelianism, often wanted to do. This was a position that certainly had to be defended to the last ; but what was unnecessary, impossible and, in fact, ridiculous to defend was the anthropomorphic view of the literalists, that for being a living personality God had to be like man on a much bigger scale.

Here, therefore, was a clear case that called for explanations, modification and adjustment. So he introduced his famous doctrine of *mukhālafā* or 'Difference'. God sees, but He does not see like men ; He hears, but does not hear like men ; that, in short, when terms are applied to God which can also be applied to men, the words are used in a different sense. It is impious to think that, for what He wants to do God requires the same organs as man does. We, therefore, discover that when Ash'ari said he was a Hanbalite, what he meant was that he was quite orthodox, but that he was certainly not expecting to defend all the crudities of Hanbal and his followers. If, therefore he was a Hanbalite at all, he was a Hanbalite with a 'difference'.

On the subject of the Quran (which had created a storm a hundred years earlier and was still a live issue) he does not even make an

explanation, he points out a mistake. Each side he said was speaking about a different thing. When an author dictates a book to a scribe, the book is said to come into being. Similarly, he said, his opponents were concerned with the act of revelation in which God communicated to Muhammad. What they called the Quran was what resulted by that revelation. 'What we call the Quran', he said, 'is what God revealed to Muhammad by this revelation; that did not originate with His act of communication. It was already with God to be communicated; it is simply the speech of God, coeval with him. How can it be said to have been created? So do you not see that the charge of bigotry against us is a bad mistake?'

Ash'ari was the high water-mark in the theology of Sunni Islam. There was, as we have said earlier, a fringe in his own party which was not satisfied with the manner in which he had achieved his victory. It was like some tribal warriors, who would feel aggrieved that anybody on their side should use muskets against the enemy, instead of the time-honoured weapons of bows and arrows. But the influence of his views on all right-thinking people of his party was decisive. No doubt, the acceptance of his opinions as final was only to come later. But his intervention in the debate was like the battle of Gettysburg in the American Civil War which was fought in 1863, whereas the treaty of peace between the Northern and Southern States was signed only in 1865; but after Gettysburg the cause of the South was a lost cause. No accredited theologian in Sunni Islam, after Ash'ari departed from the positions taken up by him. The reason for the failure immediately to grasp the full significance of Ash'ari's intervention was simple. People living too near an event do not have sufficient perspective. Thus Wendell Willkie, the American politician, who visited North Africa about the latter part of 1942, had only the faintest idea of the significance of the battle which was just then coming to an end at El Alamein. In Islam the controversy had been going on for a long time; one man had changed sides and had become the champion of the other side; but to what extent would his solutions hold and stand the test of time? Though Ash'ari's intervention was treated with respect ever since it took place, it was only later when devoted disciples formulated and systematised his positions that it was realised that Sunni Islam had to come as far as it could and had better go no further.

Ash'ari had lived in stormy times and been too deeply engaged in controversy to go into the full implications of his stand point. It is also possible that he may not have cared to do so. Though he is said to have written many books, only two of them are well known : a small book called 'Ibāna' and a larger one called *Maqālāt-ul-Islāmiyyin*.¹ In the latter he had laid down in broad outline the positions he had tried to maintain. It was a later disciple of his, one Abu Bakr Baquilani (d 1013 A.D.) who took it on himself to work out the full implications of his doctrine. He has been compared to Immanuel Kant, one of the greatest figures in European philosophy ; this is a tribute rather to his philosophical prowess than an indication of the actual branch of philosophy to which he devoted himself ; for Kant was an avowed epistemologist who had nothing but scorn for metaphysics. And Baquilani was nothing, if he was not a metaphysician. Macdonald calls his formulations 'a daring and fantastically metaphysical scheme, but exact, unflinching and consistent'.²

Ash'ari had dismissed all Aristotelian categories except Quality and Substance. 'But what are Qualities and what is Substance?' asked Baquilani. Qualities are accidents ; and Substance is a conglomeration of atoms. But of what kind can these ultimates be ? Are they space-atoms or time-atoms ? They can be neither concluded Baquilani ; so they can only be of momentary duration, meeting and parting always.

But why should they meet and part ? Is there a 'pre-established harmony', by which they do it, as Leibniz was later to suggest ? According to Leibniz, God had ordained this harmony before creation. Though this kind of thing would have suited the ultra-orthodox and popular view, according to which God had ordained everything from the outset, it did not fit into Ash'ari's thought, according to which God exercised immediate sovereignty over each act of man. Therefore Baquilani could not by any means accept the idea of a world that continued to run on the basis of 'cause' and 'effect'. In European Philosophy, David Hume was to knock

¹ He is, credited with the authorship of 300 books ; and the names of 99 of them are even given. If the tradition has any foundation, they were probably controversial pamphlets 'thrown off' during the heat of the fray.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

out the connexion between the two much later : Baquilani did it very much earlier. Hume did so for one reason and Baquilani for an altogether different one. Hume wanted to take God completely out of the picture and say you cannot prove God as cause from the fact of the world. What Baquilani wanted to say was that God was the only one in the picture who had a right to be there, because though the law of cause and effect did not function and still things were happening, it could be only God Himself, who could make them happen.

According to Baquilani, what we call the 'natural order is an ever-repeated miracle'.¹ There is no reason why anything should happen, why anything should do what it does and not something else, except simply that God wants it so. Fire burns, not because it must ; it burns only because God wants it to burn. If He had willed it otherwise, it might have made us shiver with cold. Snow, on the other hand, might have been hot, if God had so willed. When you dip your pen in ink and write, there is no reason why letters should form and take shape on paper ; it so happens only because God wants it so : God's will is the ever-present background to the unceasing permutations and combinations of this kaleidoscopic world. Sweetman's words that Ash'ari's point of view was paving the way for a devastating atomism are not a prophetic forecast but the record of an historical event that had happened 1000 years earlier.

Wensinck has observed that the conversion of Al Ash'ari marks the triumph of genuine Arab religion. That race and religion have a necessary connexion we have already denied. Apart from that, Ash'ari's conversion was only a personal matter ; but his achievement is a different matter. It ended an era. It ended the attempt of Greek Philosophy to take over Islam as a whole and make it its own religious vehicle. That attempt had been decidedly defeated. As an early Muslim writer put it, 'The Mu'tazilas held their heads high, till God sent Al Ash'ari and made them withdraw into their sesame shells'. Though, however, the attempt of Greek Philosophy to take over Islam as a whole had been defeated, it neither

¹ Shorter Encyclopaedia on Islam (Leiden) article by Macdonald.

meant the end of the appeal of Greek Philosophy to the Muslim intellect nor the disappearance of the effects left by the confrontation with it.

In the first place, it might be said that the era of Aristotelianism in Islam had only just begun. Of the great Muslim Aristotelians only al Kindi had preceded Ash'ari; and al Farabi (d 339 A.H. ; 950 A.D.) was a contemporary. But there were many others to come; some of them very outstanding, who were to spread the prestige of Islam far and wide. However, they were scholars and not religious leaders. Their influence on Sunni Islam was neither wide-spread nor deep-rooted.¹

In the second place, the effects of the confrontation left lasting impressions on Islam. For one thing, it cleared Islam of many of its old, primitive and tribal crudities. Nobody after Ash'ari wanted to calculate God's weight and size, nor inquire how many would be required to carry God's throne. It is a tribute to the genius of Ash'ari that he could bring about this change, without letting his own side feel that he was letting it down and the other side realise that he was effecting any change at all. Another important change brought about by the confrontation was that in religious debate hereafter while the ultimate appeal was always to the Quran, the method of argument would mostly be carried on according to a science learnt from the Greeks viz : *Kalām*.

In the third place, while Greek Philosophy certainly failed to take over Islam as a whole, apart from its elimination of certain crudities and its introduction of a new method of discourse into Sunni Islam, its spirit did enter into another branch of Islam, viz. Shi'a Islam. That branch of Islam comprises about 20% of those who profess Islam; and about the continued influence upon that branch of the great opponent that once historically confronted the whole of Islam as a whole there can be no doubt.² So though the Mu'tazila movement belongs to history, the spirit of Greek Philosophy which inspired it has found refuge with a minority in Islam, which though a minority is a substantial minority.

¹ For a full list of Muslim Aristotelians. vide—Spirit of Islam, p. 425.

² The total Muslim population of the world now is 538, 213, 900.

Sufism

Mysticism is to be found in many of the major religions in varying degrees. In Hinduism it is woven into the very texture of that religion, so much so that to write the history of Hindu mysticism would almost mean the writing of the history of that religion itself. In Christianity there have been various mystics, some well known and some totally unknown. But they were individuals and seemed to have been easily able to accommodate themselves within the Church. This applies particularly to the Roman Catholic Church. The cloisters of Roman Catholic monasteries provide an ideal home for mysticism. There, on the one hand, it would attract no undue public attention and, on the other, it could always be kept within bounds by the Abbots and Priors in charge of the institutions.

The case of Islam is different. Islam, certainly as it once was, may hardly seem to provide an ideal atmosphere for the growth of mysticism. Nevertheless, mysticism seems to have hung on to the fringe of Islam from the earliest times, never driven off altogether and for long not admitted within. How it finally came to be admitted within the fold of Islam we shall see as we go on. And it may be said that it was the one person who could have brought it in who finally did it ; so high was his standing in Islam and so much above suspicion or question his loyalty and devotion to that religion.

How the mystic movement arose in Islam has been a matter of speculation. It might have come from the Nestorian Christian monks, or from the heretical Gnostics or from any group from among the mixed population that could have been met with on the borders of the Islamic world, the Buddhist monks or the Hindu sannyasis wandering about in the deserts. It is possible that it might have come from any of these sources and it is equally possible that it did not. It has been held that it originated from the Prophet himself. However it might have arisen, there is no doubt how the opportunity for its growth was furnished : the cruelties and the moral laxity of the Umayyad regime drove many people into the desert.

The name 'Sūfi' itself is derived from the word 'suf', which means 'dyed-wool', a garment out of which material was favoured.

by those who took to the path of Sufism.¹ A peculiarity about mysticism in Islam is that, whereas mysticism is generally individualistic, that is, there are individual mystics within a community or organisation, in Islam because the Sūfis were usually living outside the community and wandering about together, they tended to get loosely organised among themselves. Conformity to orthodoxy may be enforced on individuals, if they live within an orthodox community; it may be to some extent enforced even when the mystics themselves form a community or organisation, if it is led by those who believe in orthodox practices. This had been the situation that prevailed in the time of the Ummayyads, when the leaders came from the better classes. But a change came over the movement when the Abbasides became rulers. The court in Baghdad was different from that of the Ummayyads in Damascus. The atmosphere was freer and life was normal; respectable people no longer found it necessary to betake themselves to the desert. So the movement got into the hands of 'the lower-middle or artisan classes of the towns, especially the mixed half-Persian, half-Aramised population of Baghdad'.²

Mysticism is a self-sufficient form of religion. It may for one reason or another conform to the practices of organised religion; but fundamentally the mystics rely on their own experience and do not need any verification or confirmation of it from any external authority. The injunctions of a sacred book or the prescribed rites of organised bodies will become gradually irrelevant in the light of their own experience. This is the course that mysticism will tend to take, unless it is duly regulated and kept under control by higher authorities and is in touch with the living religion outside its own fellowship. The Sūfis lacked this supervision by external authority and this touch with the outside world; but as long as the great saint Junaid (d 298 A.H.) was alive the movement is said to have kept within bounds. After him the leadership itself became indifferent to orthodoxy.

The first step in mysticism is for the mystic to devaluate himself into nothing *vis-a-vis* God. God is; he (the mystic) is not. Accord-

¹ There is also tradition that the word refers to the platform in a Mosque, where people used to pray even in the time of the Prophet.

² R. A. Nicholson *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, (Cambridge University Press), p. 51.

ingly, when Abu Said Fadull'lah died, he wanted to be referred to as 'Nobody', 'the son of Nobody'. But the question was bound to arise; 'If God only exists, what has really happened to me? After all I used to exist'. The answer seemed obvious: 'There is no difference between me and God'. Self-annihilation, therefore, has led to self-apotheosis. Abu Yazid al Bistami (d. end of 8th century) put the matter rather plainly: Some of his sayings were as follows:

(Pointing to various creatures in the world)

God said to me, 'All of them are my creatures, except thee and I replied 'So I am Thou and Thou art I.

Glory to me, how great is my majesty. I am not I, I, I because I am He, He, He'.

(When asked how he was that morning) 'Morning and evening apply to him, who hath attributes, I have none'.

In the Sūfi movement, the feeling of awe towards God, had departed. It is said that it had been replaced by love; but how could this be when all sense of distinction between God and man had gone it is difficult to understand. At least Sankarā was more realistic when he relegated love to a lower sphere, where identification between the Universal Self and the individual Self had not taken place. But al Hallaj (d 922 A.D.) could sing:

I am He, whom I love and He whom I love is I;

We are two spirits, dwelling in one body.

If thou seest me, thou seest Him.

And if thou seest Him, thou seest both.

All this is a far-cry from the declaration flung out five times a day from the minaret of every mosque: Great is God, Great is God; there is no god but He.

The 'Ulamā' (the learned theologians), who had all this while been engrossed with the debate with the Mu'tazilas, began to get gravely alarmed; they realised that they had been quarrelling with the Mu'tazilas for saying much less. Those people had merely said that, in spite of God's absolute power, they themselves had a certain amount of power of their own. Here were people saying that they were not different from God Himself. And as opponents, the Mu'tazilas had been much easier to deal with; they were out in

the open, declaring their views for all and sundry to hear. The Sūfis, on the other hand, were usually in the desert ; and when any of them came among others, they seldom made an open declaration on anything. Neither could all Sūfis be lumped together and be punished whole scale for the wrong ideas of some. How was it possible to know whether every Sūfi identified himself with God ? When, however, any one did openly express such views he was dealt with suitably. Hallaj was crucified for saying rather openly, 'I am the Truth'. When it was realised that a frank avowal of such views would be attended with unpleasant consequences, the movement went underground and the language of members became heavily coded. So much so, that the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, so well known in its English translation by Edward Fitzgerald, and considered to express the essence of skepticism and religious disillusionment, is supposed to be an expression of Sūfi mysticism.

However, in spite of the danger attending any open avowal of the thoughts that seemed to prevail among the Sūfis, the very audacity of the ideas seemed increasingly to attract some of the best minds in Islam ; while the reported saintliness of their holy men and the stories of their miracles were exercising a spell over the populace. What made it particularly difficult to adopt a definitely hostile policy to the Sūfis was the fact that about the loyalty of quite a few of them to the cardinal beliefs and practices of that religion there seemed to be little doubt. In fact, often times, their observance of the outward practices of Islam went far beyond what was required. Bistami, one of the greatest of the Sūfis, himself, is said to have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca 45 times ; and if others fasted for one month, the Sūfis could say that they fasted through the year. The authorities were, therefore in a quandary because the attitude of the Sūfis to orthodoxy was so ambivalent.

It is no wonder, therefore, that in course of time the attitude of the authorities themselves to the Sūfis began to get ambivalent. Would it not be better to cut the Gordian knot and simply bring them in ? So Al Kalabadhi and al Qushari put forward the view that Sūfism 'with its teeth drawn' might have a contribution to make to Islam but the authorities could not make up their minds. However, one thing was becoming clear, Sūfism left to itself, existing in close proximity to, but distinct from Islam, was fast becoming a parallel movement.

The Reintegration

By the last quarter of the 11th century, Islam was facing a bleak time. It was very nearly 450 years after Hijra and nearly 200 years after Ash'ari had gained his spectacular victory over the Mu'tazilas. Islam was now corroded by two ills: one from within and the other from without. The one from within was formalism. Ash'ari's victory had itself become a disadvantage; he had won it by the use of *kalām* and Islam was becoming a matter of *kalām*, the exposure of the faults of the other side and a display of the virtues of your own side, all by dialectical methods. He had laid down the outlines of a general theology of Islam and his followers had spelt out the implications of the system. And it was becoming sufficient to accept that system and refute an opposed system. So Islam was becoming a system and ceasing to be a religion.

The threat from outside came from Sūfism. It was too near to Islam to be totally repudiated and extinguished. If ignored, it would cut the ground under the very existence of Islām; it could develop its own doctrines without interference and yet claim to be Islam. This meant that anybody could believe or say anything, however un-Islamic and get away with it by doing pilgrimages to Mecca, attending prayers in the Mosques and reciting occasional quotations from the Quran. This threat was the most dangerous because the enemy could also pose as a friend.

If Islam was ill, so was a most devoted Muslim. He was born in Persia in 450 A.H. (1058 A.D.) and his name was Abu Hamid al Ghazzali; and his illness was skepticism; it was a skepticism born not out of the rejection of his religion, but out of his sincere and whole-hearted acceptance of it. His illness was due to his high intellectual integrity and deep spiritual sensitivity. He had a profound mind and great learning; and the Abbaside Caliph noting his powers had made him a Professor in Baghdad at the age of 33. He stuck it for four years and then left because he felt he could not honestly go on doing his work. A lesser man would have had no scruples about the matter; but he did not belong to that class. In his 'Confessions' he has given an account of why he left.

Having once, he says, left 'the low level of blind belief' with its anthropomorphic views, he could not return to them. Looking on the whole scene, it struck him that three classes of people claimed

to know the truth ; the Philosophers, the Theologians and the Sūfis. The first class he divides into three groups (a) the Materialists, (b) the Naturalists and (c) the Theists ; in this last group he includes Plato, Socrates, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al Farabi, all of whose views he considered ' impious and heretical '. He could also refute others who belonged to the first class ; it was the second, class viz : the Theologians, that caused him great difficulty because he himself belonged to that very class. Ash'ari the theologian had demolished all categories except two ; and his followers had demolished them also, so as to leave the field entirely to God. But how, he asked himself, could you be sure there was a God ? How could you be sure of anything at all ? How could you be sure that 10 was more than 3 ? As a teacher he had been used to well-charted pathways ; now he seemed to be up gainst a blank wall of nescience.

In his own heart Ghazzali was sure that there was a God ; but how does one arrive at Him ? He knew little of the Sūfis ; but he was aware that they professed to know something of the matter and, therefore, the experiment of finding out if they did was worth trying. Anyway, he could not go on as he was. Where was truth to be found ? For eleven years he wandered about, visiting holy places, centres of learning and listening to the discourses there and mixing with the Sūfis and studying their writings. As a result of his long quest he became convinced that certitude in religion could be derived only from ultra-rational sources ; and that for this reason, the secret of mysticism should be incorporated into religion.

There is no doubt about what Ghazzali wanted from Sūfism. What he saw in it, as it was, however, leaves us a little puzzled. Macdonald says that he noted the possible errors of Sūfism viz : *hulūl* (fusion of being) and *ittihād* (identification) ; but he felt that the thing itself was the true basis of the *karamāt* (virtue granted by God) of saints.¹ And we know, from what has come down to us of their writings, that *hulūl* and *ittihād* were certainly there, and sometimes in a glaring and unmistakable form. But we find Ghazzali refuting this charge and saying that it was false.² It would look as if he was in the position of a man who wanted milk from the cow, and who, therefore, decided to buy the cow, whether it had faults, as others

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

² Al Ghazzal *Confessions*, (Ashraf Publications, Lahore), p. 55.

said it had, or had none as he himself thought. In other words, he felt that the admission of mysticism would supply the very want from which Islam was suffering ; what Islam required was an ' inwardness ' and mysticism would give it.

Ghazzali had quit his post in Baghdad in 488 A.H. He came back to teach at Nayas in 499 at the importunity of the Caliph. All his doubts had gone ; he had reached an unshakeable certainty and could go ahead with the task for which he was now more than ever well qualified.

Besides the influence he exerted through his lectures to students, which coming as they did from such an extraordinary teacher, would have been publicised widely among all and sundry, he also expounded his views in a series of books, and these because of his status would have had a tremendous impact on his readers. His *magnum opus* was the *Ihyā Ulūmi'd Dīn* or the ' Renewal of Religious Science '. He also wrote a number of smaller books, some of them merely short summaries of his arguments on the various topics in his big book.

Ghazzali belonged to the Ash'arite School and as an enlightened orthodox Muslim, he could not belong to any other. But between Ash'ari and him there were differences in their spiritual history, in the respective situations in which they were placed and between the persons themselves. Ash'ari had reacted against the doctrine of the Mu'tazilas, which though considered heretical by its opponents, was considered by its upholders to be a valiant defence of the faith. The Mu'tazilas had a creed, which they thought derived naturally from the Quran. Ghazzali's religious history began with sheer Pyrrhonic doubt. This kind of doubt to which we have referred in the first chapter represents the lowest depth of nescience to which it is possible for a person to descend, where he cannot say ' Yes ' or ' No ' to anything at all. Both affirmation and denial seem beyond one's powers. Each of them, therefore, had faced a different problem. Ash'ari had merely to refute a heresy (or what he thought was heresy). Ghazzali had to build up a faith that could stand in the face of absolute doubt and to which people could cling through storm and sunshine. The times were also different. The times of Ash'ari were tempestuous and earth-shaking. The Mu'tazilas had dominated the scene in the intel-

lectual field ; and in the political field, though the sovereign had turned against them, they were still a power to be reckoned with. But now Sunni Islam of the kind to which Ghazzali belonged reigned supreme. The Caliphs and Viziers were eager to encourage and foster it. Above all, the men were different. Ash'ari was a cavalier, at his best when riding into the fray with his sabre drawn and plume waving ; Ghazzali was a calm, sober tactician carefully calculating the pros and cons of attack and defence. Ash'ari was at his best when attempting to destroy the enemy, Ghazzali when trying to preserve ' peace with honour '. But peace itself requires a kind of war, demanding constant watchfulness, effort, firmness coupled with flexibility ; and for this Ghazzali was eminently suited.

Ghazzali wanted to cure the present ill that Islam was suffering from, but he knew that the most effective way of treating a disease was not merely to cure it for the present but to prevent its recurrence. So the aim to which he set himself was to make Islam ' whole '. There are three factors in religion, which in Arabic are called *naql*, ' *aql* and *kashf*, meaning respectively, Revelation, Reason and Discovery ; these three factors should exist together. In Islam they had fallen apart and that was the disease from which Islam was suffering. Ghazzali determined that they should be brought back to work together once again, each to fulfil its own function and subserve to the common end, none to usurp the function of any other. He also knew what should be central. If religion was to be religion, it had basically to rely on Revelation. *Naql* had usually been equated with blind credulity in naive tradition. This Ghazzali knew would not do. His commentator Abdu R. Rahman says that Ghazzali's theology was the Atomism of the Ash'arite School.¹ In other words, it was a theology that asserted the doctrine of divine sovereignty in its strongest form, but which of course had nothing to do with tradition as popularly conceived. To uphold this was the purpose to which ' *aql* and *kashf* had to subserve.

The first task to which he set himself was to lure Muslim minds from the path of Aristotle ; and it was a task which he as a theologian could by no means avoid ; he could do it the more confi-

¹ Ghazzali, *Divine Predicates*, (Ashraf Publication), p. 21.

dently because he himself had tried the path of philosophy and found that it led nowhere. So he wrote his 'Incoherence of Philosophers' to persuade them that in religion the place of Reason was necessarily subordinate. Ghazzali's contention was that what religion was dealing with was the Ultimate ; and the Ultimate lay outside the realm of Reason and Philosophy. His advice to philosophers, therefore, was to get back to the Prophet, for here alone was to be found what they sought ; Revelation alone could pronounce authoritatively on ultimate truth.

Macdonald equates Ghazzali intellectually with Augustine but compares his argument to that of Mansel. It may be true that intellectually he is the equal of Augustine and that his argument may resemble Mansel's. And it must be understood that neither Mansel nor Ghazzali despised reason ; in fact, Mansel's whole argument on the point is one of the most brilliant displays of philosophical reasoning that has ever been seen ; but what they held in common was that philosophical reason was not the path to ultimate truth. However, the one Western thinker with whom he may be said to have had the greatest affinity was Cardinal J. H. Newman. Both were alike in many respects and both had to start from the same point. Both were not merely deeply spiritual and severely ascetic ; and both had to struggle hard with skepticism ; both knew the value of reason and could use it with superb skill ; but both also knew its short-comings when confronted with an insidious and destructive skepticism. So Newman's solution in matters of religion and ultimate truth was ' Back to the Church, the one sure guide ' ; and Ghazzali's ' Back to the Prophet and the Quran, the surest guides to Truth '.

As for the old traditionalists, Ghazzali knew that with all their *naivete*, they were the salt of the earth. Their beliefs could not be upheld as they were ; but their basic position was the essence of monotheism. So he argues with them gently. ' Of course ', he says ' God sees, hears, knows and speaks. But do you think He needs eye-balls to see and ear holes to hear ? Does he need a throne to carry Him ? He is above the throne and the heavens and above everything unto the limit of the Pleiades '.¹ He uses

¹ All quotations from Ghazzali are taken from his *Ihyā 'Ulūmi'd Dīn*, (pp. 300-307), if not otherwise indicated.

Ash'ari's doctrine of 'Difference' to underscore his point. You must understand, he says, that we are dealing with God and not man. So God has these qualities all right, but in a different sense.

In regard to moral qualities, however, like Ash'ari before him, he saw no reason to modify the traditional orthodox position in any way; these qualities are definitely apart from his Essence. You cannot presume to judge God by the standards you set up. God is not just, as you want Him to be just. Justice is between man and man. 'For he doth not encounter any property in another besides Himself, so that His dealing with it might be tyranny.' To raise a question of Justice between God and man is to raise an imaginary question. Neither justice nor tyranny applies to Him in our sense of the terms. He is God and He will deal with everyone as He thinks fit. Ghazzali is not setting aside the validity of moral qualities; and it is far from him to suggest that God has no use for those qualities; after all, they give Him His 99 beautiful names. What he wants to stress is that God does what he thinks fit and what He does cannot be wrong.

It is obvious that Ghazzali is placing his emphasis exactly where orthodoxy has always placed it; i.e., on God's Will. 'What He wills is; and what He wills is not'. 'Even though mankind and the Jinn and the Angels and the Shaytans were to unite to remove a single grain in the world or to bring it to rest without His will they would be too weak for that'. 'Do not think that God rewards and punishes, because your good deeds and bad deeds compel Him to do so. Nothing is incumbent on Him.' This means that our definitions of moral qualities do not apply to Him. He can, of course, take on these qualities if He wants to; but the essential thing is that it is His will that always prevails and is the standard by which everything else is to be judged; but that standard is not what we think about the matter.

After such a strong insistence on the sovereignty of God, we might almost expect him to take the side of the Jabrians and the Sifâtias on the great question that had split Islam; he does not, however, do so. We shall now see how insistently on the one-hand, he holds to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, while on the other, he tries to find scope for man's freedom. And his explanation of Ash'ari's position is one of the most brilliant that

could be given of what has been regarded as a most elusive formula. He says, 'The doctrine of Predestination (*jabr*) is absurd and the doctrine of his own acts by the creature is a frightful invasion of God's sovereignty. Right lies in the affirmation of two powers bearing upon one act, in the doctrine of a single power related to two agents'.¹ There are two agents and two powers ; but one power is intrinsic and the other derived and in the last analysis, it is the former that is effective. The Quran has said that God breathed His soul into Adam ; so man has power, but it is derived power. This derived power enables him to do things ; so we cannot say that a man's acts are not his own and besides this general power, he may also obtain special power. Ghazzali says that if man wills an act, God would at that moment create for him a power to do it and thus man acquires that power.² A *kasb* or acquisition is the association of man's power and God's act. There are thus two agents, man and God and two powers. In any act of man there is an association of these two. Ghazzali is here quoting word for word from Ash'ari's *Maqālāt*, but has made the meaning clearer.

What exactly is the implication of this position ? If, for instance, a criminal wants to commit a nefarious act, does he not have to depend on the power provided by higher authorities ? The currency notes he uses, the bus rides and train journeys he undertakes are all provided by such an authority ; that is, the power he uses is derived and not intrinsic. However, it will be seen that there is an important difference ; the power that he uses was not created specially for him ; though used by him, it was created for all to use. In this case, on the other hand, it is held that it was created specially for him. It may, therefore, be alleged that God co-operates with the criminal. Here we are up against the inviolable Muslim doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty which found its ultimate logical expression in the Atomistic theory.

Thus far, Ghazzali was merely expounding Ash'ari ; but times had changed since Ash'ari. We said earlier that Ghazzali had become convinced that the system which he had inherited, sound as it was, lacked 'inwardness'. Sūfism had not in Ash'ari's time

¹ Ghazzali, '*Divine Predicates*' (Ashraf Publication), p. 10.

² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

attracted much attention. It was neither a problem nor a solution. All attention had been concentrated on the struggle with the Mu'tazilas. Now it certainly had become a problem and possibly also a solution. It had begun to be argued by sober theologians, like al Kalabadi and al Qushari that Sūfism, kept thoroughly in check, might instead of conflicting with Ash'arism actually strengthen it. So when Ghazzali himself took up the cause, its triumph was assured. When *kashf* was added to *naql* and *aql*, Islam, he felt, would be complete. All opposition from the *Ulamā* was now withdrawn and Sūfi mysticism became a recognised part of Sunni Islam. 'Something of his (Ghazzali's) legacy', says Kenneth Cragg, 'might be loosely expressed in the idea that he altered the (grammatical) person in the Muslim Confession from "There is no God but He" to "There is no God but thou".'¹

It was expected that on its admission within the fold of orthodoxy the teeth of Sūfism would get pulled out. This, however, was a difficult operation to perform, because mysticism is a secret practice and unless the supervision is very strict, its usual tendencies could easily evade and now even defy orthodox opinion. And it would look as if, though Sūfism did sometimes conform, it sometimes ignored orthodoxy. For we find Abdul Karim al Jili (1365-1405 A.D.) who lived long after Ghazzali saying, 'I am the existent and the non-existent, the naughted and the everlasting. I am the award and the imagined, the snake and the charmer. I am the loosed and the bound. I am the treasure and the poverty; I am my creature and my creator'.² This kind of thing could certainly go on always; but there is no doubt that because of the fact that it was now part of orthodoxy it would have been conscious of a certain restraining influence, even though it was not always restrained by it.

From another point of view, Sir Hamilton Gibb holds that the admission of Sūfism into orthodox Islam had an extremely unhealthy influence on Sunni Islam. Its moral austerity and purity of doctrine were gravely undermined and the worship of saints and veneration of sacred places, along with many strange and un-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

² R. A. Nicholson *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, (Cambridge University Press), p. 90.

Islamic practices, like the (public) pursuit of religious ecstasy, dancing and the rending of garments introduced into it something very alien to its whole character. The original compromise became a capitulation. Sūfism rode rough-shod over Islam.¹ Gibb, however, admits that Ghazzali could not have foreseen all this. Ghazzali was trying to solve the problem of his own time (and of himself); no man could be expected to do anything more. No man can live indefinitely to enforce his decrees and control every situation that might arise.

Ghazzali in his life-time had endeavoured to bring together into one whole three tendencies: Traditionalism or Orthodoxy, Rationalism and Mysticism and fuse them together. His whole approach, therefore had been entirely irenic. So everybody might have got the impression that all matters had been settled and that each could get in on his own terms. But into the camp of the Rationalists and Mystics, he certainly threw a bombshell by his unequivocal declaration on the Prophethood of Muhammad. The Faith is 'incomplete that consists in witnessing to the unity which is saying, "There is no God but God", so long as there is not joined to it a witnessing to the Apostle, which is saying, "Muhammad is the Apostle of God". And He made obligatory on the creation belief in him'. And he gives a serious warning by saying that the first questions that the terrible monsters Munkar and Nakir, which sit upon a man's grave, will ask him will be 'Who is thy God?', 'What is thy religion?' and 'Who is thy Prophet?' So all Rationalists and Mystics were told in unmistakable terms that the acceptance of the *Risālat* (Prophethood) was as obligatory as the acceptance of the *Tawhid*.

Ghazzali left a complete system of thought that articulated a living religion. He had analysed and argued; he had stood firm where he had to be and been conciliatory and accommodative where he could be. He had set forth the fundamental positions of Sunni Islam so comprehensively, but in such an irenic manner, that even opponents found it difficult either to question its adequacy or to resent its manner of expression. He had contributed much intellectually towards this achievement, but most of all he had contributed himself. It was his dedication to the cause, the purity

¹ *Mohammedanism*, pp. 109-111.

of his life and the depth of his religious experience and conviction that secured for his exposition the place it holds in Sunni Islam. However, commenting on his approach and achievement, Montgomery Watt says that he had domesticated religious experience and that the fire of Muhammad was absent in him.¹ Ghazzali never pretended to any fire ; he was a systematician. Macdonald blames Muhammad for not being a systematician and Watt blames Ghazzali for being a systematician and not a prophet. Each is being blamed for what he never aimed at being. Muhammad's aim was to be a prophet and Ghazzali's to be a systematician.

But about the success of Ghazzali in achieving what he aimed at there is no doubt. So complete was it that he is now regarded as the final doctor of Islam ; and the position of the School of Ash'ari of which he had been the exponent has become the official position of orthodox Sunni Islam. 'The celebrated names after him', says Kenneth Cragg, 'are those of Quranic commentators and historians of past theology'.²

For the very completeness with which Ghazzali performed his task, he is taken severely to task by Ameer Ali, who represents a different outlook. 'The reactionary character', he says, 'of the influence exercised by Abu'l Hasan Ali al Ash'ari and Ahmed al Ghazzali can hardly be exaggerated' and quotes the like-minded Editor of *Al Asar Ul Bakieh*, who declares, 'but for al Ash'ari and al Ghazzali the Arabs might have been a nation of Galileos, Keplers and Newtons'. And Ameer Ali adds, 'By their denunciations of Science and Philosophy, by their exhortations that besides theology and law no other knowledge was worth acquiring, they did more to stop the progress of the Moslem world than most of the Moslem scholastics'.³

The flowering of Muslim thought along many lines in the early centuries and its stagnation in subsequent times are undoubted facts. Muslim thought did flower and produce choice intellects after Ghazzali ; but that took place at the far ends of the world, beyond the ken of the theologians of the Middle East. To some

¹ *Faith and Practice of Al Ghazzali* (Allen and Unwin), p. 79.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

³ *Spirit of Islam*, pp. 486, 487.

extent, therefore, the criticism of Ameer Ali may have a point. The effects of the finalising of theology in the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages might be cited as a case in point. But there are two differences. In the first place, in the Roman Catholic Church there is an ecclesiastical *magisterium* which enforces decrees ; in Sunni Islam, on the other hand, there is none ; and it is the rulers and the populace who took it on themselves to perform the task. The blame, therefore, cannot be laid at the door of Ghazzali, who was merely trying to prevent Islam from disintegrating. In the second place, while there was a finalisation of thought in the Roman Church in the 13th century, there was a break-away in the 16th century. Why was there none in Sunni Islam ? It is obvious that the long continued stagnation of Muslim thought was not altogether due to Ghazzali.

REACTION, REVIVAL AND REFORM

Once they have been founded, all religions in their history present one with various types of movements within them ; some are looked upon as reactionary, some as revivals and others as reform movements. A little examination, however, will show that not merely have they much in common, but that they arise from the same motive or impulse.

As against the other movements, a reactionary movement is usually regarded with scorn ; but its sole aim is to go back to what once prevailed ; it is a protest against the *status quo*. And so is a revival movement or a reform movement. A revival movement is an attempt to bring back the life that once was, but has now ebbed away and is no more. A reform movement is not basically different in its purpose. All these movements, therefore, may be seen as attempts to get back to the original state of things and not as attempts to introduce something new. In this respect, a revolution, even though it may look otherwise, is not different. A revolutionary is looked upon as literally an idol-breaker. But why does he want to break idols ? Because he believes that the idols are an innovation ; he wants to get back to the time when there were no idols.

Though all these movements may arise or profess to arise from the same impulse, popular opinion is not far wrong in

regarding them as essentially different. A reactionary is not concerned with the present but only with the past ; he wants the hands of the clock back where they had been and not where they should be. A reformer, on the other hand, is not trying to reproduce an exact copy of the pristine situation but wants to recapture its basic ideals, allowing for such changes as may have become necessary because of the lapse of time and change of circumstances. When he advocates his own changes in the *status quo*, they are such as in his opinion, will enable the past to express itself to suit the present. He may be said to hold the right balance between the past and the present. However, neither a reactionary nor a reformer will object to being called a ' revivalist '. But on the other hand, in religion no movement can afford to call itself a revolution because, even though it claims to go back to a past, it is to a dubious past which may not have existed at all, whereas a religion is concerned with a past that really was. A revolution in religion, therefore, either becomes another religion or is an irrelevancy.

In this section we shall deal with some of these movements in Sunni Islam which arose after the time of Ghazzali ; and for purposes of convenience, we shall concentrate most of our attention on the leading personalities associated with them.

Ibn Taimiya (661-728 A.H. : 1328 A.D.)

Taimiya lived 200 years after the irenic figure of Ghazzali and about 500 years after the fiery flame called Hanbal. Much had happened since the time of Hanbal, but everything that Taimiya said or did would have had the whole-hearted approval of the master. Taimiya was a thorough-going anthropomorphist and literalist. Convictions like his, however unacceptable to enlightened minds, could fire a man to the point of death. Figures like Hanbal and Taimiya would have greatly commended themselves to Thomas Carlyle : each was a ' Reality ' and not a ' Simulacrum '. But Hanbal looms larger in Islam than Taimiya ; because he lived at a different time. Hanbal had the people on his side ; though Taimiya had the same views as Hanbal, he did not have that advantage, because the attitude of the people had changed. So Hanbal had been looked upon as a heroic figure in his time ; Taimiya in his was looked upon as an anachronism.

As an anthropomorphist, it is obvious that, like Hanbal, Taimiya had no use for *kalām* and the whole mode of thinking that had come into vogue with Ash'ari; to him it had no place in religion. Arberry says Taimiya would have fully endorsed Tertullian's diatribe against Aristotle and Philosophy. Those who declaim against the right of Philosophy to lay down the law in religion cannot declaim against philosophy in general, but only against a particular philosophy; and they are doing so in terms of another philosophy which prescribes the limits of philosophy. Arberry calls Taimiya himself 'a superb dialectician'; and who can withhold the title from Tertullian? However, there is no doubt that Hanbal would have fully approved of the stand of his latter-day disciple.

However, it was for Sūfism and its influence that Taimiya reserved all the vials of his wrath. *Kalām* is just a way of thinking and arguing; it leaves the religion of Islam alone. But Sūfism with its 'cult of saints, alive and dead, holy sites, trees, garments and the observance of all manner of days and seasons' had changed the very character of Islam; it had perverted it. The cult that Sūfism cultivated and encouraged makes an appeal to the natural instinct of man and finds a ready response. Sūfism, therefore, had swept easily through Islam and been heartily embraced by the populace. Taimiya rightly felt that the type of religion that resulted was something that could not under any pretext or for any reason be reconciled with the Quran and bore no resemblance to the religion preached by Muhammad.

But the people who had scarcely given him a hearing, when he was alive, and had shown no sympathy for him during his numerous imprisonments and sufferings treated him like a saint when he died, because they felt he stood for something in their religion which had been neglected and ignored. He had indeed made a much-needed protest in Sunni Islam; and 'as a result', says Macdonald, 'the faith of Muhammad was not to perish from the earth'.

If Hanbal's message had to wait for 500 years for its revival, that of Taimiya had to wait for very nearly the same time for its revival. Around 1744 'Abd al-Wahhāb, supported by the House of Saud, started a movement to spread the version of Islam pro-

pounded by Hanbal and Taimiya. His followers sacked Iraq in 1802 and captured Mecca itself in 1806. Their hold was broken for the time-being by a representative of the Sultan of Turkey, who had been accepted as Caliph for all Islam since 1517 A.D. But Wahhābism reasserted itself once again and is now recognised as an important factor in Islam, recalling Muslims to Islam as it was in its original state.

CHIEF PERSONALITIES IN 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

Taimiya had lived in what in European history is called the 'Middle Ages'. Since then many events of far-reaching importance have happened. Till the close of the Middle Ages Europe had in every respect been on the defensive; intellectually Muslim culture, science and philosophy held the field; and politically and from a military point of view Muslim power, though checked, was still mighty; but with the coming of the Modern Age, Muslim culture and power had begun to recede into the background and one European power after another dominated the world scene. At the end of the 19th century the British Empire, embodying European culture and might, almost covered the globe. This was a situation which neither al Ash'ari nor Al Ghazzali or Ibn Taimiya had confronted. Was Islam to be merely regarded as a vestige of the past, a museum piece? There were those who had other ideas on the subject. 'Why cannot British culture be brought into the service of Islam? they asked; after all, the flower is fertilised by the bee that sucks it.'

The first person of importance who realised the need for Islam to come to terms with the modern world was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) the Indian statesman. He was quite at home in the field of British culture and felt that Islam was doing itself no good by clinging to utterly untenable modes of thought and life. We must, he said, make a distinction between principles laid down for perpetual maintenance and those that are solely the products of those whom we designate as learned men, divines and doctors. After a long visit to England (1869-70) he came back convinced that there should be an institution for Muslims which would do for them what the British Universities were doing for Britain and so he set up the Aligarh University in 1875. He

also tried to weed out of Islam out-of-date social customs. The other person of note who took up the same attitude was Sir Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928), the great Indian Jurist. As a Shi'a, he was a natural believer in intellectual freedom and his views are propounded in his 'The Spirit of Islam' (from which we have been quoting liberally). It is said to be the most widely read book in Muslim countries.

In the Middle East, the confrontation with European culture seems to have evoked more than one kind of reaction. One was represented by Sayyid Jamal al Din (1839-1897). He was an Afghan by birth who had migrated to Egypt. To him the European apparition was a continuation of the Crusades and should be fought. In 1883, we find him crossing swords with E. Renan in Paris. To meet the challenge of European culture, he wanted to establish a pan-Islamic brotherhood. He bequeathed his task to his devoted disciple Muhammad Abduh, who represented a different reaction to European culture.

Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905)

Between master and disciple there was little in common except their learning and their unswerving determination to further the cause of Islam. But their methods of furthering Islam and their views of the Islam to be furthered were entirely different. Jamal's Islam was mediaeval Islam, bequeathed to this age to be propagated as it was ; Abduh's was modern Islam. Jamal was breathing fire and brimstone against the whole non-Muslim world ; Abduh was concerned with what Islam might learn from that world, and how Islam as it was practised could be purified and improved. Jamal denounced and refuted ; Abduh got what he wanted done accepted, without providing any opportunity for refutation or denunciation by others.

For the purpose he had in mind he was well qualified both intellectually as well as officially. One of his many books called *Risālat al Tawhīd* has since his death gone through eighteen editions.¹ He became Editor of two of the important journals, one French and one Arabic, the Censor and Director of the Press

¹ Translated into English by I. Musad and Kenneth Cragg under the name *Theology of Unity*. (Allen and Unwin).

in Egypt and finally the Grand Mufti with the power to issue directives in all matters of Muslim jurisprudence. Besides all this, he was a close friend of Lord Cromer, the British Representative and the Khedive himself.¹ Being a professional theologian unlike the Indian Reformers, Abduh's programme could go much deeper. He conceived of his task as that of re-interpreting Islam to the modern world and with entire devotion to Muhammad and loyalty to the Quran to say to the modern world what Muhammad had said in the 7th century. For doing this, he had to go behind much traditional teaching and a good deal of the Sunna.

In the first place, he held that all the controversy between Reason and Revelation was simply wasted labour. Each had its proper sphere. Reason is meant for the study of created things and in this it is not to be hedged about with conditions ; but he clearly defined the limits of Reason by quoting the Quran, ' Ponder the creation of God, but do not take your meditation into the divine essence or you will perish '. And he comments that any right estimate of human reason will agree that the utmost extent of its competence is to bring us to a knowledge of the accidents of the existents.² ' God did not ', he says, ' create man with the need to know the essence of things. His need is to know the accidents and the particular qualities '.³

For mere Traditionalism he had only contempt. Sheer credulity may be pardoned, he says, in an animal, scarcely in a man ; in one place he calls it a disease. And towards the attitude of invariable deference to the views of the ancients he is pointedly sarcastic : ' Mere priority in time is not one of the signs of perceptive knowledge nor superior intelligence and capacity. Ancestor and descendant compare closely . . . but the latter has the advantage over his forbears in that he knows everything gone by and is in a position to study and exploit the consequences '.⁴ In al Ghazzali's time traditionalism had been a strength to Islam ; now it had become a hindrance. So Abduh is very severe with it.

¹ Till the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire the ruler of Egypt was called the ' Khedive ', a representative of the Sultan. The ruler was recognised as a king from 1922 (till the declaration of the Republic).

² ' *Theology of Unity* ', p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

On the issue about Predestination and Free-will he has a very clear opinion ; but about the controversy itself which had taken place historically he is scornful. The Jabriyas (Determinists) who repudiated the use of reason, he said, were transgressing the Quran ; the disciples of Wasil (the Mut'azilas) professed to follow reason but were relying on their imagination. Both sides had taken up extreme positions while the moderates had been reticent. With the eventual triumph of Traditionalism (though greatly mitigated by Ghazzali) aided by the various sovereigns and the populace 'the remaining traces of rationalism faded from Islam and a false antithesis was set up between faith and knowledge'.¹ We have got beyond Ghazzali—on the same road but further ahead.

What is Abduh's opinion on the issue involved ? Every man of sense he declares, knows that he exists. It is the same with his will and his actions. He weighs the consequences of his actions and effectuates them with inward power. To deny this would be to deny existence itself, so opposed would it be to all rational evidence.² Man, he says, was not created to be led by the bridle. The world is God's and the divine will is the context in which the human will effectuates its actions. This does not mean, therefore, that everything that man does is God's will ; what it means is that the world is regulated by God's will and a man who wants to do just as he likes runs up against God's will sooner or later. A man who takes part in a rebellion knows the consequences and yet he does it ; and he will find that there is a will greater than his and an order set up by an authority greater than he.

We find that Abduh has gone far beyond Ash'ari or Ghazzali would have gone ; but he wants to insist that this is what they had also meant. So, he says, the possibility of a man's action in a contingency is there ; he acquires it. This he declares is what Ash'ari meant by *kasb*. Abduh says, God may know what the man is going to do, but He is not responsible for it. This, of course, is mere foreknowledge. What is the relationship between divine foreknowledge and divine will ? It is not for us to penetrate this mystery, says Abduh. This however, we may remember, was not the position taken up by al Ghazzali ; according to him,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

if man willed an act, God, not merely foreknew it, but also willed it ; as otherwise, the thing would not take place. Even as many Calvinists in Christianity while being followers of Calvin do not subscribe to his theory of Double Predestination, it is evident though Abduh is an Ash'arite he does not subscribe to the Atomistic theory of his tradition, whereby God creates the conditions for every act.

Abduh, however, does not want any mistake to be made about his position. 'The condition of all dogma', he says, 'is that it contains no compromise on Transcendence (*tānzīh*) and the exaltedness of God above all likeness to creatures'.¹ And 'to turn to the transcendent Being, the ever-eternal, is to be aware not merely of a puzzled wonder but a complete incapacity (on our part) and an otherness (on the part of God)'.²

So the sovereignty of God is asserted not, of course, with the same force as Ghazzali but with greater refinement, nevertheless, with unmistakable clarity. However, he says, though the Quran describes the qualities of God with a surer accent on transcendence there are many qualities ascribed to Him which have their counterparts in those of man. So how can man be set at naught ? The Quran certainly speaks on the question of Predestination and Free-will, involving the relationship between God and man, but it 'takes controversial issue with those who take up extreme positions'. In other words, Abduh's stand is God is sovereign ; but in His world, governed and ordered by Him, man made by Him and in His form, has his rights and freedom. Beyond this we cannot go.

On another point the breach between Abduh and Ghazzali is beyond any dispute. It may be recalled that in a rather eerie passage in his *Ihyā*, Ghazzali prescribes a strict exclusiveness for Muslims uttering the threat that two monsters would sit over the grave of each man and ask, 'Who is thy prophet ?' Both before and after Ghazzali this attitude has been characteristic of the large majority of Muslims. With this attitude Abduh breaks categorically ; and he has the Quran on his side. He quotes sura III-67

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

where Abraham is called a Hanif, i.e., Muslim, because he is 'the surrendered one'. Sura XLII-13 says, 'God has decreed for you the religion he commanded to Noah; it is this which we have revealed to you as we have ordained to Abraham, Moses and Jesus that you may perform the faith and not divide into sects'.¹ Nineteenth century Islam could not have found a better spokesman. Some twenty years after his death, Sir Hamilton Gibb paid Abduh a striking tribute in particular to his creation of a literature inspired by definite ideas of progress within Islam.²

Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938)

It can be said that Abduh made Iqbal possible. Lord Cromer, the British Representative in Egypt from 1883 to 1907, had expressed the opinion that, 'Islam cannot be reformed; Islam that is reformed is not Islam'. He was merely commenting on Islam as he found it. 'Islam can be reformed; and it will still be Islam', Abduh had said; and to that task he had harnessed all his energies. He had roused no outcry or insurrection but had, on the other hand, been received with profound reverence in Egypt.

Since the possibility of reform had been shown, it was natural that others should follow in his wake. To Muhammad Iqbal in India the idea that Islam could not be reformed was utter nonsense. 'Prof. Horton of Bonn', he declared, 'says that between 800 and 1100 A.D. one hundred systems of theology had appeared in Islam. The spirit of Islam, therefore, is boundless. The Muslim public is simply conservative'.³ And he would have echoed the words of one of his modern admirers that 'the re-interpretation of the teachings of Islam in the idiom and grammar of modern science and philosophy was a biological necessity'.

But while both Abduh and Iqbal were moved by the impulse to protest against Islam as they found it, there were basic differences in their background, respective situations, their particular aims and above all in their theology. Abduh, though at home in European culture, was educated in Egypt; Iqbal was educated at

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

² Bulletin of Oriental Studies (London, 1928) Quoted in Introduction to the translation of 'Theology of Unity'.

³ *Iqbal* magazine (January 1967).

Cambridge and got his doctorate in Munich. Abduh was a professional theologian and a Grand Mufti, Iqbal was a Professor of Philosophy in a secular University and could be a religious free-lance. Abduh was living in a thoroughly Muslim country and found the religion of the people primitive, superstitious and fanatical. His aim, therefore, was to modernise their religious beliefs and bring them into line with the demands of the modern world. Iqbal was living in an overwhelmingly Hindu country, where the Muslims were a minority looked upon as a vestige of a regime that had ceased to exist long ago. Iqbal wanted the Muslims to assert themselves and make themselves a force in the country.

More than all this, their theology was entirely different. Abduh's God was a God whom Muhammad would have recognised ; Iqbal's would have astonished him beyond measure. Iqbal's concept of God had been greatly influenced by the philosophies of the West in vogue when he was a student and for sometime later. From each of them he takes what he wants and rejects what he does not. He takes from Bradley the idea of an all-inclusive Reality with different grades, from Nietzsche that of the self-asserting Ego and from Henri Bergson the idea of the unending flow of life. From Whitehead he gets the idea that the Reality at the heart of things is a conscious Reality. It is obvious that this whole concept would have seemed to Abduh as quite un-Islamic and to Muhammad as exceedingly strange.

Iqbal was a curious combination of a Professor and a poet. It was his poems, mostly written in limpid Persian, that were his chief means of communication and gained him the enormous popularity that he still enjoys in Pakistan. His conception of Reality may best be seen from a quotation from one of his own poems :

The pencil of Self limned a hundred todays
 In order to achieve the dawn of a single tomorrow,
 Its flames burned a hundred Abrahams,
 That the lamp of Muhammad might be lighted.
 Subject, Object, Means and Causes
 All these are forms which it assumes for purpose of action.
 The Self rises, kindles, falls, glows and breathes
 Burns, shines, walks and flies.

'Tis nature of the self to manifest itself.

In every atom slumbers the might of Self.¹

His claim to be a spokesman for Islam is that he comes forward as an interpreter of the real meaning of *Tawhīd* (which had been misunderstood till now). The unity of God means an all-inclusive self, comprehending everything. But it is not the impersonal Reality of Bradley, nor the purposeless flux of Bergson; nor is it the Brahman of Sankara, because Sankara held the world to be unreal. He had read too much of Nietzsche to allow the human soul to be 'wrecked on the ocean of Infinity'. He differs from Whitehead with whom he has much in common on two points: his view of Time and his view of Reality. Whitehead thought of Time in serial Terms and of Reality as growing from the 'Primordial' to the 'Consequent'. To Iqbal real time was without change or succession; and change is something that cannot be predicated of the ultimate Ego.²

What then is Iqbal's theory of Reality? It is unlike Whitehead's Reality which realises itself by continuous manifestation. Iqbal's Reality manifests what He already is Himself. He does this in various degrees and at various levels; but there is no growth or realisation gained by the process. He is what He manifests Himself to be. This universal, ultimate Ego, holds within Himself all finite selves, without obliterating their individual existence. Thus, 'To interpret life as an Ego', he says, 'is not to fashion God after the image of man, but to accept the fact of experience that life is not a formless fluid, but an organising principle of unity, synthetic activity, which holds together and focalises the dispersing dispositions of the living organism'.³ This God is transcendent, personal, wholly other, creative and omnipotent.

Therefore, Iqbal holds himself to be a theist. But we are warned by Dr. Ishaq Hasan Enver about mistaking his kind of theism for what is ordinarily meant by the word. 'Iqbal's God', he says, 'comprehends the whole universe. In Him alone the

¹ Muhammad Iqbal, *Secrets of the Self*, (Translated from Persian. Published by Muhammad Ashraf), pp. 18-19.

² Muhammad Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Ashraf Publication, Lahore), p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

finite egos find their being. 'Like pearls do we live and move and have our being in the perpetual flow of divine life'. His God is the Absolute of Philosophy. It is the ultimate Ego which comprehends in itself all beings, all finite egos'.¹ And a writer in the 'Iqbal' magazine (January 1967) has no hesitation in confessing that ontologically Iqbal is a monist.

Now that we know Iqbal's conception of God, it is obvious that to him the whole controversy about Free Will and Predetermination is quite meaningless. He admits that the idea of destiny runs through all Islam; but it is, he says, a misunderstanding of the idea of *Tāwhid* to think of it as a rigid system of cause and effect. The controversy has meaning only where God and man are considered distinct and separate. To Iqbal the Infinite is in the Finite and the Finite in the Infinite; it is the whole Self that is acting. To it all life is free and unfettered; in all action it is the universal Self that is asserting itself. 'Man's first act of disobedience is also his first act of free choice'.² There can be no disobedience, because there is no one to disobey. The controversy between Free Will and Predestination had no meaning for Iqbal, because he did not consider God and man as distinct and separate. It would have had a meaning for Muhammad; only he did not concern himself with it. It had a meaning for Calvin, who decided in favour of Predestination. It would have had no meaning for Bradley, Nietzsche, Bergson or Whitehead; and it had no meaning for Iqbal either. When a person declares a controversy to be meaningless, it may be that he considers the issue insignificant or it may mean that he takes one side so much for granted that the other side is inconceivable. So it is with Iqbal, it is the Universal Self that acts and its freedom can be taken for granted.

In this Section we have dealt with certain important personalities who played different roles in Islam. What was Iqbal's role? Was he revolutionary? A revolutionary is one who wants to go back and beyond the present to a primitive past. But what is the past to which Iqbal wanted to go back? We find that he wanted to go back and behind not merely Muhammad, but beyond

¹ Ishat Hassan Enver *Metaphysics of Iqbal*, (Ashraf Publication Lahore), p. 95.

² 'Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam' (Ashraf), p. 85.

theism. But one cannot go beyond Theism ; one can only go outside Theism ; and this is what Iqbal does. Such a verdict is, of course, an adverse theological verdict ; but Iqbal did not aim at a favourable theological verdict. What he wanted to do was to stir the Muslims of India out of their stupor. For centuries their *moulvis* had so stressed the awful difference between God and man and based their whole teaching on the doctrine of God's sovereignty so that the Muslims had accepted everything that happened as God's will. Iqbal's message that they themselves were part of the Godhead was certainly one to stir them to action. So Iqbal was not a Reformer or a revolutionary ; but he was revivalist not of Islam but of the Muslim community of India at that time.

TRANSCENDENCE IN SUNNI ISLAM

It has been seen that the *Via Negativa* is a method to which certain thinkers have resorted when they felt that Ultimate Reality would suffer limitation by being characterised by particular qualities. This method enabled them to keep on denying to ultimate Reality not merely all qualities but the negatives of those qualities as well. It is a method, which when used, has been used chiefly in Philosophy and not Religion and for an obvious reason. It has, of course, been used by the Advaita School of Sankara in Hinduism and by the *avant garde* of the Mu'tazilas ; but it is very much open to question whether these Schools in doing so were not so much religious as philosophical. An ultimate Reality which can be characterised only by negatives is one with which we cannot enter into personal relations and, therefore, one that can be left alone. This is an attitude which no religion which believes in a personal God can afford to take up.

Muhammad was a man overwhelmed by an experience, so inescapable in its intensity as to leave no doubt that the Reality behind it was personal ; and so tremendous in its power as to leave no doubt about its greatness. And the only thing he could do in that presence was to bow in complete submission and say over and over again, ' Great is He ; there is none other god than He '. When he had to commend this God to others and communicate His commands to his followers, he adopted the procedure precisely

the reverse of the *via negativa*, but for the same reason that others adopted the latter. The *via negativa* withholds every predicate, lest its affirmations by their inadequacy may do an injustice to the subject. Muhammad, on the other hand, aims at securing adequacy by piling predicate on predicate lest the omission of any may do an injustice to it.

By far the greatest number of the Quranic names attributed to God deals with His majesty and greatness; twenty-four refer to His kindness and graciousness. If the proportion seems small, it must be borne in mind that every single chapter, except one, begins with the formula, 'In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent'; and the words 'Rahīm' and 'Rahmān' (the Merciful, the Compassionate) are repeated over and over again in the text. So the numerical disproportion in the words used for a certain type of qualities is more than made up by the constant repetition of the same words referring to that type as against words referring to other types.

If this were all, there would be no problem; for after all, it is the most natural thing in the world for a believer in a personal God to say that He is great and kind and merciful. But along with these there are also certain disquieting epithets, like 'Hurter' and 'Misleader' etc. It is not possible to look upon them as accidental or as having crept in through a mistake. The names are compiled from the Quran; and the text leaves as in no doubt. 'Whosoever Allah sendeth astray, for him thou (Muhammad) canst not find a road' (Sur IV—90); 'For whom Allah sendeth astray, there is no right road' (XIII—33); 'Who is able to guide him whom Allah leads astray'? (XXX—29) Muhammad Ali in his 'Religion of Islam' protests strongly against the tendency of Western writers to give a wrong interpretation of such words as 'vengeful', 'inexorable' and 'autocratic'. It is possible to explain such terms in accord with God's natural power as God.

What, however, was Muhammad's purpose in using such terms, we may ask, when he must have known that there was a possibility of misconstruing them. He was intent on emphasising God's power and authority in every respect; and lest it might be imagined that there was any respect in which He was lacking in them, he was using almost all possible epithets he could

think of. If God is sovereign, He is sovereign in every matter. Muhammad was paying a tribute to the majesty and the power of God. In fact, the whole of the Quran is one ecstatic utterance, a 'magnificat' to the glory of God :

Any interpretation of an ecstatic utterance must be true to the spirit of the utterance. That spirit demands that we recognise that when Muhammad was magnifying the sovereignty of God, he was magnifying His sovereignty as God. In their zeal for the master, the followers of Muhammad concentrated all their attention on the quality of sovereignty as such, forgetting that what the master was extolling was that quality as found in the God who had confronted him. However early this tendency might have crept into Islam, it is not, we think, true to the spirit of the prophet. It is impossible to believe that he would have allowed the separation of God's sovereignty from His character. Therefore, it is difficult to refuse to admit that the Mu'tazilas were right in not consenting to this separation.

We said earlier that as against the French Philosopher Descartes of the 16th century, the Muslims were right in locating the Will as the source from which a person realised that he was, rather than from thought. And we also said that as against Schopenhauer, who believed in an impersonal Will, they were right in associating such 'existential' qualities as 'hearing', 'seeing', 'knowing' etc., with it. But here we are talking not of man but of God. And even as we cannot separate man from his existential qualities, without depriving him of his very nature as man, so we cannot separate God from His moral qualities and still look upon Him as God. The question may well be considered whether it is derogatory to the sovereignty of God, however great and all-comprehensive it may be, that he should always be considered merciful and kind, as the Quran itself keeps on saying. In short, is it derogatory to His sovereignty to think that He exercises His will as sovereign, in keeping with His character as God? Because it was so considered certain consequences almost inevitably followed.

At the popular level it led to the idea of Predestination. This kind of belief may lead to either one of two results. On the one hand it might encourage one to think that whatever one may do, it is always the will of God. The Bedouin who steals a horse and

kills the master or who indulges in blood feuds may comfort himself that he is but an agent of God. On the other hand, instead of encouraging wrong action, it might also encourage sheer inaction ; and the fact must be squarely faced that it was this kind of belief that has been responsible through the centuries for the apathy of those in Muslim countries in the face of much that was happening all around them.

At the level of philosophy it led to a contrary conclusion, which negates the whole principle of Predestination and is embodied in the Atomistic Theory of Baqilani, according to which God has to keep the affairs of the Universe going minute by minute by manipulating the constituent atoms of the Universe. The Atomistic theory, as we have seen, is not new in the history of thought. It had prevailed among the Greeks and the Romans ; but, as it prevailed among them, it was a materialistic theory. It had no place for God and the atoms were sovereign. It can find no room in any theism. A God who has to assert His sovereignty by resorting to an unending permutation and combination of atoms does not seem to be a God very much worthy of worship. The Atomistic theory in Islam, however, has one redeeming feature ; it is not known to most Muslims.

The isolation of the Will of God from His moral qualities led also to another result, which unlike the Atomistic Theory can be traced back to more accredited sources. This is the theory of *Mukhālaḥa* or 'Difference', which had arisen from a real need. Ash'ari had to explain to his party that when it is said that 'God hears, sees etc.', He does not have to have ears or eyes like men ; and, therefore, he explained that when such terms are used of God they are used in a different sense ; he was guarding against anthropomorphism. When the theory of 'Difference' was applied to 'existential' qualities it performed a legitimate function, but it exceeded its legitimacy when it was extended to moral qualities. To reconcile all the moral qualities which the Quran attributes to God with the stress on the absoluteness of His will, it began to be asserted that these moral qualities have a different meaning when applied to God than they have when applied to man.

In spite of the venerable sponsorship it has in Islam, it must be said that this distinction has no authority from the Quran and

is purely artificial ; i.e., man-made. When applied in earnest to the ethical sphere it will work nothing but havoc and wreck all moral values. What is right and what is justice and what is goodness? Why should anyone practise them and not their opposites? If those qualities in the sense in which they are understood by man do not inhere in God, they hang in the air and nobody need pay them any attention. If God has one standard for Himself and another for man, the values which are meant to be the basis and guide of human life lose all their meaning. One cannot, therefore, help admiring the courage of such Reformers as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Abduh and even Iqbal for their feeling that the Muslim world had had enough of the various people designated as 'learned men, doctors and divines' who had flooded the Islamic World with their artificial interpretations.

Because of its overwhelming stress on God's transcendence, does Islam ignore His Immanence? As Abduh says there is a surer accent on transcendence ; but it will be rash on that account to say that Immanence is ignored. The Muslim is ever conscious of the presence of God and the fact that He is a ' Watcher,' ' a Judge ', ' a Provider ' etc. ; he is aware that he is under constant religious, ethical and ceremonial injunctions which prevent him from thinking that because God is transcendent, He is, therefore not present in this world and is unconcerned with it.

D. B. Macdonald pronounces a curious verdict on Islam. He says, ' It is part of the irony of Muslim Theology that the emphasis on the Transcendent Unity should lead to Pantheism '. The word ' Pantheism ' is here used for what we found, when dealing with Sankara, which is sometimes more accurately called ' Theopantism ' ; that is, the teaching that God alone is and nobody else. This would denote a Monism of Being. Such a charge is far wide of the mark in Islam. Islam does lay great stress on God's transcendence and places a wide gulf between God and man and there is a tendency to widen it unnecessarily. But the very fact that there is a gulf shows that if God is on one side of it man is on the other side, doing his five prayers a day, his attendance at Mosque on Fridays, his Ramazan and his pilgrimage to Mecca. Therefore, it can be said that nothing can be further from Islam than Pantheism which is summed up in such words as *hulul* and *ittihād* ; that is, there can be no ontological pantheism in Islam.

Is there then a temptation to any other kind of Monism? There is and that is to a kind peculiar to Islam. It is to identify one's own will with God's and to believe in a Monism of the Will. We have seen how Al 'Ash'ari and Ghazzali tried to provide against it ; but the temptation does prevail.

What, it may be asked, is now the general view of Muslims in regard to the relationship of God's will to man's. When Solon, the wise man of Greece, was asked what was the best (political) Constitution, he replied ' Tell me the age and tell me the country '. It may be said that we are talking of the present time, and therefore, the question of age does not arise. But the question does arise, because not all Muslims now are intellectually and theologically living in the 20th century ; some are even living in pre-Ash'arite days, some after him, but still in the Middle Ages ; and when they live theologically may be said to depend on where they live geographically.

With those coming from regions where the traditional religion has had no chance of being touched by any new influence the temptation to think that everything one does and everything that happens to one or to the world is the will of God not merely prevails but is triumphant. Those from certain other regions may hold the view as modified by Ash'ari. Those who have received a modern education and have had a chance to notice men of diverse nations and cultures, the clash of their interests and the march of events, against the background of the world scene, seem to hold the view of Abduh and the other Reformers viz : that within a frame-work set by God man is free ; but he will find his mistake if he rebels against that frame-work. Perhaps many of them will agree with the words of Bediuzzamann Nursi, the famous Turkish scholar of the twenties of this century :—

To abandon to God those tasks one may accomplish is laziness

But to abandon their outcome to Him is true trust in Him

.... To be satisfied with the existing state

Betrays lack of aspiration.

Nur—A U.S.A., Muslim Magazine

Nov. 1975.

PART II

SHI'A ISLAM

We have said earlier that there are two branches of Islam. In the first part of this chapter we were dealing with the Sunni branch. Islam is spread over many lands ; and in most of them the Sunni branch commands an overwhelming majority. Shi'a, however, is the State religion in Iran, commanding the allegiance of 98% of the people ; in Iraq and Yemen it commands a majority.¹ The Prophet himself had said that his religion would be split into 72 sects ; there are, however, actually more of them now, most of them in Shi'a. But common consent would agree that the main division is that between the Sunnis, on the one hand, and Shi'as on the other.

This division is fundamental in spite of the obvious agreement of both branches on most of the cardinal doctrines and practices. Lack of conformity of either side in this respect would have deprived it of the right to be called Islam. The Shi'as agree with the Sunnis on five out of the six articles in respect of faith viz : the Unity of God, Angels, the Prophets, the Books of God, the Resurrection and the Judgment. They also agree with them in regard to five of the basic practices, called 'Pillars', viz : the Confession of Faith, the Recitation of Daily Prayers, the Observance of the Fast of Ramazān, the giving of Alms and the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

Nevertheless, the differences between the two are strong and go back almost to the beginnings of Islam. It will be seen that the differences are of the kind that can exist only when there is much in common. 'The word Shi'a' says Prof. H. Nasr, 'which means literally 'partisan' or 'follower', refers to those who consider the succession to the Prophethood to be the special right of the family of the Prophet—and who in the field of Islamic Sciences and culture follow the school of the household of the Prophet'.²

¹ Populations—Iran : 32,923,000 ; Iraq : 11,124,300 ; Yemen : 5,237,900. It is estimated that there are 80-90 million Shi'as in the world.

² Introduction by H. Nasr to '*Shi'ite Islam*' by M. Husyan Tabātaba'i. Translated from Persian (Allen & Unwin), p. 33.

It is said that even in his life-time the Prophet showed a special attachment to Ali ; and that since Ali was the first to believe in him, the right of succession was his by the Quranic verse xxvi—214 (or 215) which says ' lower thy wings (in kindness) to those who believe in thee '. It is also said that in Ghadir Khumm the Prophet actually chose Ali for the post of general guardianship of the community.

However, the chief claim put forward for Ali and his descendants was the right of blood. All the four *Khulafā Rāshidūn* (literally, ' rightly-guided Caliphs ') were closely related to Muhammad.¹ Of them however only Ali and Usman had married the daughters of the Prophet. Usman, however was disqualified by his age (60) to be the proper progenitor to the Prophet's offspring ; Ali was younger and was also his cousin. It was believed that before Creation God had taken some light out of His own glory and created the ' Light of Muhammad ' (*Nūr Muhammad*) ; and this light passed down the family line. Support is also found in the Quranic passage in the promise by God to Abraham and his offspring.

The Sunnis take their stand on the hadīth which says that the Prophet declared, ' I leave behind two things to which you should cling : the Quran, and the *Sunna* of the Prophet '. The Shi'as take their stand on their own *hadīth* which says something very different. One of them says, ' Two things of value I leave in your midst in trust, to which if you hold on, you will never go astray : the Quran and members of my household. These will never be separated till the Day of Judgment '.² There are many other *hadīth* of a similar nature among the Shi'as.

In view of this stand on the question of succession, it has long been customary for Shi'as to challenge the validity of the Caliphate of the first three Caliphs. But as Dr. Nasr points out, it is instructive to realise that Ali himself accepted the Caliphate of his three predecessors. But who is a Caliph? According to Shi'as it is one who is merely responsible for administrative matters ; but

¹ Abu Bakr the first Caliph was the father of Ayesha, Muhammad's wife. Umar, the 2nd Caliph had also given his daughter Hafza in marriage to him. Usman had married two of his daughters. (Usman=Uthman,=Osman).

² *Op. cit.*, p. 93.

an Imām according to them is different. Among the Sunnis the term Imām is applied rather freely. It may refer to any kind of Muslim leader : to one who leads prayers in the Mosque or the propounder of a system of law etc. In Shi'a Islam the term is reserved for the ultimate spiritual leader of the whole Islamic fold. Therefore, whoever might be the Caliph, the Imāmāte belongs to the household of the Prophet. For this reason the Shi'as are also called 'Imāmis'.

But the 'household of the Prophet' may include a vast number of people. So certain definite standards and qualifications are laid down for the Imām. He should, of course, in the first place, be in the direct line of succession of Ali and Fatimah (daughter of the Prophet). This, however, does not mean that as in the case of hereditary monarchies the eldest son automatically succeeds. He should also be expert in the religious sciences and free from error and sin.¹

However, the view of non-Muslims that the dispute regarding Ali's succession is after all only of antiquarian interest is totally mistaken. The Shi'a view of the Imāmāte and its reservation of that position to qualified persons in the line of the Prophet shapes the whole cause and character of Shi'ite Islam. It does so in two ways.

In the first place, it made the Shi'as necessarily a minority community. The other Muslims looked upon the Caliph both as the political as well as the religious leader of the Muslim community. The Shi'as, on the other hand, though compelled as citizens to obey him, in their hearts and conscience simply treated him as if he did not exist. Account must also be taken of the fact to which H. A. R. Gibb draws our attention viz: that Shi'ism in the early days (and even subsequently) drew to itself the non-Arab races to whom the Shi'a attitude represented a revolt against the ruling Arab classes.² So there has always been a minority complex about the Shi'as ; and the complex was hardened and nurtured by centuries of persecution. To the Umayyads the presence of the devotees to the cause of Ali in their kingdom presented a

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

² *Muhammadanism.*

source of almost fatal danger and made them a target for persecution. But if the Umayyads persecuted them because they themselves, could lay no claim to any hereditary right, the Abbassides themselves, after an initial respite, began to persecute them just because, they were devotees to another line which also claimed a hereditary right. The sharpness of the persecution could therefore be more acute. So the realisation that they were a minority community was driven into the Shi'as by the knowledge that their cause was a forlorn cause, by the fact of race and at the point of the sword. It was inevitable that the realisation of the permanence of this status should influence and shape their thinking.

The second reason why the devotion to the cause of Ali was a fundamental influence on Shi'ite Islam was that the succession of Imāms through him meant an extension of the personality of the Prophet.¹ To the Sunnis Muhammad had been a 'warner', a messenger of God, like many others before him. To the Shi'as he was far more; he was a ray of light from God's own glory. And that ray continued to be in those of his household who succeeded him as Imāms. Therefore, whoever might hold the reins of government, whatever kingdoms might rise and fall, ultimate spiritual authority was to be looked for in the Imām who had taken the Prophet's place.

The implication of this doctrine of the Imāmāte is far-reaching and constitutes an unbridgeable gulf between the Shi'as and the Sunnis. On every disputed point the Sunnis have to go back to the Quran chiefly, and failing that to the less reliable authority of *hadith*. The Shi'as, on the other hand, can depend on the word of any of the Imāms who succeeded the Prophet or on the word of their representatives.

If authority resides in the successors of Ali, where are they to be found now? The Shi'as are split into many groups, but the principle of the Imāmāte is common to all of them. A considerable group recognises only seven Imāms; but the majority of Shi'as recognise twelve Imāms and are called *Isnā-Asharias*. The names, dates and history of all the Imāms of the whole line are well known. The last one was Muhammad-al-Mahdi (the guided-one). He is

¹ H. Nasr, *Introduction to Shi'ite Islam*, Husyan Tabātaba'i.

considered to have gone into his minor 'occultation' in 872 A.D. and emerged in 939 A.D. After that he is in his major 'occultation' (some say in a cave in Samara). This 'occultation' continues up to the present time and will continue to the Day of Judgment: he is called the *Imām Ghāib* (the absent Imām). It is a firm belief that God will not allow the world to be without an Imām for a single day. It must be clearly understood that for these Shi'as the succession of Imāms ended with the Twelfth.

If, however, he went into hiding as early as 939 A.D., it will be said 'That was long ago, surely he cannot be living now'. 'Why not?' will be the reply. 'We are not dealing with ordinary men and we are outside the field in which scientific arguments operate'. Tabatāba'i is categorical on the point:

It can never be proved that causes and agents that are functioning in the world are solely those which we see and know and that other causes whose effects and actions we have not seen nor understood do not exist. It is in this way possible that in one or several members of mankind there can be operating certain causes and agents which bestow upon them a very long life of a thousand or several thousand years.¹

If the Imām is merely in hiding it means that though he cannot exercise certain functions, there are others who can, in particular his representatives. In certain countries they are called *mujtahids*. These *mujtahids* must be well versed in the religious sciences and possessed of high moral qualities. But there are so many sects among the Shi'as and the representatives of the Imām may be called by other names. But all believe that the hidden Imām is guiding them.²

It is enlightening to see how its status as a minority and its belief in the continuing Imāmāte have influenced the other chief characteristics of Shi'a and made it stand in contradistinction to Sunni Islam.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

² This would explain the power of the leader of the revolution at the present time in Iran.

Attitude to the Sunna

The Sunnis consider themselves the people of the Sunna or tradition ; the Shi'as do not take up the same attitude to tradition as the Sunnis ; but neither do they repudiate the principle of tradition as such ; in fact, not merely do they have their own distinctive *hadīth* but there is a considerable body of *hadīth* common to both sides. However, the differences in their respective attitudes are important :

1. The Sunnis will accept a tradition that can be traced either to the Prophet or to one of his Companions, provided every link in the chain of intermediate authorities is satisfactory. To the Shi'as a tradition traced to any other Companion besides Ali is worthless ; and even a tradition traced to the Prophet, unless in the first instance it was channelled through Ali, has no value.
2. Since the Imāms took the place of the Prophet their sayings are entitled to the same reverence as any saying that is traced back to the Prophet himself through Ali.
3. Because of the belief in the continued guidance of his flock by the hidden Imām, it is clear that mere tradition, as such does not play the same part in Shi'a as it does in Sunni Islam.

Those *hadīth* which they accept are embodied in five collections (as against the six among the Sunnis), the best known among them being that of Ya'qub Kulyani (d. 940 A.D.), containing 16,199 *hadīths*.

The Tendency to Esotericism

The Shi'as say that anybody can understand the obvious meanings in the Quran ; but is that all that there is to the Quran ? There is a *hadīth* common to both the Sunnis and the Shi'as that the Prophet once said he had three kinds of knowledge : one to be imparted to all, another to be imparted to a few and a third to be imparted to none. It is also maintained that there is a Quranic verse supporting the second kind of knowledge referred to by the Prophet. It says (XIII—17) when rain falls, a lot of water flows

off; some of it however remains according to the capacity of the land to absorb it. 'Thus Allah coineth similitudes'. This does not mean that the privilege of insight into the inner meaning of the words of revelation is open in general to everyone with a religious temperament. It is a specific privilege reserved for the Imāms and those authorised by them.

Though the Sufis first appeared among the Sunnis, the Shi'as claim them as their own, for the reason that the first masters of Sufism traced their claim to special knowledge to Ali.¹ The Shi'as certainly do not approve of all their extravagances and aberrations, but they admit that fundamentally the Sufis are on the right path but hold, however, that the fullness that they are after, is to be found only among the Shi'as.

Attitude to Intellectual Sciences

Prof. Nasr says that the Shi'as inherited the love for *hikmah* or *sophia* from the Prophet and the Imāms and developed it by contact with the Graeco-Alexandrian, Indian and Persian cultures.² Though the ruling classes who were Sunnis had political and military power, intellectually they lived in a closed world. The general racial composition of Shi'ites, their proximity to other cultures and their position as a minority community compelled the Shi'as to seek for superiority over the Arabs in the intellectual field. They have consistently maintained that attitude.

Divine Justice

On this question Prof. Nasr is as explicit and emphatic as he can be on the contrast between the two branches of Islam. 'We might say', he declares,

'that in the exoteric formulation of Sunni theology, especially as contained in Ash'arism, there is an emphasis on the Will of God. Whatever God wills is just, precisely because it is willed by God. . . . in Shi'ism, however, the quality of justice is considered as innate to the Divine Nature. God cannot act in an unjust manner, because it is His nature to be just.'³

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 114.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

The Mu'tazilas also had taken up the same attitude on this question. They had seen the perpetration of cruelty and injustice around them and came to this conclusion on ideological grounds ; the Shi'as came to the same conclusion out of sheer necessity. They were the targets of persecution so long that they could not adopt any other attitude. The doctrine of the Shi'as on this point is like the cry of Prometheus for a higher justice than was meted out in the world.

Divine Essence and Qualities

We noted in the first part of this chapter the attitude taken up among the Sunnis on this question by the orthodox, on the one hand, and the Mu'tazilas on the other. The orthodox maintained that benevolent qualities though they were taken up by God did not belong to His Essence, which consisted of His Being (and Will). Because the Shi'as had adopted the same position as the Mu'tazilas in regard to the quality of Justice, it was logical that they should do so in regard to other benevolent qualities as well and declare that they also were in the Essence of God. They hold that 'The Divine Essence is limitless and infinite', says Tabātabā'i and therefore, would encompass the qualities as well ; and the qualities would include one another and as a result all would become one.¹ The Mu'tazilas were in the same fold as the orthodox and therefore could be suppressed as heretical by the latter. The Shi'as were a rival branch and their views could not be dealt with in the same manner.

Freewill and Divine Sovereignty

While the questions regarding Divine Justice and the relationship between Divine Essence and qualities did indeed arise during the long controversy that went on among the Sunnis, it may be recalled that it was the question of Human Free Will and of its relationship to Divine Justice that not merely started the controversy but was also the crucial issues round which the battle had always raged. What made the issues crucial was that each of the two sides could accuse the other of violating the principle of *Tawhīd* for taking up the stand it did. In regard to this matter we shall see how in spite of the difference in the circumstances in which the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

Mu'tazilas and the Shi'as were placed, yet they also took up the same stand in regard to the first ; but because of the difference there was a slight but significant divergence in regard to the second.

Even as in politics, so in respect of culture the position of the Mu'tazilas was very unlike that of the Shi'as. The Mu'tazilas were living in an Arab world, where the Arab culture and ideas prevailed. They were, no doubt, influenced by Greek thought, but were not under any compulsive pressure to adopt the view they did ; they did so of their own accord. The Shi'as were living in a fluid society, largely beyond the borders of the Arab world, where Greek thought was dominant and exercised an almost inescapable power. Because of this, they could hardly have taken up any other position than they did. The entire dissimilarity of their circumstances, however, did not interfere with the identity of their views.

On the question of human Free will, the Shia view is clear and unmistakable and is the same as that of the Mu'tazilas. Man, they hold, lives in an ordered world, where every part has a relation to every other part and where every cause has an effect. In such a world man must have the freedom (*ikhtiar*) to act as the situation demands. There are various possibilities and he must act according to the possibility that actualises. If bread actualises, he will eat it ; if it does not, he must find a substitute. Man's freedom is, therefore, a presupposition of his existence in this world. In view of this, every man's act is his own ; we may realise that the Shi'as could not take up any other position, since that would have shifted responsibilities for the actions of the Caliphs from them to God. The fifth and sixth Imāms said that ' God loves His creation so much that He will not force it to commit sin and then punish it '.

Very sensibly, however, the Shi'as go on to add that, while man is free (*mukthar*), he is not independent (*mustaqill*). This, we may remember, was the stand taken up by Abdu, the Egyptian Sunni Reformer in the last century. This is God's world ; He has set the frame-work ; it is within it man lives. It is also a world where many other men, besides himself are also living. It is absurd, therefore, for anybody to imagine that he has total independence and can do whatever he likes ; if he does, he will soon find his mistake. This was not a point which the Mu'tazilas

touched, because they did not feel bound to do so. But if called upon to do it, we do not think their opinion would have been different from that of the Shi'as.

But while there was agreement in regard to human freewill, we noted that there was a divergence of opinion in regard to its relationship to divine sovereignty. The Shi'as had stressed human free will to the very limit to which it could be stressed ; however, when they proceed to its relationship to divine sovereignty, what they say is that while man is certainly free to act as he wants to, in the very act of exercising it as he wants, he is but doing what God Himself wills. The Sixth Imām has said, ' He (God) is so powerful, that nothing comes into being in His Kingdom which He does not will.'¹ This, of course, is a new principle that is being introduced into their general attitude. It is one thing to say that we are living in a world ordered and governed by God ; but it is another thing altogether to say that what we are doing in that world is what God Himself wants.

Dr. Nasr commenting on it brings his Harvard terminology to bear on it ; and after observing that the subject transcends the dichotomy of discursive reason, goes on to say,

With respect to Absolute Reality, there is no Freewill, because there is no partial reality independent of the Absolute. But to the extent man is real in a relative sense, he possesses freewill. From the point of view of causality there is determination in relation to the total cause, but freedom with respect to man's action which is part of the total cause.²

Dr. Nasr is not merely changing the terminology of the argument but shifting its basis. He is shifting it from the personal to the impersonal and therefore from the Exclusive to the Inclusive. Every one will agree that the whole, because it is whole, includes the part ; but because God is God, and therefore a person, He does not include man, but is distinct from him. In view of this, what He wills does not include what man wills or does. But the Shi'ite

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 135.

² *Op. cit.* p. 137.

position on the point is clear though it is not in keeping with its views on other points.

Why then should this ambivalent, and in the circumstances totally unexpected, attitude be taken up? As a minority community, constantly subjected to persecution, they certainly wanted to put the responsibility for their persecution where it belonged. But as a religious community, which had to define its faith upon every subject, it did not want to invite the charge that the Sunnis might level against it that it was violating the *Tawhid*; so having stressed human Free will as much as it could, it put in the addendum that, after all, God is all powerful, and therefore nothing can take place against His will. Nevertheless, the Shi'ites wanted it to be understood that their position was not the same as that of the Sunnis. So the Sixth Imām was careful to say that 'it is neither Freewill nor determination, but something between the two'.

Transcendence in Shi'a

The concept of Transcendence in Shi'a Islam must now be obvious to everyone who has read the foregoing pages. Shi'a does not take the concept to such forbidding lengths as Sunni Islam does. It does not, like Sunni Islam, place the emphasis on God's Will to the exclusion of His qualities. To Shi'a if God is God, He must be a just God, a good God; a wedge should not be driven between His will and His character. His Will is always exercised in accordance with His character.

Though it has taken up this attitude, nevertheless, lest it might be suspected of being shaky on the cardinal doctrine of *Tawhid*, it is willing, very hesitantly no doubt, to interpret the sovereignty of God to mean that everything that goes on in the world is ultimately in accord with God's will. We may be permitted to say if that were so, since God is a just God, everything that goes on in the world must also be just; which as all know it is not.

Abduh, being a Sunni Mufti could afford to deny such an interpretation. Shi'a Islam, already suspected of heresy, could not. But even if a country is ruled by a tyrannical Dictator, it cannot be said that everything that goes on in it is in accord with his wishes. So we may ask why it should be considered derogatory to the sovereignty of a good God to hold that the acts of wickedness and injustice that go on in this world are not in accord with His will.

VII CHRISTIANITY

The Antecedent :

James (afterwards Lord) Bryce (1838-1922) a well-known English Liberal Statesman in his time, in his book, 'Studies in Contemporary Biography', thought he had scored a great point against a political adversary, Benjamin Disraeli, at one time Conservative British Prime Minister, by slipping in the innuendo that Disraeli was probably a Christian because he was a Jew. It does not seem to have struck him that the same thing could have been said of St. Paul, one of the greatest exponents of Christianity, and of all the other Apostles. Jesus himself, in whom Christianity centres, was a Jew, who lived throughout within the traditional Jewish geographical boundaries. It might be suggested that what impelled Disraeli was race and not religion. But in the case of a Jew it is often difficult to separate race from religion.¹ And we have to remember that St. Paul himself was not above this attitude and that, when occasion arose could trot out that he 'was a Hebrew of Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin' etc.

Two facts are obvious in regard to Christianity and Judaism viz : that they are definitely distinct religions and that the one arose from the other. The fact that they are two separate religions is proved, if it needs proving, by the continued (except in certain cases), totally inhuman and utterly indefensible persecution to which the Jews have been subjected through centuries in countries which have called themselves Christian. In history it has often happened that those who belonged to one religion, if they had power in their hands, have persecuted those who belonged to another. But the peculiar intensity and almost sustained vindic-

¹ How Disraeli mingles race with religion may be seen from the following excerpt from his writings :

The pupil of Moses may well ask himself whether all the princes of the house of David have done as much for the Jews as the prince who was crucified on Calvary. Had it not been for him, the Jews would have been comparatively unknown, or known as a high Oriental caste that had lost its country. Has not he made its history the most famous history in the world? Has not he hung up their laws in every temple? Has not he avenged the victims of Titus, and conquered the Caesars? What success did they expect from their own Messiah? The wildest dreams of the rabbis have been far exceeded.

tiveness of the persecution inflicted on the Jews show that there was more to it than mere difference of religion. If it be said that it was due to the difference of race, i.e., to anti-Semitism, one may well ask, 'Why pick on the Semites?' In the Roman Empire, while the Jews were disliked, they were left alone. It seems clear, therefore, that mere difference of religion or race was not at the bottom of the persecution exercised on the Jews in Christian countries.

The venom at the bottom of the whole phenomenon points to an earlier connexion between the two that had snapped at some time, to an agreement that had turned into a sharp disagreement, over a point so fundamental that it could not be ignored, so that either side, if it had the power, could even feel virtuous if it persecuted the other. And it must be remembered that the persecution of Jews in Christian countries followed a period of persecution of Christians by Jews, when they had the power. Even an elementary knowledge of Christianity is scarcely needed to make it clear that Christianity arose out of Judaism.

There are three ways in which one religion may arise out of another : Evolution, Protest and Expulsion. In every case, it is inevitable that there would be a carry-over from the old into the new, the extent and degree of the carry-over depending on the circumstances. In case of Evolution, the situation is such, that we may apply to it the French saying : 'The more it changes the more it remains the same'. In case of Protest, it all depends on what the protest is against. In Hinduism, the Ārya-Samāj protested against Idolatry and other non-Vedic practices that had invaded Hinduism, but is able to remain within it as a legitimate form of that religion. Buddhism, on the other hand, protested against the Vedic and absolutely basic tenet of Hinduism, viz : the existence of the Soul, through cycles of births and deaths, and therefore automatically became a different religion. But even here, though we have held in this book that Thera Vāda Buddhism is built on that denial, it is impossible not to catch within it the overtones of its pre-natal situation. From these overtones it has been possible for many Indian scholars till today to hold that Buddhism is simply another form of Hinduism.

Expulsion may be due to two reasons : either to a deliberate denial of something cardinal to the old religion or to the intro-

duction of something new which the old religion feels it cannot admit. In the first case, one side courts expulsion and the carry-over, though natural will be restricted and often unconscious. In the second case, it is an unwilling victim and the carry-over from the old religion will be considerable, if not whole-sale. The party expelled will consider that what it has introduced fulfils and consummates the old, and without it the old religion would become meaningless. So it would not want to separate from the old, as long as it could help it and would long continue to affirm, whatever be the opinion of its opponents, that it was within the frame-work of the old religion.

Christianity separated from Judaism because of expulsion and the expulsion took place owing to the second of the two reasons given above. Jesus appeared on the scene in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, i.e., 28-29 A.D., and all the earthly events connected with his career were *fait accompli* within three and a half years. Soon after, when his disciples went out into the world to preach what they called 'The good tidings', centering in Jesus, it was to the synagogues of the Jews that they first went in each city. It was from the Jewish scriptures that they sought to prove their case; and till they gradually began to get writings of their own, during the second century, the Jewish scriptures remained their only scripture. And up to date the scriptures of the Christians consist of the Jewish scriptures as well as their own. The attempt of Marcion (d.c. 160) to dissociate Christianity from its Jewish beginnings, to discard the Old Testament and create an antithesis between the God of the Old Testament and the New was mercilessly trounced by Tertullian (c 140 - c 220) one of the most brilliant polemicists of the early Church. The movement never showed its head again. The Christian Church has always held that both writings belong together. Augustine (354-430) put the matter in his usual epigrammatical manner, when he said *Novum Testamentum in Vetero latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet* (The New Testament is latent in Old Testament and the Old is patent in the New).

The Inheritance :

Christianity has always emphasised that it is a continuation and consummation of Judaism. The emphasis may be said to be

rooted in the words of Jesus himself that he had not come to destroy the law or the prophets; he had come not to destroy but to fulfil.¹ And Christian scholars have constantly pointed out that Christianity is inexplicable except in the light of the Old Testament. Old Testament studies are a recognised and respectable branch of discipline in all Christian theological seminaries. The Psalms continue to be called the 'Hymn Book of all Humanity', and the ratio of sermons in Christian churches on Sundays based on Old Testament texts to those on New Testament ones, is by no means inconsiderable. And it is quite significant that when Christian parents want to give 'Christian names' to their children, they pick upon such Jewish names as John, James, David and Thomas for their boys and such names as Mary, Martha, Sarah and Ruth for their girls.

It is, therefore, natural that the basic conceptions of Judaism in regard to God, Man and the Universe should pass over into Christianity. But it is also natural, if not inevitable that what had caused the crisis between the two should shed its own light on those concepts thereafter and that they would be interpreted accordingly by Christians; and that new emphases should begin to occur.

G O D :

In regard to God, both religions hold Him to be unique, and absolutely unique. Oscar Cullmann, the modern Swiss theologian, has said that, when the Jews after the Exile in Babylon (586-538 B.C.) began to substitute the word *Adonai* (Lord) in place of the proper name of God, which had been prevalent earlier, and later translated it by the Greek word *Kurios*, they were defining Him as one without a rival.² This meant God as such was sovereign. What were the qualities of this God as he was conceived of in Judaism and has later been in Christianity?

(1) That He is Transcendent, that though He has dealings with man and is forever interested in him, He is 'high and lifted up', with an utter 'otherness' about Him, and that His ways are not ours and His thoughts not ours.

¹ Matth. 5 : 17.

² The Greek word *Kurios* may also be written *Kyrios*.

(2) That this God is Holy. The idea is indicated in Hebrew by the word *quadosh* and is not merely akin to but implied in the word transcendence. The term 'Holy', as the German theologian Rudolf Otto has pointed out, usually meant something terrible. In the Hebrew religion it acquired a religious content.

(3) That though He is absolutely transcendent, He is also very Immanent; that is, He is deeply interested in man and concerned with his welfare, and that though He is different from and other than man, He is very much in this world and concerned in its history. He is immanent as the transcendent and Holy God.

(4) That He is Righteous. This is indicated by the Hebrew word *tsadiq*. It is obvious that the Hebrews conceived of God not merely as a source of power but as one who is righteous in Himself and demands righteousness in others. What is not so obvious, but what is equally true of the conception, is that He not merely demands righteousness but that He is willing to communicate His righteousness to others.

(5) That He is Trustworthy. In Hebrew this is indicated by the word *chesed*. The Septuagint, the Old Testament translated into Greek for the Jews, renders it by the word *elee*, meaning 'mercy'; which is not quite accurate.¹ It means 'reliable'; therefore, God is called a 'shield'. God is faithful; He keeps His contract.

(6) That He is a God capable of Wrath; this is the other side or a corollary of His Righteousness. A God who is righteous must be intolerant of unrighteousness; He demands righteousness of others. Hence the denunciations by the prophets, of the people of Israel and Judah and the proclamation of the Day of Yahweh (the proper name for God). But His wrath is reserved for these unwilling to accept His gift of righteousness. But fundamentally His wrath is temporary, while His faithfulness is everlasting.

(7) That He is a living God. This means that He is not a mere idea, nor impassible; nor capable of being caught in static ideas (as among the Greeks) nor in static images (as in old pagan religions) but a living God who can act on a wide scene and on a cosmic scale.

¹ The Septuagint was probably translated in Alexandria by order of Ptolemy II (Philadelphus—B.C. 285-247). It is often referred to by the Latin numerals LXX.

MAN :

In regard to Man, the Old Testament holds that man was made 'in the image of God', but that he has defaced that image by sin. Throughout the Old Testament man is represented as a sinner; the historical books of the Old Testament, therefore, make very sad reading; and the prophets show a consistent vehemence against the deeds that they see around them. Nevertheless, man remains the unceasing object of God's care, interest and love; and God is always represented as anxious to save him.

THE UNIVERSE :

The Universe was created by God, but while He is always *melek* (king), the universe has come under the power of the princes of evil. It is usually believed by scholars now that this concept came into Jewish thought, during their captivity in Babylon. That it took definite shape and assumed doctrinal form during that period is probably true; but the presence of evil powers in the world had long been realised in the history of Israel. The belief in demons probably began with the Canaanite gods. Satan himself had been there from the beginning, though not armed with the same power nor with a character as black as in later times. But however it had taken shape, the belief prevailed in a fairly well defined form among the Jews at the time with which we are concerned. It was believed that the universe had come under the powers of evil; but it was also believed that this dominion was temporary and would be brought to an end by God.

These concepts and beliefs in Judaism were inherited almost *in toto* by Christianity; but, as has been said earlier, what brought about Christianity and made it separate from Judaism was bound to exercise an influence over them. Basically, however, they remained in the new as in the old; and the reason, as has been seen,

For much of the material used in regard to the concepts inherited by Christians from the Jews the writer is indebted to the following works :

- (1) Th. C. Veriezen of Utrecht, *An Outline of the Old Testament Theology*, (Basil Blackett, Oxford).
- (2) Edmund Jacob of Strasbourg *Theology of the Old Testament*, (Hodder and Stoughton).
- (3) A. W. Argyle *God in the Old Testament*, (Hodder & Stoughton)

is that Christianity did not repudiate Judaism ; it was the other way about.

The New Movement :

How the New Movement arose we have seen. Historians can almost pin-point the exact time ; and as for geography, the place of its origin is there for all of us still to see. Nazareth the town where Jesus habitually lived, Galilee, the province where it lies and where he usually moved about and Judaea and its capital city of Jerusalem to which he often came, are all there still for every one to see. During his short-lived ministry, Jesus is said to have performed 'many mighty deeds', i.e., extraordinary deeds above the power of ordinary men. The Jewish leaders who had first watched his career with interest had become filled with increasing alarm, because of certain claims behind his words and acts, which seemed blasphemous for any human being to make. When they found that he was serious about them, they decided things had gone too far, and had him crucified by the Roman authorities on the trumped-up charge of sedition. That they thought was the end of the matter.

Much, however, to the astonishment of the Jewish leaders the disciples of Jesus began to go about soon after asserting that their Master had risen from the dead. In ordinary circumstances the assertion would have been completely laughed out ; for from the beginning of the world it has been assumed that when a person dies, he stays dead. Among many nations the body is burnt and nothing is left of it but its ashes. Nevertheless, because of the belief that there might be a life for him in another realm for the dead, where burial was practised it was also customary among some races to make provision for his welfare in that realm by burying along with the dead person things and even persons — of course, after seeing to it, the latter duly co-operated — capable of use by him in after-life.

Though, therefore, generally speaking, the idea of the Resurrection from the dead scarcely received any credence among most people, it was not so with the Jews. Speaking to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul referred to the resurrection of Jesus as a fulfilment of God's promise 'to the fathers' ; and standing before the Sanhedrin after his final arrest, he could declare that he was

being 'held in question' because of his belief in the resurrection of the dead, knowing that the argument would have a strong appeal to a considerable section of that assembly. And during his last trial in Caesarea, he could even ask King Herod Agrippa, who was partly Jewish, why the idea should appear unreasonable to him.*

Though there was a powerful and influential party among the Jews, called the Sadducees, who were inimical to the idea, it was numerically negligible. Most of the others among the Jews, therefore, believed in the Resurrection; but the belief took various forms. Some believed that such a Resurrection was a prelude to 1000 years of 'Messianic' reign, after which the Messiah (Heb. meaning the 'Anointed') would hand over everything to God, who would be all in all. Some believed that there would be a Resurrection of the Elect and that only those deserving would rise. Others, however, believed that there would be a total and general Resurrection and everyone would be judged, rewarded or punished as they deserved. All these forms of resurrection are eschatological; that is, expected to take place at the end of all things.

This, however, was not a Resurrection of some or all but that of one person; and it was claimed that this person was the Messiah. It was not expected that the Messiah himself would die; but Scriptures could also be quoted against that position. So if this Jesus had indeed risen from the dead, they had to take account of the fact that he might be the Messiah and that the kingdom of God had indeed been inaugurated. That he was the Messiah the Jewish leaders had consistently refused to believe. He was a carpenter from Nazareth, whose brothers and sisters they knew and who had preached among them on several occasions. They had asked him 'for signs from heaven' and he had refused. If God was really intervening, surely He would have let everyone know it with omens, signs and portents. Since it had not happened in this instance, it was impossible that this Jesus could be the Messiah, and therefore it was impossible that he should have risen from the dead.

In the case of the disciples, the thinking was the other way about. Whether when he was alive the disciples had been quite

* Scriptural refs. Acts 13 : 32 ; 23 : 6 ; 26 : 8

convinced that he was the Messiah or not we are not sure. They had of course felt that he was no doubt an extraordinary person ; but had they all been sure that he was the Messiah ? Certainly, Peter on one occasion had acknowledged his Messiahship, and the mother of James and John had asked for seats for her sons on either side of the Master in the new kingdom, but there was too much tentativeness about it ; and they had all deserted him when the crisis came. Now that they were convinced that he had risen from the dead they felt sure that he was the Messiah.

Of the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead the disciples did not have the slightest doubt. And because of that belief they were willing to defy all the authorities, before whom they had cowered some weeks earlier and were willing to undergo untold hardship through the years and even face death. The book of the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke fifty years after the Resurrection, records the story of their sufferings and their bravery. We are told that Sir William Ramsay (1851-1939), the noted scholar, approached the book with great prejudice and strong scepticism about its reliability, but as a result of his independent researches on various points, became convinced that the author ' was a most careful and trustworthy writer '.¹ The book of Acts shows how the Resurrection was not so much an event that gave the initial impetus to the movement but one on which the whole movement based itself. Almost at the end of Paul's career, Festus the Roman Procurator explaining to King Agrippa the point at issue between the Jews and Paul, over which both sides were willing to go to extremes, said it all seemed to be concerned with ' one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive '.²

And Adolf Harnack (1851-1930), a writer of encyclopaedic knowledge, whose sympathies, however, with the trend of events in the history of the Christian Church were hardly enthusiastic, is yet compelled to say :

Whatever may have happened at the grave (of Jesus) and in the matter of appearances, one thing is certain : *This grave was the birthplace of the indestructible belief that*

¹ Stephen Neill, *An Interpretation of the New Testament* (1861-1961), (O.U.P.), p. 142.

² Acts 25 : 19

death is vanquished and there is life eternal. (The italics are his). It is useless to quote Plato ; it is useless to point to the Persian religion All that would have perished and has perished ; but the certainty of the resurrection and a life eternal, which is bound up with the grave in Joseph's garden has not perished and on the conviction that Jesus lives we still base those hopes of citizenship in the Eternal City.¹

Whatever might be said about the intrinsic probability of the event, there is not the slightest doubt that the disciples believed in its occurrence : and on an examination of the evidence, one might say they did so with good reasons.

The earliest authority on the subject is not the Gospels, the earliest of which was probably written between 65-70 A.D. nor the Acts, which was written considerably later than the event, but St. Paul himself. He was an ardent Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians, who had been converted to Christianity and became its most powerful exponent. In his first letter to the Corinthians written about 56 or 57 A.D., some 26 or 27 years after the event he makes the most categorical statements on the subject : that Jesus after the resurrection appeared to Peter, then to the Twelve and to 500 brethren at the same time, of whom the greater part were still living, and to James. Twenty-six years are not after all such a long period ; and the statements could have been easily verified. Finally, he says, that he had appeared to himself (Paul) also. It is calculated that Paul was converted about three years after the crucifixion and that he visited Jerusalem within six to eight years of the event ; so that he may be said to be standing very close to the event.

At first, the disciples thought that it was enough merely to proclaim the Resurrection but soon realised the need to draw out the implications. What did the Resurrection of Jesus indicate ? It indicated that the prophecies of old had been fulfilled. And if there was one thing that was the constant theme of all prophecy it was the coming of the Day of Yahweh : i.e. the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. That had occurred, said the disciples.

¹ A. Harnack, *What is Christianity ?* p. 162.

The issue between the Jewish leaders and the little band of Galileans had now become clear. What the former had always looked forward to, the latter said had already come.

To the Jewish leaders the reign of God meant primarily the vindication of his chosen people. God had covenanted with them ; He had given His promise, ' I will be your God and ye shall be my people ' :¹ He had planted them in His chosen land. But through the centuries various mighty nations with enough chariots and horses had made that land their happy hunting-ground and continually victimised its people ; but they were mere nations or small empires and finally they had all gone. Their place had now been taken by a world Empire, whose power no one could challenge and it seemed that this power would never go. A petty Procurator of that Empire was exercising sway from the up-start town of Caesarea over the holy city of Jerusalem.² And the soldiers of its legion tramped over the land, where once David had marched his armies, and could ask any Jew to do the menial work of carrying his burden ; and the heathen could now well ask the Jew in the words of the Psalmist, ' Where is thy God ? '. They had waited long enough but they could wait longer. God would surely show His might and establish His power. He had not done it yet, but He would surely do it. But to say that this young man from Galilee had done what God would do was sheer blasphemy ; and to say that he had risen from the dead was nothing but a hoax.

In building their case for the Messiahship of Jesus in the face of such determined and seemingly valid criticism, and in the face of natural questions and doubts among the peoples of the various lands to which they carried their message, the disciples must have been indubitably sure of their ground. They were as sure, as they themselves were alive, that they had seen him alive after he was dead and had been buried. But what was it they had seen ? Right from very early times, there have been many people, who have claimed to have seen ghosts of dead persons ; whether they had indeed seen them or not, it has never been anything over which much ado is made. Nor was it a resuscitated corpse ; for the

¹ Leviticus 26 : 12.

² Caesarea built by Herod the Great and completed in B.C. 9 or 10 ; (to be distinguished from Caesarea Philippi, up in the North).

sight of such a thing would scarcely have been an inspiring sight ; in fact, it would have been a positively alarming one. Then what was it ? It was a ' glorified body ', a body which as St. Paul says was ' sown in corruption and raised in incorruption ',¹ a body that could walk into closed rooms, appear and disappear at will, but one with sufficient similarity to him as he had been and yet with sufficient dissimilarity to convince them that he was no longer a person over whom the chief Priests and Pilate had any power. It was the ' Risen ' body. It was a phenomenon, through which the conviction was overwhelmingly and irresistibly borne in on them which was later put into the memorable saying, ' I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore '.²

Yet, however, convincing the impressions might have been, what was the guarantee that the impression had after all not been produced by a powerful and all-embracing hallucination that had gripped them ? The only reason that could have dispelled such a suspicion and given credibility to the occurrence of the event must have been the impact produced on them by that person concerned, while alive on earth. It must have been such as to have made them say, ' Of course no ordinary man rises from the dead ; but we know that this was no ordinary man. This man could rise '.

The Gospels and the Gospel :

There are four books in the New Testament which deal with the incidents that occurred in the life of Jesus and the words that he spoke. The first three of them (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are called the ' Synoptic Gospels ', because they agree with one another a good deal. (Greek, *syn* = together with). The other is the Gospel of St. John, which though it deals with the same subject, does so from a somewhat different angle. Basing their opinion on the words recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, there used to be many critics who drew a distinction between ' the religion of Jesus ' (that which he taught and practised) and ' the religion about Jesus ', which they said, was the religion now called ' Christianity '. ' The religion of Jesus ' was said to have been more or less a belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of

¹ I Cor. 15 : 42.

² Rev. 1 : 18.

man. He himself, they said, was never central in his own religion. He was made central in the religion which was later built round him.

If one were to base one's judgment merely on the words recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, such an opinion would have considerable justification. If one is to go a little further, there are certain questions that one will have to confront. The first is why it should have been thought worthwhile after forty or fifty years to record the life of one who merely taught the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, which may be considered somewhat platitudinous. The second question is why it should have been worthwhile to record not merely the major points of his teaching and major events in which he was involved but even casual remarks and casual incidents with which he had any connexion. And the third question is who were these writers and for whom were they written.

The answer to the first question is that obviously the person concerned had impressed them as one whose purpose was not merely to teach things which were already well-known; and the answer to the second question is that by the time they came to write their Gospels, they had come to realise that his purpose and significance were of such supreme importance that even his most casual remarks and the most trivial incidents in which he was involved should be recorded. And the answer to the third question throws light on the answers to the first two and almost explains them. That is, the Gospels were written by those who fervently believed in what is called the 'religion about Jesus' to those who shared in their belief.

Those who draw facile conclusions from skimming the surface of the Synoptic Gospels must remember that the writers of those Gospels, did not have such data to go on, because those Gospels had not yet been written. The writers of the Gospels were living in and breathing the atmosphere created by the 'religion about Jesus'. They took that for granted, and knew it could be taken for granted by those who read their books and therefore they could write what appears on the surface of their Gospels and which was not so well known. But if that atmosphere provided their basic convictions, it must surely be expected that one could at least find traces of it in their writings. We can certainly do so; but for that

we must go below the surface of the Gospels. Therefore, it is true to say that what is below the surface is the reason why what is on the surface came to be written.

But if what is below the surface did not come into being from what was on the surface, how did it come into being at all? The answer must be obviously from the impression Jesus had left on those who had been in fellowship with him and the inspiration that it continued to provide to them and their successors. As Emil Brunner has said, Jesus came to be the Messiah and not to preach about the Messiah.¹ So the impression created by Jesus underlay what is recorded as having been said and done by Jesus. Archbishop William Temple has said that the only Jesus of whom there is any evidence is a Jesus who made tremendous claims. Those claims are inherent in much of what he said and did: but to find them one must go below the surface. Therefore, what is recorded on the surface must be read in conjunction with the claims that were assumed for saying and doing what he did. For this reason Bishop Stephen Neill has said that, 'The central message of the Gospel is not the teaching of Jesus but Jesus himself'.²

And what are these claims as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels? He claims to forgive sins (a privilege reserved for God only); he is greater than the Temple (the central shrine of Jewish worship); he is greater than the Sabbath, the observance of which in the minutest detail has been considered inviolable by all Jews through the ages; he assumes the right to set aside the Law of Moses (which had had a sacramental value for the Jews ever since their race began); a word spoken against him was comparable to (though different from) a word spoken against God's Holy Spirit; in the Parable of the Vineyard, he is the only son of the owner, to be distinguished from the messengers before him; he prays for his disciples, not with them (the Lord's Prayer was given by him to be used by them); what he asks for is devotion to his person not to his doings or works, those who trust God and do His commands are still outside the Kingdom.

He who loses his life for his (Jesus') sake and the gospel's has supreme blessings; he who gives a cup of cold water to anybody

¹ Quoted 'Jesus, God and Man', W. Pennenberg, p. 52.

² Stephen Neill, *Interpretation of the New Testament*, (O.U.P.), p. 191.

because he is a disciple, will not go unrewarded ; he who gives up all and follows him will be suitably rewarded ; all that 'labour and are heavy laden' are invited to come to him (a saying found only in Matthew) ; he would be found wherever two or three are gathered in his name ; a man's final relation to God will depend on whether Jesus owned him as a true confessor ; he would be the ultimate judge of the world ; and Israel would be wrecked and replaced by foreigners by its attitude to him.¹

In the opinion of the disciples any one who has acted on these assumptions was obviously a person who could also rise from the dead ; whom death could not contain, whose career death could not end. Credence in the resurrection of Jesus, therefore, to them was not merely possible but inescapable. So, what would have been a mere superstition or a deliberate hoax, if put forward in any other case, in this case seemed but a natural climax.

The question might, however, easily be asked, why if Jesus had created such an impact on his disciples, they had refrained from going out into the world and preaching about him when he was alive. But what could they preach ? They were ordinary people who had come up against an extraordinary person ; were they to go and tell the people of Antioch or Corinth, that there was an extraordinary person among them ? The audience could easily have replied, 'We also have a number of extraordinary persons among us'. Formerly the disciples had no gospel to preach ; now they had. It wanted the Cross and the Resurrection to supplement the earthly life of Jesus and to constitute the gospel. Now they knew that God Almighty had intervened in history, saved mankind and inaugurated His Kingdom. God had kept His promise ; the prophecies had been fulfilled ; now they had a gospel to preach.

The 'religion about Jesus' was not the same as the 'religion of Jesus' and could not be. But the religion about Jesus had not merely a legitimate beginning but an inescapable beginning. It arose because the religion of Jesus could not be the religion of anyone beside himself.

¹ Many writers have listed these assumptions. We have here mainly followed P. T. Forsyth, *Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Independent Press), pp. 106 & 107.

We have so far spoken of only the first three Gospels, but there is a Fourth, the Gospel of St. John. Its treatment of the life of Jesus is very different from that of the first three. It was probably written in the last decade of the First Century and was probably not written by John the Apostle ; but for these reasons it does not lack authenticity.¹ Archbishop William Temple says that he regards as self-condemned any theory which fails to find a very close connexion between the Gospel and (John) the son of Zebedee.² We cannot be sure, he says, about what sections came actually from the Apostle himself, but he says, ' We are nearer the truth in maximising than minimising these '.

The Fourth Gospel is not a verbatim record of the teachings of Jesus, nor a chronological record of his deeds ; it is an explanation of them. As the result of long contemplation on the significance of the career of Jesus, the author tries to give an account of the meaning of it all. He is looking back on it in the light of the Resurrection, and explains why the disciples felt they had a message for the world. He weaves his own rendering round the words and incidents taken out of the life of Jesus. To search for the ' religion about Jesus ', one must dig below the surface of the Synoptic Gospels ; as for the Fourth, it is there on the face of it ; it is what the whole Gospel is about.

The Message of the New Movement :

While, therefore, Christians consider the Old Testament as part of their scripture, the Jews on no account will consider the New Testament as part of theirs. The 39 books of the Old Testament were written before Jesus and the 27 books of the New Testament after. The career of Jesus, it is obvious, makes the difference.

When we examine the Old Testament, we find it contains various types of literature : Law, history, prophecy, devotional poetry and apocalypse. But the theme round which they all revolve is God Almighty, who created the heavens and the earth. It was at His command that Moses led the Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan ;

¹ There has recently been an attempt to ante-date the composition of the book ; such an attempt will require much effort to get accepted.

² Readings in St. John's Gospel (Macmillans), p. xx.

it was His Law that Moses was considered to have propounded ; it was in His name the Judges judged and the kings ruled ; it was to Him all poetical outpourings were addressed, even by the waters of Babylon ; it was His will that the prophets prophesied. It was perhaps taking account of all this (and not the Psalms alone) that it was possible to say :

‘ By one sure sign is Israel’s music known
He sings of God and God alone ’.¹

When from this we turn to the New Testament, the picture changes. The theme of the New Testament is Jesus Christ. The Four Gospels describes his life as it was lived on earth ; the book of Acts describes how his followers carried the message about him far and wide ; the Epistles expound the implications of that belief ; the book of Revelation visualises his final judgment on the world. Hence such hymns as ‘ Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly ’, ‘ Jesus, the very thought of thee with sweetness fills my breast ’, ‘ Tell me the old old story of Jesus and his love ’, are in good New Testament tradition. New Testament Religion knows of only one name, ‘ before whom every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth ’.² Referring to this attitude, Harnack says that it is this which makes it a positive religion and not mere piety or general religion.³ New Testament religion may, therefore be said to centre in Jesus Christ.

Two particular words applied to Jesus give us the clue to the place that he holds in the New Testament. The first is the word ‘ Lord ’. This word had originally been a term of respect, used by a servant towards his master ; and therefore we need not be surprised if the disciples had habitually used it of him in his lifetime as the Synoptic Gospels record. The Hebrew equivalent of it is *adon* and the Greek *kurios*. It was also used of kings, who often claimed divinity. In Hebrew it was used of God in the form *adonai*, and when the Hebrew ceased to pronounce His proper name it was this word they used ; but it occurs in writing also and is used in the Old Testament 130 times.⁴ In the centuries just

¹ Norman Bentinck, *The Jews in Our Time*, (Pelicans), p. 122.

² Phil. 2 : 10.

³ *History of Dogma*, vol. I, p. 71.

⁴ Alan Richardson, *Word Book of the Bible*.

preceding Jesus, however, Greek had become the *lingua franca* of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire and the kings had begun to apply to themselves the titles, 'Lord, King and God'. The Roman Emperors, who had to appear democratic (at least in the early days) refused to allow the term *kurios* to be applied to themselves in the Western Provinces ; but it was used of them in the Eastern part of the Empire and the word was gradually coming to be equated with the word ' God '. But what is extremely significant in the matter is that when the Old Testament had to be translated into Greek, about 250 years before the birth of Jesus, for the benefit of the Jews living in Egypt, the translators (who were Jews) had used the word *kurios* for the unpronounceable name of God : Yahweh.

When Jesus was among them, the Disciples had used the word of him in one sense ; after the Resurrection they began to use it of him in another sense. It is used in the very first speech of Peter after the day of Pentecost, a few weeks after the Resurrection. In the New Testament the word is used of Jesus 138 times by itself and with various epithets 213 times. While, however, the disciples had certainly begun to use the word *kurios* of Jesus in its special sense they did not equate him with Almighty God. All knees should bow at the name of Jesus and confess that he is ' Lord to the glory of the Father ' (Phil. 2 : 10) ; ' Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's ' (I Cor. 3 : 23) ; ' the head of every man is Christ . . and the head of Christ is God ' (I Cor. 11 : 3) ; ' When all things have been subjected to Him, then shall the Son himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all ' (I Cor. 15 : 28). Thus it is plain that in the early New Testament writings at least there is a strong sense of ' Subordinationism ' (subordination of the Son to the Father) running through.

The lordship of Jesus, however, is such that he is entitled to be an object of worship. Thus we find Stephen when he was being martyred saying, ' Lord Jesus, receive my spirit '. And Saul of Tarsus is referred to as one who wrought havoc on all ' who called on his (Jesus') name '. Many years after his own conversion he addresses his First letter to the Corinthians to ' all that call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ '. And ' the grace of Jesus Christ ' is invoked in his letters on those who read them ; and the

repetition of the formula 'Jesus is Lord' was demanded of all baptismal candidates.

The implication of the acceptance of his lordship is plain. He was considered as one who performs many of the functions usually associated with God. It is He who redeems, pardons, justifies, sanctifies, who confers his Spirit and who judges the quick and the dead. There are commentators who say that when Paul says, 'of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever' (Romans 9 : 5) he was equating Jesus Christ with God. This, however, is a doubtful interpretation. But there is no doubt that within a short time of his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus, as Macintosh says, had begun to receive 'the religious value of God'.¹ There is also good external evidence bearing on the point, for Pliny, the Younger, then governor of Bithynia, writing to the Emperor Trajan in 112, about the practices of the new sect, says that, 'they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn to sing an antiphonal hymn to Christ as to a god etc.' If it was a practice in 112, it would mean that it had been in usage for a long while earlier.

The second word that gives us a clue to the position that Jesus holds in the New Testament is the word 'save' (Greek *soso* = I save). The verbal form is used more than 100 times, the abstract noun 'salvation' 46 times and the personal substantive 'Saviour' 24 times; but in various other forms also it is found in other places in the New Testament.² The writers in 'Hastings Dictionary of the Bible' have been wisely content to say that to expound fully the contents of this term would be to expound the content of the whole gospel. This is a natural remark, since salvation is the *raison d'être* of the inauguration of the reign of God.

What is the meaning of 'Salvation'? To expect that the aim of God's decisive intervention in history would be to rid a small part of the Middle East of alien rule would be to take a very light view of God's intentions and purposes for the world. But long before the Romans, the Greeks, the Babylonians and Assyrians,

¹ *Person of Jesus Christ*, p. 42. Vincent Taylor quotes Anderson Scott who says of the use of the word in reference to Jesus that it gave him 'a religious significance hardly to be distinguished from that which men assign to God'.

² Interpreter's Bible.

there had been a power oppressing not merely Israel but all mankind ; and that was the power of Evil. Kingdoms and Empires had arisen and then ceased to be ; and others might arise to be overtaken by the same fate ; but this power could always hold mankind in its grip. The inauguration of the reign of God, if it was to mean anything, should mean the subjugation of that power. That Christ had done this was the gospel (from god+spell=good story) or ' good news ' that the disciples took into the world.

But how does the coming of Christ bring about salvation ? The Jews had attached a lot of importance to the Messiah belonging to the lineage of King David ; but many had belonged to that lineage and done evil. If God had chosen to effect his salvation through one belonging to the lineage of David, that was only a preliminary qualification for what the person was to do. A basic clause in the proclamation of the early Church, on the other hand, was that ' He died according to the scriptures to deliver us from the present evil age '. Would not this, however, mean that instead of overcoming the powers of evil, he had succumbed to them ? No ; because he would rise from the dead and thus conquer death itself.

That mankind needed salvation or should work hard to obtain it was not ' good news '. The message that the disciples took out into the world was that it had been saved. ' While we were yet sinners Christ died for us ', says St. Paul (Rom. 5 : 8). ' The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin ', says the writer of the First Epistle of St. John. Mankind has been saved because Jesus died. So the phrase ' word of the Cross ' became interchangeable with the word ' gospel '.¹ That the death of a person (unless he was very wicked) should seem good news to anybody particularly to strangers, seems curious indeed ; but the good news in it was that in that death God had taken the sin of mankind on Himself ; and this was no surmise or after-thought, it was as Holy Scriptures themselves had earlier foretold.

To understand the idea of God taking the sin of mankind on Himself we must understand the Biblical idea of God's holiness. In the 6th chapter of Isaiah, the prophet describes his vision of

¹ 1 Cor. 1 : 18.

God. He saw the 'Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and His train filled the temple', and angels flew around Him, covering their faces, one crying unto another and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory'. There is a story of a mediaeval saint, engaged on a theological treatise, who after a vision of God refused to write any further, saying to his companion, 'Brother, I blaspheme'. It was not God's might and majesty that either was talking about, but His holiness. Against such holiness what is man? Isaiah cries out, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips'. It is not that Isaiah was particularly sinful; his was the plight of any man standing before the holiness of God.

If any man was to be made holy, God had to make him holy; and God had been in Christ suffering and dying for just this purpose. Rudolf Otto has said, 'Jesus did not believe that he was the Messiah though he had to suffer, but because he had to suffer'.¹ God's holy one had to take the sin of mankind on Himself. 'For all writers of the New Testament', says C. H. Dodd, 'the life of Jesus was a preparation for his death'; and 'what to them has absolute value is the finished work of Christ'.²

Christ and the New Testament :

The New Testament, therefore, is a book about Jesus Christ. This does not mean that it wants to promote 'a Jesus cult'; that would have meant building up Jesus as a hero or martyr. There have been many heroes and martyrs. It is about Jesus, the Christ of God. The Greek word *Christos* means, 'the Anointed' and is the equivalent of the Hebrew word 'Messiah'; but since the Hebrew word meant nothing to the Greek-speaking Gentiles, who formed the bulk of those among whom the new message was spreading, the Greek word took the place of the Hebrew word. What the New Testament wants to establish and assert is that the Jesus, the man of Galilee, whom the Jewish leaders knew very well, was the Christ in whom God had intervened and inaugurated His Kingdom. Because the belief that Jesus was the Christ was taken

¹ Quoted *Christian Doctrine of God*, J. S. Whale, p. 87.

² *Apostolic Preaching and its Development*, pp. 46 & 42.

so much for granted among Christians, the term 'Christ', which was a title, became a proper name and Jesus was referred to as Jesus Christ or simply as Christ.

But because there is so much concentration in the New Testament on Jesus Christ, as has been pointed out more than once earlier, it does not mean the earliest Christians, who had been brought up from their cradle on the Old Testament Scriptures had ceased to believe in the God of their fathers, much less that they had denied Him. Their whole point was that Jesus was the person in whom the God, they had always believed in, had intervened to save mankind, so that in taking up the attitude to Jesus which they did, they were honouring God Himself.

A German writer on Greek and Roman culture says the following of that culture :

An old and rich world of culture dying and in agony, yearning for a new creation and re-birth in all the unrest of a search for God, an unrest never to reach a goal ;—so shows itself to us as the declining paganism.¹

In a world longing for salvation and wondering whether there could ever be such a thing, salvation was being proclaimed ; and the whole of the New Testament was such a proclamation, a *kerugma*. The word is derived from the verb *kerussein*, a word used of the act of a herald or town-crier, who went about the highways crying out and proclaiming some news of importance.²

The Old Testament is not a proclamation, in spite of such verses as 'Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God', or Isaiah's 'Hear, O Heavens and listen, O earth'. The Old Testament had been regarded as a book for a particular race ; it was regarded as a record of God's dealings with that race with whom He had a covenant. It was not regarded as a proclamation to others by the people who possessed that book. The Jews as a whole never regarded that they had any special obligation to the world, and therefore did not feel the urge to proclaim any message to it. And

¹ 'Greek and Roman Culture' (in German) by Wenland, quoted in *Paul of Tarsus*, T. R. Glover, p. 132.

² *Kerugma* is also written *Kerygma*.

that is why the historian Gibbon has called Judaism a good religion for defence but a poor one for attack. The Jews were content to leave the world alone, provided it left them alone.

In contrast, the New Testament is a proclamation from end to end. It had a message about which it could not be silent and that message was concerned with Jesus Christ ; its content was Jesus Christ saved and no one else could. 'What shall I do to be saved?' asks the jailer at Philippi in perplexed anxiety. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house', replies Paul. Reduced to its simplest terms, this may be called the proclamation of the New Testament.

The belief that Jesus came to teach certain general ethical doctrines is one that may be held only after a very superficial reading of the Synoptic Gospels, without a realisation of their purpose and background. It may seem odd to us that the great exponent of such a belief was the noted historian A. von Harnack ; but it must be realised that he came after a storm of scepticism that had swept over Europe early in the 19th century. The theory might have automatically fallen to pieces in course of time when it struck people that nobody gets crucified for uttering platitudes ; and that therefore, there was more to it than Harnack would want them to believe ; and it began also to be remembered that, after all, the Synoptic Gospels themselves were written long after the Epistles of Paul and were written by those who believed in the doctrine of Christ found in those Epistles and written to those who held a similar belief.

But the whole theory popularised by Harnack was given a deathblow early in this century by Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), then a young man, in a massive book called in English, 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus'. Stephen Neill says that hardly anybody adopted Schweitzer's position in every detail even then ; and as a whole it was open to severe attack, but nevertheless he performed a great service by shifting the angle of vision in regard to Christianity from the ethical point of view to the eschatological view point (from Greek *eschaton* = the last). According to Schweitzer, Jesus believed that God was about to wind up history and establish His reign, but the sin of man was the greatest obstacle to it and that by offering himself as a sacrifice, he believed that he would bring

about the desired result. 'He lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn and he throws himself on it. Then it turns and crushes him — — the wheel rolls onwards and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great man — — is hanging upon it still'¹ After Schweitzer it is no longer possible to go back to the view that the purpose of Jesus was merely ethical.

However, while admitting the service that Schweitzer has rendered in shifting the angle of vision on the career of Jesus, it is obvious that the theory that he weaves from that angle is, in the first place a flat contradiction of Scripture. According to him the death of Jesus was a gambler's last throw ; and that throw had failed ; the Kingdom of God was not inaugurated, according to his expectation and he died a death of despair and disillusionment. According to the New Testament, however, it all went 'according to plan'. Jesus knew he had to die and that the kingdom of God would be inaugurated. He died and the Kingdom was inaugurated. According to the New Testament, the career of Jesus did not end in the tragedy of death but in the triumph of the resurrection. Schweitzer is writing an interpretation of certain historical events and the only documentary evidence he has on the subject is Scripture. If he wants to reject it, he must do so on the warrant of some better and more reliable authority, but he does so with no better warrant than a preference for his own arbitrary theory.

In the second place, Schweitzer's theory is a contradiction of common sense. He wants to account for the rise of the Church by attributing it to the poignancy of a mangled body hanging on a cross : 'That is his victory and his reign'. His theory cannot explain the joyous confidence and the defiant courage of the disciples throughout the rest of their lives. And it is too much to ask anybody to believe that the proclamation of the unjust execution of a deluded visionary would be undertaken as a mission of joy, or accepted as a message of glad tidings by anybody. The New Testament is not a dirge of sorrow but a paean of triumph of life over death, of God's final intervention by which all men are saved.

¹ Quoted *Interpretation of the New Testament etc.*, Stephen Neill, p. 199.

The Holy Spirit :

In his book 'The Reconstruction of Belief', Bishop Gore says that if you had asked one of the disciples in Jerusalem or one of the members of the churches founded by St. Paul what it was to be a Christian he would probably have said, 'It is to confess "Jesus is Lord" or it is to have received the Spirit'. So though the New Testament deals with God, concentrating, however, on Jesus Christ, the early Christians felt that by being Christians they were experiencing yet another presence. And the New Testament gives ample testimony to that experience.

The fact that the Spirit of God has always been operative in the world is well recognised in the Old Testament. In the first chapter of Genesis we are told that it was brooding on the waters before the creation of the world. Mighty men of valour like Sampson are sometimes endowed with it to do something extraordinary. The Psalmist cries, 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?' (137 : 7), and 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me', (51 : 11). But in the Old Testament it is chiefly the prophets who are called forth to be the organs of the Spirit.

However, even as the concept of the 'Messiah' had come from the Old Testament and acquired a fresh meaning in the New, so we find the term 'Holy Spirit' progressively acquiring a fresh meaning in the New Testament. First we find before the birth of Jesus himself Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, being filled with the Holy Spirit prophesying over the birth of his own son. And Jesus born of the Virgin Mary is conceived of the Holy Spirit ; at his baptism he is filled with the Spirit ; it is the Spirit that leads him into the wilderness where he is tempted and which brings him back strengthened to the synagogue at Nazareth. By the Spirit of God he casts out devils ; he rejoices in the Holy Spirit and utters a severe warning against the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. So that the operation of the Holy Spirit is recognised as a fact even before and during the career of Jesus on earth.

But there is a significant verse in St. John's Gospel (7 : 39) which says that the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified. This Gospel, as we know, was written long after the events it records and takes a retrospective view of the whole situation, throwing a clear light on the outlook and atmosphere

of the era with which it deals. Therefore, it reveals that the Holy Spirit, though acknowledged as always existing, was recognised as having a special role to fill after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our attention to this is clearly drawn by what are called the 'Paraclete sayings' in the 14th and 16th chapters of John. The term 'Paraclete' is used in those chapters in reference to the Holy Spirit. The term is derived from Greek *para* + *kaleo*, meaning 'I call for one's aid', and the term 'Paraclete', therefore, means 'one that comes to somebody's aid'. The sayings enumerate the functions that he will perform, once Jesus goes away; and it is definitely said (14 : 7) 'If I go not away the Comforter will not come to you'.

The coming down of the Holy Spirit on the disciples with many signs and wonders on the day of Pentecost is vividly described in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.¹ Thereafter, the Holy Spirit is a guide, inspirer and participant in all the doings of the Apostles; and becomes the stamp and testimony to the authenticity of their actions. He asks them to separate Paul and Barnabas for work among the Gentiles; and the decision of the Council of Jerusalem on the question of observing the Mosaic Law is represented as a joint decision of the Holy Spirit and the members. And when a person is incorporated into Christian fellowship the Holy Spirit comes on him, signifying that the incorporation is true and valid.

As for Paul, the outstanding theological exponent in the New Testament, Christ and the Holy Spirit seem always to go together. 'Now the Lord is the Spirit' (II Cor. 3 : 17). The believer is often said to be 'in the Lord' and often said to be 'in the Spirit', so much so that some scholars have wondered whether Paul wanted to identify them with each other.² That he does not may be seen from the verse: One Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (Ephesians 4 : 4 and 5); and above all, it may be seen from the famous verse repeated millions of times every week, 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you' (II Cor. 13 : 14). So that while there is a very close and undeniable association

¹ The Pentecost is the 50th day following the Sabbath after the Jewish Feast of the Passover.

² Vincent Taylor *The Person of Christ*, (Macmillan), p. 53.

between them, the disjunction is also plain. Therefore, one may see that Christianity recognises three distinct agencies : God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that, however important the doctrine of the Holy Spirit may be, it has been only for those who have recognised Jesus Christ as Lord. 'Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ, is not of God ', says the writer of the First Johannine Epistle (I Jn. 4 : 2 and 3). That is why J. S. Whale has said that Christian Theology is mostly Christology. And Bishop Gore's imaginary but intuitive account of what an early Christian would have said about what it was to be Christian shows how closely and almost automatically confessing the Lord and receiving the Holy Spirit were connected.

Paul and the New Movement :

We have seen something of the religion of the followers of Jesus in the First Century. We may see how it differed from the kind of religion which would have prevailed, if, as Harnack says, it was true that Jesus had been a simple teacher of ethical ideals or as Schweitzer held he had been a misguided visionary who had thrown away his life in the vain hope of impelling God to act. Since this was not the kind of religion that did prevail in the First Century, the opinion has been forcefully put forward that Paul was the founder of Christianity as it became.

It must be admitted that, if that religion was not of natural growth but was imposed on the New movement, then Paul was the man who could have done it. Of the class that constituted the majority of converts at that time, he could say that there were 'not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble'. Socially, he himself belonged to the upper class of Jews, since he possessed Roman citizenship ; he was at home in two cultures, Hebraic and Hellenistic. As a Hebrew, he had been a pupil of Gamaliel and as a Hellenist had been born in the University town of Tarsus ; and there are good reasons for thinking that, in addition, he had a good knowledge of Latin, the language of the ruling race. (He lived for two years in Rome without inconvenience.) Above all, he was not merely intellectually superior to his own contemporaries

but one of the greatest minds of the ages ; and many of the profoundest theological scholars of the present time think that they have produced the *magnum opus* of their lives if they could produce a 500 page commentary on a letter that he tossed off to the church in Rome, when he was in Corinth between 54 and 59 A.D.

In his book 'Paul of Tarsus', T. R. Glover (1869-1943), a famous classical scholar in his time, pays the following tribute to him :

Whatever his argument is .. it is not that you remember when he is done. You have been with a man of genius ; you have swept with him from peak to peak, vision to vision ; you have tried to keep pace with his moods and subjects, indicated in the amazing vocabulary, the striking metaphors, the compressed word pictures, popular phrase . . . you have consorted with a man of elemental force, revelled in all the colours of God with him, wondered why he was not a poet and why he was so much more than a poet .. and all the time you have been growing to love more and more the greatest human being who ever followed Jesus Christ¹

That such a man could ram his views down on the mixed, struggling and unpretentious community in whose midst he was and who were very much his social and intellectual inferiors looks on the face of it a tenable theory. And a certain colour is lent to it by his habit of referring to the gospel as his gospel and his boasting that he had received it of no man and that it had been specially revealed to him.

But can such a theory bear much examination ? In the first place, when we meet him, he is a zealous persecutor of those who belonged to the New Movement. He must have known for what views he was persecuting them ; it would certainly not have been for believing in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men. After his conversion he was staying for some days with the persons of that community in Damascus, and was even preaching in their synagogues. If his views had been peculiar he would have been challenged then. And after three years in 'Arabia',

¹ T. R. Glover *Paul of Tarsus*, (S.C.M.), p. 197.

he went to Jerusalem and stayed for a fortnight with Peter ; and C. H. Dodd drily remarks that they would not have spent all their time discussing the weather. Before Paul came on the scene, the fundamental points in its *kerugma* had become well fixed ; we find Peter proclaiming them before he met Paul and if the latter's views had differed substantially from his, he would certainly have contradicted them when they met.

In the second place, besides Peter, there were ten or eleven other Apostles and quite a few others who had been preaching for some time ; and their word had already spread over a considerable area ; and if when he started preaching, his views had differed from those they held, they would certainly have challenged and contradicted him. He could have been contradicted by Barnabas in Tarsus or later when he was with him for one year at Antioch.¹ Barnabas could have also done it when both of them went out on their first missionary journey. Above all, his brand new Christology would have formed the chief issue of the Council at Jerusalem and if it differed from that of the others, he would have been strongly admonished. But the chief issue in the Jerusalem Council was the necessity of the observance of the Mosaic Law among followers of the New Movement, and even on this point the Apostles and elders agreed with him rather than with his adversaries.

It becomes quite clear, therefore, that the teaching of Paul was not different on any essential point from that of the rest of the Apostles. C. H. Dodd does a careful analysis of the Pauline *kerugma* and concludes that it was ' derived from the main stream at a point very near its source '.² In his First Letter to the Corinthians (15 : 3) Paul states quite plainly that he had communicated to them what he had received. It would also appear that he had studied a written record of the sayings of Jesus (1 Cor. 7 :10, 25). Many scholars are of opinion that the famous passage in Phil. 2 about Christ renouncing the privilege of being on an equality with God is a quotation from a liturgy current at the time ; and Bultmann has suggested that even the passage (Rom. 10 : 9) about confessing Christ as Lord and believing in your heart that God

¹ Acts 11 : 26.

² *Apostolic Preaching and its Development*, pp. 17, 16.

has raised him from the dead is a quotation from a creedal formula that was in use.¹ And Vincent Taylor has no hesitation in saying that instead of being an innovator, ' Paul is steeped in tradition '.² If he was not so well grounded in the faith held in common by others in the community, he would not have dared to say that even an angel from heaven would have no right to preach any gospel other than what he himself was preaching.

In the circumstances, therefore, we may wonder why he should insist that the gospel he preached was not taught to him by other men but was received direct by revelation.³ If there was one point on which Paul was sensitive, it was on the fact that he was not one of the original Twelve and that he was a late-comer. And it was an accusation that his adversaries were constantly flinging at him. His purpose, therefore in taking his stand on direct revelation was not to suggest that he was preaching anything different from the other Apostles, but that he had as much authority as they to preach. If he had not been with the Lord during his earthly life, the Lord had appeared to him after his earthly life and given him his commission. So what he was doing when taking his stand on direct revelation was not stressing a difference of content between the preaching of others and his, but stressing the sameness of his authority and qualification.

If the charge that Paul was an innovator cannot be maintained, what was the contribution he made to the early Church and how does one account for his immense influence on that era? Paul did not teach the followers of the New Movement their cardinal beliefs, but he taught them the meaning of those beliefs, looked deeper into them, saw further than they did and spelt out the implications of those beliefs for them.

We have seen what the baptismal formula was, the repetition of which was required from new converts. We also know what the Petrine *kerugma* was which had been proclaimed by the Jerusalem Church before Paul. We note that the *kerugma* lays stress on the fulfilment of prophecies, and the inauguration of the

¹ Vincent Taylor *Person of Christ*, (Macmillan), p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ Gal. I: 12, 13.

new age. In fixing the baptismal formula, these responsible had come to the conclusion that their whole message after all was 'Jesus is Lord'; i.e., they end up with Christ. With Paul on the other hand, it was Jesus who had met him on the road to Damascus, and called him from his old allegiance to the new and so made the difference between his old faith and the new. So what to others was the conclusion was to Paul the starting-point.

From this point of view, he looked at every question and drew his conclusions with ruthless logic. If now after the Resurrection Jesus was at the right hand of God and had 'an epilogue of eternity', he must also have had a 'prologue of eternity' and been on an equality with God earlier. If the inauguration of the new era meant not political emancipation but salvation from the power of evil, how had that been achieved? By the death of Jesus on the Cross; so reliance on anything else for salvation other than the Cross was a violation of what the new Faith stood for. What then about the Law about which some were concerned? Now that Christ had come, its time was over. God was concerned with saving all mankind, not merely the Jews. These views put forward with a passionate single-mindedness and an almost unceasing earnestness for over thirty years had a profound influence on the early Church. It was his clear-sighted explanation of the fundamentals of the faith that was looked upon by some as a divergence from it. But that their formulation in a manner so free of ambiguity performed an undeniable service need not be doubted.

Two factors may impress us about that influence. The first is that while there might have been much written at that time by those who professed the new Faith, it is chiefly Paul's own writings and those of his followers which have come down to us in the New Testament. Of the writers of the Synoptic Gospels, Mark attended on him on his first Missionary journey, and though they had quarrelled they had probably been reconciled, and he was probably with Paul and attended on him during his last imprisonment. Luke, the author of the Third Gospel and the Acts, was his personal physician. The second factor is that Marcion (d.c. 160), who though he scorned what the Old Testament stood for, was certainly devoted to the New Faith, wanted only the writings of Paul and Luke to be regarded as the canon of the latter.

There might have been some misgivings that Paul was putting things a little too uncompromisingly, but there need be no doubt that these were the beliefs of the New Testament Church.

The Break

For some four decades the New Movement entertained the hope that its interpretation would be accepted by the Old Faith and tried hard to achieve that aim. It was to the Jewish synagogues that Paul first went, when he travelled from city to city in Asia Minor or Southern Europe to spread the gospel, and it was with the Jews he first tried to argue and reason. Even about the end of his career we find him undertaking the Purificatory rite (mentioned in Numbers 19 : 12) to prove that the new Movement was not inimical to the old. Before the Sanhedrin he declared, 'I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,' and that though he belonged to a 'sect', it was a sect of the old Faith.

Also it is very significant that for a long time the New Movement refused to take on any new designation ; and it was in the pagan city of Antioch that its members were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11 : 26). It has been on the same basis that the Muslims to this day refuse to be called Mohammedans ; only, the Muslims are right and the early Christians were wrong, because Islam does not centre in Mohammed, while Christianity does centre in Christ. At first, they distinguished themselves from the Jews by calling the New Movement 'the Way'. Only thrice does the word 'Christian' occur in the New Testament and of the three occasions only once is it used by a Christian (1 Pet. 4 : 16). So genuine was the hope of the New Movement of being able to convert the leaders of the old Faith to its own point of view.

The debate was carried on with fierce tenacity by the Jews and hopeful earnestness by the Christians. 'The scriptures proclaim but one God and none other and you make your Jesus equal with Him', said the Jews. 'It is the same God we also proclaim ; but God is not an idol : He can manifest Himself in many ways and He has manifested Himself in Jesus', replied the Christians. 'Why in Jesus?' 'To inaugurate His Kingdom', 'What do you mean by inaugurating His Kingdom?' asked the Jews. 'By saving mankind'. 'How?' 'By dying on the Cross'. 'By

dying on the cross, indeed ! Do you not know that he who hangs on a tree is accursed ?' said the Jews. The Christians replied saying, ' That is the whole point of it. The day of the Law and Prophets is over, a new era has come into being. This form of death, the lowest known to man, was chosen to show that God is willing to come thus far to save man '. Thus the debate went on.

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. the Jews as a community were scattered far and wide ; but religiously their attitude wherever they were remained the same ; and with the introduction of the *birkath ham—minim*, a malediction on the apostates which the Christians could not utter, Christians were permanently debarred from fellowship with the Jews.¹

As time went on, Christianity grew in strength and spread throughout the Roman Empire and the Jews became wanderers. Their religion that could be so strong and look so natural in its homeland, seemed out of place in distant lands scattered over a far-flung Empire ; it had nothing to say to the world at large. But even in their continued distress their disavowal that Jesus fulfilled their age-long hope has not wavered.

Long after the break had taken place, Justin Martyr (c 100-c 165) a Christian writer, in a book called the ' Dialogue with Trypho ', has attempted to present a dialogue with an imaginary-Jew, in the city of Ephesus, on purely Platonic lines ; but the maintenance of a friendly tone in such a discussion had become possible not merely because it was an imaginary effort in which the process of the argument was entirely in the hands of the author, but because the atmosphere had changed and any vindictive ferocity on the part of a Jew was past recall. Nevertheless, to give an air of reality to the discussion Justin has found it necessary to show that the position had not shifted one bit ; for at one point Trypho exclaims, ' I would like you to know that you are talking nonsense ', and at another place, ' God's words are holy, but your expositions are artificial or blasphemous, I should say '.² Discussions of this sort are possible and do occasionally take place even

¹ *Companion to the Bible*, T. W. Manson, article by A. F. Bruce (T. & T. Clark), p. 504.

² T. R. Glover *Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire*, (Methuen), p. 174 and 192.

nowadays, but the basic attitudes remain the same. The old religion still remains a religion, but what was a New Movement within it has become a new religion.

The Heritage from Judaism :

It has been pointed out why, in the circumstances, the carry-over from Judaism to Christianity should be considerable. Because it was expelled and did not leave of its own accord, it carried over with it a sense of continuity with the old religion. In spite of all the new element that had come into the new movement and the development of its implications that had necessarily to take place, it never ceased to look to its beginnings and the old religion from which it had sprung. To Paul it was always the 'faith of the fathers' that he was proclaiming. The last book in the New Testament is the book of Revelation and Bishop Gore calls it the most Judaic book in the New Testament beyond all question.¹ The author writing from the lonely little island of Patmos envisages the end of all history and sees the God of the book of Genesis sitting on the throne, judging all mankind. But it is not merely to the beginnings that Christianity looks; it seeks to maintain a sense of continuity with the Old Faith right through.

The heritage also involved the carry-over of a sense of the absoluteness that always attended every divine command. Since, however, it was believed that now that the Lord had come, the large number of injunctions that covered practically all aspects of life and constituted what is called the 'Mosaic Law' no longer held good, the absoluteness applied only to moral commands. What, however, the New Movement predominantly inherited from the old religion was its basic concepts regarding God, Man and the Universe. It may, therefore, be expected that these concepts would continue to colour its thinking.

But since this book is dealing with the concept of Transcendence, we need to concern ourselves only with the concept of God. It is a conception that governs the Old Testament. Very early in this Chapter we noticed the various definite ideas that went into this conception. It is the conception of One, sovereign, living God

¹ *Reconstruction of Belief* (John Murray), p. 421.

besides whom there is none other God, Transcendent but Immanent, Holy and Righteous, Wrathful (against sin and wrong) but essentially a God of Love and Mercy. In later controversies in the Christian Church there were many occasions, when owing to the place that Christianity assigns to Christ and the Holy Spirit, the question might have been raised whether Christianity was indubitably committed to the conception of one God. The imputation suggested by the question, if true, would have been a devastating indictment; and Tertullian at the end of the Second Century merely summed up all Christian thought on the subject when he said *Deus, si non unus, non est*. (If God is not one, He is none).

The New Movement as a New Religion:

Harnack has said that 'The Jewish, that is, the Old Testament element divested of its national peculiarity has remained the basis of Christendom'.¹ Certainly as the New Movement spread among the Gentiles, it had to shed many of the peculiar traits that characterised Judaism among its own people and in its own homeland; but it fundamentally remained in a Judaistic context. The difference, however, was that it had become a new religion which could by no means square entirely with its context. That new religion is a religion about Christ. The World Council of Churches which represents all the major Christian bodies in the world outside the Roman fold defines itself as, 'a fellowship of Churches who believe in Jesus Christ as our God and Saviour, according to scriptures and who under the guidance of the Holy Spirit seek to fulfil together their common calling etc.'² (This definition was arrived at in 1961 at the insistence of the Russian Orthodox Church. Formerly it defined itself simply as a fellowship of all those who believe Jesus Christ to be their God and Saviour). The Roman Catholic Church may add further qualifications; but it will certainly not deny this is the basic minimum qualification for Christians. This definition of Christianity is a far cry from Judaism.

We speak of Christianity as a historical religion; by which it is meant that it was founded at a particular time in history by a

¹ *History of Dogma*, I, p. 52.

² W. Visser T'Hooft, *Memoirs*, (S.C.M.), p. 311.

historical person and is not one which has existed and grown up through the ages. In this sense we refer to Jainism as founded by Maha Vira in the 6th century B.C., of Buddhism as founded by Gautama Buddha about the same period and of Islam as founded by Mohammed in the 7th century A.D. But there is an important difference between them and Christianity. Generally speaking, (that is, in spite of later contentions), their founders are not integral to their message. Whereas, in Christianity, from the start Christ has been integral to what is proclaimed as Christianity. And that is why the Apostles' Creed, which though not composed by the Apostles goes fairly far back to very early times, simply consists of a string of facts about him ; so integral is he to the religion that goes by his name.

But if the religion is about him, is it correct to call Jesus its founder? In fact, P. T. Forsyth, the great theologian, has denied that he was ; and what is more, Scripture seems to lend itself to such a point of view ; for it says, ' For other foundation, can no man lay, than that which was laid, which is Jesus Christ '.¹ If Christ is the foundation it may be said he could not have been the founder. This means that somebody else made him the foundation. To take up such a view-point would be to suggest that the Jewish leaders were right in declaring that the Apostles made up the whole thing and built up a religion round Jesus. But it would be senseless to believe that the Apostles would have done it right from the start, unless they had been convinced that Jesus himself had made such claims that he had to be the foundation. Was Jesus then the foundation or founder? He was both.

The statement that Jesus was both the founder and foundation of Christianity is very important ; because a historical person is not expected to be the foundation of a religion ; here, however, he has to be, because so it was intended and others do not have the liberty of changing it.

In the phenomenon of religions why is not a historical person ordinarily found to be the foundation of a religion? Because, Religion and History are considered to belong to different spheres. Religion makes assertions about the ultimate with which one may

¹ I Cor. 3 : 11.

agree or disagree ; but they are supposed to belong to a category that is above challenge. They may be analysed and commented upon ; but that is done in the knowledge that such procedure makes little difference to those who believe in them. History makes statements about human beings and human events ; it is concerned with persons and their achievements which are of public interest. Though it is untrue to say that history is what the historian makes it, history is something about which every man can exercise his right to say something, use his own criterion, make his own criticisms and express his opinions freely on everything connected with it. So a religion that chooses to base its ultimate assertions upon a historical person opens itself wide to attack ; and this opportunity has often been availed of.

H. G. Wells (1866-1946), a popular writer of a generation ago, put the matter pointedly in an address to the British Association. He said—

We are telling our young people about the real past, the majestic expansion of terrestrial events. In these events the little region of Palestine is no more than a highway between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nothing began there, nothing was worked out.¹

Many others may have made criticisms, which may seem more serious ; but Mr. Wells' comment, if looked at carefully, is quite devastating. What he wants to say is that from the point of view of history in general, the whole of what is regarded as God's special revelation and is recorded in the Bible, and in which the life of Jesus is itself embedded, may simply be dismissed, as not being of the slightest consequence. Historical comment and criticism are dependent on the criterion used ; so that when a different criterion is used, the comment may be different. For such a comment see below.²

¹ At Nottingham 1937 (*Ex. Times*, vol. 49), p. 48.

² Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the German poet, and a far greater authority on cultural matters than Wells, says this about the Bible which records these events :

What a book ! Vast and wide as the Universe ! Rooted in the abysses of creation, towering beyond the secret blues of heaven ! Sunrise and sunset, promise and fulfilment, birth and death, the whole drama of humanity all in this book ! Its eclipse would be the return of chaos ; its extinction the epitaph of history.

But the point is that when a historical person is made the foundation of a religion, its basis does become open for anybody's judgment and comment. This, of course, may be considered a grave disadvantage to any religion. But believing as Christians do, that God intervened decisively in history, Christianity could not do otherwise.

Knowing what was involved in the whole procedure, why then, it may be asked, did God intervene in history so that Christ had to become what he is in Christianity? After all, Mr. Wells has merely commented, whereas the Jewish leaders and Pilate did much worse things. Why then? The reason is that such an intervention if really believed in, would be so astounding in its significance, that it would be overwhelming in its impact. 'If I really believed that God became man, I would talk and write about nothing else', said Lord Morley, the famous British atheist. To talk about the love of God is one thing, but to say, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish etc.', is another thing altogether. A doctrine actualised is very different from a doctrine in the abstract.

If the concreteness of divine intervention has its disadvantage, it also has a decided advantage. If the figure of Jesus that emerged from it could become a subject of adverse comment, we know that, in fact, through centuries it has exercised a continued fascination over believers and unbelievers alike. It is true beyond doubt that for most people throughout the world the figure of Jesus Christ has been the chief attraction of Christianity.

The Problem Without and the Problem Within

In making Jesus Christ the basis of its assertions about the ultimate, the New religion was creating a curious situation. On the one hand, it had been claiming all along to be a continuation and fulfilment of Judaism, in which Monotheism was the overruling concept. This meant, that Monotheism was its heritage. And on the other hand, it was treating Jesus Christ as if he was God, insisting that such an attitude to him was demanded by its revelation. On the face of it, the revelation seemed to contradict

the heritage. But members of the New Religion denied that there was a contradiction. If there was no contradiction between the two there had to be a reconciliation. So the reconciliation of its Revelation with its Heritage was the major problem that confronted Christianity. This was without.

But if that reconciliation was to be real, there was another problem to be solved within its revelation. Jesus Christ had been a man who had been known to the earliest disciples, and the memory of whose earthly life had been handed down to their successors. And Christianity had built its whole case on the fact that it was making its assertions about a historical person, who had lived at a certain time and place. To void him of his divinity or even extenuate it, was to void him of the power to save which was the whole point of his career; for how could a mere man save mankind? On the other hand, to void him of his humanity or even extenuate it was not merely to outrage historical memory, but also equally to deny that God had intervened in human history and saved mankind by His identification with it.

No Christian could dispute the need to reconcile the Christian position with its heritage. However, as we go along, we shall find the Church engaged in many violent controversies. What were these controversies about? None could have been about the major problem confronted by the Church, i.e., the 'problem without. All the controversies were about matters within the revelation. Though the need to solve the first problem was certainly imperative, the need to solve the second was immediate and more urgent. And within the revelation there were a number of disputes from time to time on a number of issues; but all the great controversies bore on just one point, viz: the exact degree of the divinity or humanity of Christ. The dispute about the Holy Spirit that arose in their wake, was a related issue.

For any problem to be solved, there must be certain preliminary conditions which must be fulfilled. In the first place, it must be seen as a question which demanded an answer. Secondly, when seen, there must be persons capable of giving an answer to it. Thirdly, such persons should not be otherwise preoccupied. In the first century none of these conditions could be fulfilled. The

Apostles who could have done it were busy preaching the gospel and had no time for tackling subtle theological issues ; and the kind of converts who came into the Church at that time were quite incapable of dealing with such matters. In the Second Century, all the conditions required could be fulfilled. In the East the gospel had gone among a people who could not merely see a question when raised, but who could raise questions even if no one else did. But both in the East and the West it had reached a class who could answer them : in the East with subtlety and acuteness and in the West with exactitude. And in the Second century, since the gospel was spreading on its own like wild-fire, no responsible leader need have been too preoccupied.

So now ' the question was before the House ', i.e., before the Christians of the Empire. And everybody felt free to express his opinion and began to do so with such ardour, that it became a complaint that it was difficult to get any work done in an Inn, because every labourer had become a theologian. And the chief question that formed the subject of discussion was the status and the nature of the Son ; the heritage itself remained in the background and was considered inviolable.

As thinking had become more informed, a marked tendency became apparent. Leaders who had come under the influence of Alexandrian thought tended to emphasise the divinity of Christ and those who had come under the influence of Antioch to emphasise his humanity. Alexandria was the second city of the Empire and was the seat of the famous Catechetical School, at which outstanding teachers taught. Antioch was the third city of the Empire ; it was from there that Paul had started his mission to the Gentiles, and it had a long tradition of theological thought. But apart from the influence of the Schools, there were also teachers whose influence was felt deeply. The most important of them were Tertullian in the West and Origen in the East. Tertullian was a pagan lawyer who had been converted to Christianity and brought to his task the trenchancy of the Court House. Origen was a man of legendary piety, learning and austerity ; but unfortunately he wrote a little too much, so that he could often be quoted on both sides of a controversy.

However, tendencies and teachers laid down no laws and speculation continued to be free ; and it was natural that both

right opinions and wrong opinions should have been expressed. The application of the word 'heresy' to any wrong opinion expressed at that time is an *ex post facto* act. It would be a word applied by those who came at a later time to an opinion expressed, when the distinction between a right opinion and a wrong opinion had not been rigidly drawn. Though such action is *ex post facto*, as an action, it is however, undoubtedly right ; because the Church is bound to survey not merely the present but also the past and pronounce on what is valid doctrine from its own point of view. The fact that an opinion was expressed long ago does not by any means make it right.

However, to call certain views heretical, particularly in subsequent times, is by no means to attribute wrong motives to most of those who advanced them, because they were mostly Bishops, Archbishops and other high and holy men. And even as opinions, Alan Richardson cannot help saying, 'As a matter of fact, the Church owes a great deal to heretics. For she was led to develop her theology largely through the pressure which they brought to bear on her etc'.¹ Heresy may have performed a service ; but a heresy it was, though the judgment came later.

Over two early heresies we need not spend much time ; they did not involve the whole Christian community, nor did they last very long. They were Ebionitism and Gnosticism. The Ebionites were Jewish Christians, who clung to the Law of Moses ; and of the New Testament writings they accepted only the Gospel of Matthew, particularly and definitely rejecting all Pauline writings. They held that Jesus was a mere man on whom the Holy Spirit had alighted at his Baptism. To the Gnostics, on the other hand, Jesus was neither God nor man, but a phantom. Theirs was a form of a pre-Christian belief which found its way into the Church during the general influx of the Gentiles. As far as Christianity is concerned, it was not heresy but unbelief. It was an attempt to explain away Christianity and not an attempt to amend any particular doctrine. Echoes of Ebionitism were heard in later times but none of Gnosticism.

¹ *Creeds in the Making* (S.C.M.), p. 53.

Controversies, Councils and Creeds

Introduction :

For quite sometime people continued to express their theological opinions freely : some were right and some were wrong. Though nobody passed official verdicts on them, it does not mean that no assessments were made. People would usually sense when the boundary line was being crossed. It was an atmosphere in which there was a free exchange of thought ; to apply the term 'Controversies' to such disputes is to give them an undeserved title. In the history of the Christian Church, where records are long, the term 'controversy' is usually applied only where three conditions are fulfilled : an opinion that went against the general instinct and tradition of the Church (i.e., the majority of Christians) should have been expressed by a person of rank and influence, it should have been proclaimed with persistence and it should have gained sufficient following so as to pose a threat to the unity of the Church.

When such situations began to develop it was natural that some kind of official action should have become necessary. But since the Empire was not merely pagan, but also anti-Christian, for sometime this had to be done on a regional level by local Synods or Councils. When, however, the Empire became Christian it could be done on behalf of the entire Christian world. Such Councils were called Ecumenical (Greek : oikoumene = the inhabited world) ; these Councils were not merely geographically representative of the whole Empire but had the support of the rulers of the Empire ; and their decisions, therefore, carried both prestige and authority. They, of course, met only when a particular opinion that clashed with the opinion of the Church had grown to such proportions that it had to be refuted and condemned before the eye of the world ; but in doing so the Councils would also feel it their duty to state their refutation against the background of the general belief of the Church. Hence the Creeds as we have them.

Since in safe-guarding its revelation the Church's duty was to keep the right relationship between the divinity and humanity of Christ, it may be assumed that the heresies with which we shall be

dealing here were chiefly attempts to upset that relationship. This could be done in either one or two ways : by over-stressing the one side or the other. In doing this, either type of heresy, it may be claimed, had the same basic aim as the other. So it seemed just to apply a common term for them ; and that term was ' Monarchianism ', meaning ' sole rule '. That ' sole rule ' could only be that of God. But when trying to uphold the sole rule of God through Christology, since opposite lines of approach would be followed, there would be a wide difference in what either heresy proclaimed and that difference had also to be indicated. This was done by a different adjective in either case being prefixed to the substantive ' Monarchianism '.

Dynamic Monarchianism :

The invention of a common term that came to be applied to both types of heresy seems to have been the brain-wave of the first exponent of ' Dynamic Monarchianism ', one Theodotus, a tanner from Byzantium, round 190 A.D. It was called ' Dynamic from the Greek *dunamis* (power) as applied to the Holy Spirit which descended on Jesus, the man, at baptism ; from which time Theodotus held that Jesus was adopted into Sonship by God. This Theodotus was reinforced by a namesake of his, also from the same city, who added the bizarre detail that Jesus was actually Melchizedek, a legendary figure of the Old Testament. Both, however, admitted that Jesus was worthy of worship after his adoption by God.

But the person who revived this heresy and gave it vogue for a long time was Paul of Samasota, who was Bishop of Antioch from 260 to 269. Macintosh calls him the ablest exponent of the theory. To Paul of Samasota also Jesus was a mere man ; in him dwelt the Logos of God, as it dwells in everyman. Because of his extraordinary goodness, at Baptism a greater measure of it was communicated to him. A peculiar kind of relationship existed between Jesus and God and he was invested with divine power. This view was condemned as a heresy in a Council in his own city of Antioch in 268 or 269.

Modalistic Monarchianism :

' Modalistic Monarchianism ' expresses the exact and directly opposite reaction to the earlier type of Monarchianism. It seems

to have been first propounded chiefly by Praxeas and Noetus round 200 A.D. This theory held that God assumed the form of Jesus for the salvation of man and after that took on the form of the Holy Spirit. In a scintillating booklet Tertullian wiped out Praxeas by saying that he had done the devil's work in two ways : by crucifying the Father and putting to flight the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit is always represented by a dove). But the man with whom this heresy is always associated is Sabellius who lived in Rome about 220. Dr. Prestige, after paying a tribute to the good intentions of Sabellius, calls his theory thoroughly pagan at bottom ; for if God had used three changes of appearances already, what was there to prevent Him from using more in the future ?¹ It was condemned at a Synod in 261.

Though officially condemned, both were possible as heresies and, as we shall see, lived on and were revived off and on. Only, now they could be labelled ; a person whose views tended to be near the one type was called a ' Paulican ' and one whose views tended in the other direction was called a ' Sabellian ', even as the terms ' Fascist ' and ' Communist ' are hurled at one another by political opponents at the present time.

Arianism, Nicaea and Aftermath :

The deadliest heresy which the Church had to fight in its whole history was Arianism, named after Arius (c 250 - 336). Thomas Carlyle has said that if Arianism had triumphed, Christianity would have dwindled into a legend.² Yet Macintosh quotes Schultz to say that it was ' inwardly the least stable and dogmatically the most worthless of all the Christologies to be met with in history '.³ Why should such a worthless theory have posed such a deadly threat to the Church ? The answer is that it is its very worthlessness as a theological doctrine that made it deadly by its attractiveness to many. The discerning eye can make out what the doctrine fundamentally was ; but it was so disguised as to look like nothing before or since, because it looked like so many things at one and the same time. It had the advantage of a compo-

¹ *Fathers and Heretics*, p. 78.

² C. Gore, *Reconstruction of Belief*, (John Murray), p. 502.

³ H. R. Macintosh, *Person of Christ*, p. 178.

site photograph in which every one would be pleased to recognise himself ; but had the severe disadvantage of being no one's photograph in particular.

According to Arius, God is One and Only One, besides whom there is none else. He cannot communicate His essence to any one else, but he has created other ' Powers ' (whose nature is undefined) but especially has He created the Son who creates all other beings, including the Holy Spirit. The Son stands between them and God, as they cannot endure any contact with Him. But the Son is not eternal ; he is a creature, even whose knowledge is not perfect. However, he is not like other creatures, since he has created them ; and between him and God there is a special relationship. Though it is pretty clear on which side of the dividing line between God and man, Arius would place the Son, he tries to confuse the issue by making the Son a demi-god. His view in regard to the mutual position of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is stated in an equally dubious manner. Though God, the Son and the Holy Spirit are definitely different in essence from each other, nevertheless, they are all entitled to worship.¹

What was the purpose of this doctrine ? Arius had been a pupil of Lucian, a disciple of Paul of Samasota, the chief exponent of Dynamic Monarchianism. It was his teacher's brand of severe monotheism that he wanted to propagate even at the cost of appearing polytheistic, since polytheism was attractive to the pagans. His theory may look inconsistent but he himself was not. Monotheism was his conviction, polytheism the method he adopted on set purpose. His statement was meant to hold both together.

The Emperor now was a Christian, called Constantine. He wanted peace in the land at all cost and called together a Council of Bishops in 325 in Nicaea and himself personally opened it. This was the first of the Councils called ' Ecumenical '. There were about 300 present, all of them, except two, were from the East. Among the Western representatives was Hosius of Cordova. In the Council there were three parties ; that of Arius led by Eusebius of Nicomedia, who espoused the view of Arius, the party holding

¹ *History of Dogma IV*, pp. 15-19

the opposite view, by Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, but deriving its whole impetus from a young deacon, called Athanasius and a majority of uncommitted Bishops.

The policy of the Arian party, as may be expected, was subtlety, equivocation and a seeming accommodativeness, with a view to putting through a formula which was seemingly orthodox, but was capable of being interpreted to suit one's own liking. The party from Alexandria was a band of determined and dedicated men, who would ask for no quarter and yield none. Triumph lay with the side which won over the large body of uncommitted Bishops. When these saw what was at the bottom of Arianism and what it meant, they voted with the Alexandrians. So the formula was arrived at saying that the 'Son was God of God, Light of Light, very God of Very God', 'begotten not made'.

But the *coup d'etat* that was performed at the Council was insertion of the phrase that the Son was of the same substance as the Father, represented by the Greek word *homoousios*. The tradition is that Constantine proposed it at the last minute at the suggestion of Hosius of Cordova. But Ambrose (c 339-397) has a different account. He says that this term, which had been condemned at the Council of Antioch earlier, was purposely dragged in by Eusebius of Nicomedia to frighten delegates as if to say, 'You surely do not want to say the Son is *homoousios* with the Father, a thing that has already been condemned'.¹ It was immediately seized upon as the very word wanted to complete the formula; in seizing on the word, the Bishops saw that there was difference of context between the Sabellian heresy under discussion at Antioch and the Arian heresy under discussion here. But the probability is strong that Constantine did indeed cast his weight in favour of the Alexandrian party and that it did make a difference.

It is well to keep in mind three things about the Nicene Council. In the first place, it was a Council in which the State had been allowed to play a major, if not decisive, role; for this the Church had to pay a heavy price in succeeding decades; and through long centuries to come, it was to have far-reaching consequences. Secondly, though the religion of Christians had from the start

¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, (Longmans), p. 253.

been Trinitarian, the issue at the Council had been mainly binitarian ; that is, it had dealt chiefly with the relationship between the Son and the Father. Thirdly, the Council had been largely an Eastern Council. In the West, Tertullian had defined its answer 100 years earlier and there it stood ; it was Nicene before Nicaea.

If once the State had been allowed to intervene in affairs of the Church for the better, it could also use the right to interfere for the worse ; and this is exactly what happened after Nicaea. Constantine who, according to tradition, played a decisive rôle in regard to the clause about the consubstantiality of the Father and Son, soon changed his mind on the question owing to the intrigues in Court of Eusebius of Nicomedia and turned his face against Athanasius (c 296-373), who by now had become Bishop of Alexandria. Things got much worse when the Emperor died in 339 and the Empire was divided between his two sons ; Constantius in the East and Constans in the West.

Constantius was a convinced Arian and launched an unrelenting war against Nicene orthodoxy ; and Athanasius naturally became the chief target of his fury. Many of the Bishops found it convenient to fall into line with the Emperor ; and the crowds, usually ready for an opportunity to break out, is always in high form when the State is on its side and is specially pleased when its target is narrowed down. Athanasius was subjected to constant depositions and exile, and hunted from one place to another by the soldiers of the Emperor and the crowds. To add to it all Constans, the Emperor of the West, who had been his patron though far away, died in 350. It now seemed that Athanasius was almost standing against the whole world (*contra mundum*). Through it all his faith never faltered and his determination never flagged ; and it was largely due to his unshakeable steadfastness and sheer heroism that Nicene orthodoxy won out in the end. Even Gibbon the historian cannot withhold his tribute to his single-minded inflexibility 'applied to a single object, surmounting tremendous obstacles and finally producing a great and lasting effect'. (Arianism driven out from the Empire found refuge among the Teutonic tribes and became extinct when the Franks were converted to orthodoxy in 496.)

The Third Clause and Constantinople :

The Nicene Creed consists of three sections or clauses on the Godhead. As it stands today, the third clause, i.e. the one, on the Holy Spirit, is fairly full. But in the original creed as passed at Nicæa it simply consisted of five Greek words, translated, 'And in the Holy Spirit.'¹ It may be said that this was quite natural as the issue at Nicæa had been binitarian. But why should most controversies before Nicæa and even after it tend to be binitarian, though the religion of Christians in the First Century onwards was Trinitarian ?

Two reasons have been given for this scant attention to the Holy Spirit from two different angles. Friedrich Strauss (1808-1871), a great critic of orthodox Christianity, calls the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, 'the Achilles heel of Christianity'. That his heel was the vulnerable point in that classical Greek hero is well known. What Strauss meant was that it was a difficult doctrine to defend. Karl Barth, on the other hand, says that the reason is that man wants to be present at God's revelation without the aid of the Holy Spirit.² We cannot agree with either reason. It does not seem to have struck Strauss that the opposite of what he said might be equally true ; and as for Karl Barth, he is trying to discover a deliberate purpose when there was none. The first reason is misconceived and the second artificial.

The actual reasons are different. In the first place, the subject is not one that lends itself easily to controversy. It does not stare you in the face or 'hit you in the eye'. The second and the more important reason is that once the divinity of the Son is accepted the divinity of the Holy Spirit follows. The words 'And in the Holy Spirit', which seem to appear very casual in the original Creed of Nicæa is a consequent, following what had been said earlier. There is a 'Therefore' which is assumed. It is like saying 'Now that we have shown you what our belief in the Son is, there is no difficulty about your believing in the divinity of the Holy Spirit'.

¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, (Longmans), p. 216.

² *Church Dogmatics I—I*, p. 535.

The reason why the Section about the Holy Spirit came to be amplified is more significant than we may imagine. The old Clause might have stood as it was in 325 had not a body called the 'Pneumatomachians', (from *pneuma* spirit) deliberately started questioning the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They called themselves 'Macedonians', after Macedonius, who had been Archbishop of Constantinople from 342 to 360. Authorities differ as to the connexion between him and them. But what is significant is that they were Arians : they had not raised the question in 325, because they knew that the issue in debate then was more important.

Now the Pneumatomachians resorted to the typical Arian method. They pretended that they accepted the divinity of the Son but had objections to accepting the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It did not strike them that once they had lost on the Clause about the Son, they were bound to lose on this. Their view had been condemned by the Pope ; but that did not mean as much in those days as it might mean now. In the Ecumenical Council that was soon to meet they thought they could win over the large body of persons who had voted for the Athanasian position in a half-hearted fashion.

The main purpose of the Council called by Emperor Theodosius to meet at Constantinople in 381 was to bring about a rapprochement between the Athanasians and the 'Semi-Arians' (i.e., those who had voted for the Athanasian position half-heartedly). But the 'Macedonian' position was being pushed forward vigorously. In fact, out of 150 Bishops who attended 36 were Macedonians. And therefore the issue they raised demanded inclusion in the agenda.

What, however, had cut the ground under the feet of the Macedonians was the fact, that intoxicated by the success of the party during the period that followed Nicaea, a section of the Arians had moved much 'further to the left' and had begun to assert positively that the Son was of unlike substance from that of the Father ; and for this reason they had come to be called 'Anomians'. The 'Semi-Arians' realised that this was where Arianism finally led and veered to the side of the orthodox party. Realising what the verdict would inevitably be, the Macedonian Bishops left.

So the third clause in the Creed was elaborated at Constantinople to read as follows :

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified, who spoke through the prophets etc.

(The words now in the Creed about the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son also were added later).

The minutes of the Council of Constantinople have been lost and we know the Creed passed by it only as it was ratified by the Council of Chalcedon in 451.¹ But there need be no doubt that, except for the addition referred to, we have the Creed as it passed in 381. Called by courtesy 'The Nicene Creed' it is the Creed recited in Churches today. This Creed it has been said, 'is the one Creed for which ecumenicity or universal acceptance can be claimed'.

At Christology Again :

Those who thought that the Council of Constantinople had said all that it was necessary to say on Christology found themselves mistaken. In the first place, Christianity is a religion about Christ, and there are questions which will always continue to be asked on the subject. In the second place, the Greek spirit was of an inquiring type and could always be depended on to discover questions, which others may not have thought of asking. In the third place, the same question can be asked and controversies arise on the same issues (usually under new names) even though they had already been answered or settled earlier ; because people change from generation to generation.

That Jesus had been a man was admitted on all hands. But the Christian Church had affirmed that he was also the Eternal Son of God, of the same substance as the Father. One Apollinaris (c 310-390), a good Athanasian, had asked himself how one and the same person could have two natures, human and divine. So, he had said, when God took on a human body and soul He did not

¹ J. N. D. Kelly *Early Christian Creeds*, (Longmans), p. 298 & 306.

take on a human spirit or mind ; therefore, Jesus was God in human form. This theory does not exactly coincide with the modalistic monarchianism of Sabellius ; but one can see that it was produced by the same attitude of mind. In this form it was called *monophysitism* (Gr. *physis* = nature) and had been condemned at the Council of Constantinople, along with many other heresies. However, the heresy had remained latent and one Eutyches (c 378-454) brought it up again as the most rational explanation of the teaching that Christ was both human and divine. Eutychianism was, of course, a revival of *monophysitism*.

If a heresy provokes an equal and opposite reaction, such a heresy should have led to *duophysitism* ; i.e., that Christ had two natures. But that was exactly the position of the Church. Where then could a heresy be found ? Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, was on the lookout for a heresy and Cyril wanted it to come from a certain place — Constantinople. This city, as the imperial Capital, had recently been given precedence over the ancient see of Alexandria. So Cyril, on the lookout for a heresy from Constantinople, was able to discern it in what Nestorius (d 451), Archbishop of Constantinople, had said. The latter had wanted to say (as the Church did) that Christ had two natures ; but according to ancient linguistic usage, he had used the word ‘ person ’ to denote ‘ nature ’. So, on the face of it, he seemed to say that there were two persons in Christ. This was enough for Cyril ; he held that Nestorius taught that Christ was actually composed of two persons, one human and the other divine. Prestige says, ‘ The two thinkers were completely at cross purposes ; both meant the same thing and were saying it in different ways’.¹ Nestorius was condemned at a ‘ rigged ’ Council in 431.

The whole subject came before the Council of Chalcedon in 451. By then Cyril had died and Nestorius was lingering in a monastery on the verge of death. The Council, which Alan Richardson calls the greatest of Ecumenical Councils, confirmed all that Nicaea and Constantinople had already said on other points in Christology, but elaborated its stand on the Person of Christ. It said that Christ was of one substance with the Father, as regards

¹ *Fathers and Heretics*, p. 127.

to his divinity and of the same substance with us, as regards to his humanity :

He is of two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the distinction of two natures being in no way annulled by the union . . . not as parted into two persons, but one and the same Son, the Only begotten God, the Word, Jesus Christ.³

Cyril, if he had lived, would have said that this was exactly what he had wanted ; and Nestorius before his death was able to say that this was exactly what he had also been saying all the time and that he had been entirely vindicated. A book by him in Syriac, called ' The Bazaar of Heraclides ', discovered in 1895, shows that this had always been the position of Nestorius.

The Council of Chalcedon did one great service and one great disservice in the matter. The service was a clear formulation of the position of the Church in regard to the person of Christ, the disservice was the creation of the very heresy it condemned ; for that heresy had not existed when it was condemned and seems to have arisen only when it was found that such a view was a possibility, for the actual rise of the heresy dates from this time. After spreading far into the countries of Asia, Nestorianism is found now only among a small body called the ' Assyrian Church '.

The Creeds : What they Did and Did not Do

We have so far run into four Creeds : the Apostles', the Nicene, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and the Chalcedonian. Creeds, as we know, are passed to meet special situations ; that is, when occasion demanded the condemnation of particular heresies. The Apostles' Creed was not passed by any particular official body. But we shall not be far wrong in believing that it arose in response to the need for meeting the early heresy of Gnosticism, which threatened to dissolve Jesus Christ into a phantom ; it therefore stressed the details of the earthly life of Jesus. As to how the other Creeds arose we have seen. At Council meetings, though the immediate need was to refute particular heresies, the leaders of the Church always, as we said, stated their refutation in the

³ *Documents of the Christian Church*, H. Bettenson (O.U.P.), p. 72.

context of the general belief of the Church. And that general belief was its special and distinctive belief. That is, every time it refuted a heresy, it also stated what it believed it had received by revelation. To state its revelation correctly was we said earlier the second problem of the Church. The solution to the second problem was what the Creeds did ; that was their achievement.

The first and major problem which we have called ' the problem without ', viz. : that of reconciling the Revelation, which the Church believed it had received, with the Heritage it certainly had received, however, remained unsolved. This does not mean that the Church was unaware of it ; it could not have been unaware of it, because it had always loomed in the background and unless the right relationship to it was established Christianity could not be itself. Now Revelation itself needed reconciliation with the heritage if it was to receive completeness ; for that Heritage did not consist of an abstract concept of Monotheism, but a Monotheism with certain definite characteristics and a history of its own, by fitting into which only Christian Revelation itself would find its own meaning. It would look as if the heretics were more sensitive to the need for its solution, because they were always attempting short-cuts to it. The difference between them and the Church was that the Church knew that when the reconciliation did take place it had to be a reconciliation of the revelation in full with that with which it sought reconciliation.

Did the Church do nothing else in the matter besides maintaining an awareness of the problem ? What it did was to try to keep an antithesis from growing up between Revelation and Heritage, by stressing the consubstantiality of the Son and the Holy Ghost with the Father. It stood on Tertullian's dictum. ' One Substance, three Persons '. By ' Substance ' is meant ' Essence '. But is it not possible for three different beings to exist, who are of the same essence ? Was not therefore, the general impression left by the Creeds one of the distinction between the Father, Son and Holy Ghost rather than unity between them ? Certainly this was the impression left on the soldiers of Constantine, who when the Emperor died wanted three Emperors on earth as there is a ' Trinity ' in heaven. Even if the Church had not actually intensified the need for a solution of the first problem it is quite correct to say that problem was still unsolved.

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Theologically the Doctrine of the Trinity is the attempt to reconcile the Revelation, which the Christian Church believes itself to have received, with its Heritage of Monotheism. Emil Brunner (1889-1965) draws a distinction between the problem of the Trinity, which is set by the Bible and is inherent in the *Kerugma* and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the result of human reflexion. He takes Karl Barth to task because he 'assigns an importance to the Doctrine which does not legitimately belong to it but only to revelation.'¹ In other words, according to him, the Revelation and Heritage are both important, because they are Biblical ; but the attempt to reconcile them is unimportant, because the attempt is non-Biblical. If the problem is set by the Bible, the answer is also demanded by the Bible and the answer cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Though it is the result of human reflexion, it is the result of the performance of a necessary duty set for it by the Bible and is therefore legitimate.

This does not mean that every Christian should necessarily know the formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Apples were always falling to the ground, nobody knew why. Newton saw the challenge of the situation and felt it his duty to ask why and thus came to formulate his Law of Gravitation ; but many people may still know nothing of that Law. The Church had drawn up its Creeds, expounding the *Kerugma*. Now it felt that it could not go on indefinitely allowing the *Kerugma* and Heritage to be in a mere state of coexistence. There were two reasons which compelled action on the part of the Church. In the first place, this was a religious matter where such things could not be left purely to individual option. Secondly, what ought necessarily to be supplementary had come to seem a stark contradiction ; and a contradiction could not be allowed to exist in the heart of a religion. It was therefore the duty of the Church to solve it.

John Calvin, on the other hand, declares that there is no problem to solve, because unless we think of God as Trinitarian, the word

¹ E. Brunner *Doctrine of God*, (Westminster Press), p. 236.

“God”, ‘flutters in our mind naked and meaningless’.¹ His point is Trinitarianism is self-authenticating. It certainly is not. Do the Jews and the Muslims, who are undoubtedly monotheistic, think of God as Trinitarian? And why should Karl Barth, the greatest of modern theologians, according to his biographer, have spent sleepless nights wrestling with the question; and why should Leonard Hodgson refer to the groanings in vicarages, everytime Trinity Sunday approaches?

Always aware of the necessity of the reconciliation, the Church now felt that the time had come that the matter should be taken in hand seriously, and the person who took up the matter on behalf of the Church was Aurelius Augustine (354-430), one of the greatest intellects that Europe has produced. He had been a pagan teacher of Rhetoric in Rome and had been converted to Christianity at the age of 33. He had become Bishop of the North African city of Hippo, when he was about 43 years of age; and there he remained till his death. He had mastered all earlier pagan philosophies, and after his conversion made himself the spokesman of the religion he had embraced and set himself the unceasing task of keeping track of incipient heresies and nipping them in the bud, confuting full-blown ones and exploring every nook and corner of thought that needed exploration. Such was his prestige and gift of style that every scrap he wrote was snatched up. When he died he left behind 110 books, some of them quite voluminous, being commentaries.

Augustine looked upon his task as that of making a convincing case for the reconcilability of the *Kerugma* with the Heritage and making the matter intelligible to every one. He spent twenty years (399-419) on his book on the subject. He had to answer two questions:

(1) How can Three make One?

(2) If they can, is there still any precedence among the Three? Two hundred years earlier, Tertullian, during the course of his controversy with Praxeas, over what came later to be called the Sabellian heresy, had given his answer to both. Augustine

¹ Quoted *Doctrine of the Trinity*, Leonard Hodgson (Nisbet p. 15 and *Doctrine of the Word of God*, K. Barth, p. 346.

supported Tertullian in his answer to the first and set him right on the second :

In regard to the first question, Tertullian had said that the Three are an 'economy' within the One. Tertullian never spent time in explaining or proving his point ; whereas, Augustine's whole purpose was to explain and prove. Knowing that he was trying to explain the inexplicable and prove what was beyond proof, he adopted the method of Analogy, justifying it on the principle that we can see the Creator only through what He has created. He saw many triads in the world in various spheres ; but he also saw the danger of making them the basis of his case.¹ But he saw in Memory, Understanding and Will a proper Triad he could use ; and also in the triad of that which loves, that which is loved and love itself. Karl Barth pours scorn on Augustine's analogies and calls them a 'menace' (I-I-394) ; and Martin Luther dismisses the whole method of analogy as valueless. Though Augustine knew, as well as anyone else, that an analogy is not an argument, as a teacher of Rhetoric, he also knew that a good analogy carried as much weight as an argument. But the whole point about Augustine's analogies was that he did not base his case on them, he was using them as illustrations of an idea, which, we shall find, sank deeply into Barth's own mind.

In regard to the second question, Augustine very rightly corrected Tertullian. Tertullian had subordinated the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father. But if you hold that the Three are a 'disposition' or an 'economy' within the Godhead, it would be illogical thereafter to speak of any superiority or inferiority among them. So Augustine laid it down that, 'In divinity, the Father is not greater than the Son and the Son greater than the Holy Spirit. In the realm of the spiritual and changeless, there cannot be degrees of truth'.² What Augustine said on the point became normative for the Church thereafter. Subordinationism which had been orthodox before Augustine became a heresy after him.

Augustine wrote a book ; he did not formulate a Creed, a task usually done by Councils. But by the middle of the Fifth

¹ *Augustine's Later Works* (S.C.M.), p. 91.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

Century (i.e., about 30 years after Augustine) a Creed began to creep into the Church originating probably from Southern Gaul, passed by no Council, called by its opening words in Latin the 'Quinquaginta Vult', and more popularly the 'Athanasian Creed'. The 'Oxford Dictionary of the Church' discounts Augustine's influence on it on insufficient grounds; but Harnack (1851-1930), more or less an encyclopaedia of Church history, says, 'The doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is strictly Augustinian'. Other writers, some quite recent, are equally emphatic on the point.¹

The Creed Summarised says :

We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the substance—such as the Father so the Son and such the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreate, eternal, incomprehensible and almighty and so is the Son and such the Holy Spirit; each is what the other is; but there are not three Gods but one. In the Trinity, none is greater and none the less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal.

The main thrust of the Creed lies in the fact that after characterising the Father, Son and Holy Spirit uniformly with several epithets, like 'uncreate', 'incomprehensible', 'almighty' etc., it still insists that the epithets characterise but One God. It will also be seen that it makes an important, necessary and logical correction on Tertulian's position in regard to the mutual relationship between the Three and represents the official thinking of the Church in the matter ever since. Of this whole Creed John Whale says it is 'the ultimate implication of the Christian Faith'.²

How is this Creed to be interpreted? Vincent Taylor says that the Doctrine of the Trinity can be interpreted in three different ways: ³ —

1. According to the widely accepted usage employed by the Fathers of three 'persons' or *hypostases* and one 'Substance' or *ousia*.

¹ Principal A. E. Garvie, Bishop Gore, Vincent Taylor and Alan Richardson.

² *Christian Doctrine* (Cam. University Press), p. 120.

³ *Person of Christ*, p. 249.

2. By adopting the suggestion of certain recent writers (chiefly Karl Barth) of using words like 'modes' in place of 'Persons'.
3. By adopting the claim that the word 'Persons' be understood as accepted in modern usage.

This means that there are three options.

What did the Fathers Mean ?

Of one thing we may be sure and that is that the word 'Person' did not mean to them what it means to us ; because it acquired its present meaning in full only after Descartes, the 17th Century French Philosopher. What then did it mean to the Fathers ? Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) derives it from *personando* meaning 'I sound through' ; from this came the word *persona* which was applied to a mask worn by actors. Augustine, well aware of the danger of using a word with such a dubious derivation in such a context says that he has either to use it or keep silent altogether (*non ut illud dicretur, sed ne tacretur omnino*) ; and says he uses it as a matter of convention or a custom of speech (*consuetudo loquendi*).

And Aquinas warns us that the terms predicated of God are not used in a quantitative but transcendent sense ;¹ and says that when using the word 'Persons' we must avoid all sense of 'discrepancy' or of one being 'alien' to another. He quotes Hilary, who says that it is a sacrilege to assert that the Father and Son are 'separate' in the Godhead. We 'distinguish' we do not 'separate'. For it was invariably held that the work of the Trinity in regard to what was outside of it was one and indivisible (*Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*).

What then did the Fathers mean ? According to Karl Barth, they were speaking of an intradivine and incommunicable relationship. 'There is', said Augustine, following Tertullian, 'in God a certain "distribution" or "economy", which makes no change in the unity .. These distinctive appellations (like "Persons") denote their reciprocal relations to one another and not the substance

¹ *Summa Theologica First Part—On the Trinity* (Burns & Oates), p. 31.

itself which is but one'.¹ That is, the division into 'Persons' denotes certain distinctions, within One God.

What does Barth Say?

Barth devotes 230 pages to the subject (some pages in very small and closely printed script) in the very first volume of the 13 massive books of his Church Dogmatics. So important does he consider the doctrine that he declares it to be a perfect protection against atheism, polytheism, dualism and pantheism (p. 347).

What then is Barth's stand on the question? If God is revealing Himself, He cannot reveal anything else. If it is Himself that He is revealing, how does He do it? Through Himself. If Christ (who revealed God) is not true God, to worship him would be idolatry and so with the Holy Spirit. So Subordinationism is ruled out completely. But how can the one God be Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the same time? Because, he says, God's unity is not singularity or isolation; it is not a unity which excludes distinction or an internal arrangement (*dispositio*, or *oecumenia*). So like the Fathers he insists on the unimpaired unity of God, manifested in unimpaired variety.

Wherein then is the difference between the Fathers and Barth? In the simple fact that where the Fathers had used the word 'Persons' Barth uses the word 'modes'. But why had the Fathers used the word 'Persons'? Because, on their own confession, they could not hit upon any other word. Why did it not strike them that there was a catch in the word? Because it had not then acquired the meaning it now has. And why does Barth want to object to the word? Precisely because it has acquired its present meaning, which it did not have in the time of the Fathers.

Barth, as we see, substitutes the word 'modes'. What objections can be raised to its use? In the first place, the word had acquired a bad meaning by its association with Sabellius and certain others who maintained that God assumed the 'mode' of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit successively and temporarily. Sabellian 'Modalism' however, had been a flat contradiction of

¹ Quoted *Compound of Calvin's Institutes*, H. T. Kerr (Philadelphia), pp. 24 & 25.

Barth's basic position and he explodes Sabellianism by saying that if it were accepted, God was not revealing Himself, but holding Himself back ; i.e., He would be like an actor playing various parts.

The second objection is voiced by Canon Raven (1885-1965), an Anglican divine and therefore definitely one who can speak for the Fathers. He says, in fact, such words as 'modes' or 'aspects of being' are preferable to the word 'Persons', if it were not for the reason that they tend to minimise the 'separateness' or 'distinction' in the Godhead.¹ Barth meets this objection 'head on'. He says, 'It is precisely in these three-times-otherness. He is God, so other that His otherness, his existence in three modes of existence is absolutely essential to Him ; therefore, so other, that this otherness is irremovable'.²

So that we find that Barth stands exactly where the Fathers do. Both sides are agreed on the Oneness of God, on the fact that there are intra-divine distinctions, but that these distinctions are real. The standpoints are the same ; the difference lies in either side using different words to denote the distinctions in the Godhead. But it is an old axiom : *Non Sermoni res, sed rei sermo subjectus est* (the subject matter is not subservient to the word ; the word is subservient to the subject matter). We said that while Barth poured scorn on Augustine's analogy (of Memory, Understanding and Will) the idea behind the analogy had sunk into Barth's own mind. We see why ; because he also says that while distinctions in the Godhead are real, they are internal.

The Third Option :

Vincent Taylor's third option was that of holding the doctrine in the sense in which the word 'Persons' is now used. We do not know how anyone holding to the Oneness of God (as all Christians theologians must) can at the same time hold that there are two others also like Him. Karl Barth in his 'Table Talk' declares the idea to be 'fantastic'.

It, therefore, scarcely looks like an option. But was it ever seriously advocated ? The Cappadocian Fathers in the 4th Century

¹ *Quoted Creeds in the Making*, A. Richardson, p. 43.

² *Doctrine of the Word of God I—I*, p. 414.

toyed with it for sometime and then shied away from it. After many centuries again it was advanced by a Roman Catholic theologian called Anton Gunther in 1859 and was promptly condemned by the Pope. It was revived in 1918 by the English philosopher, Prof. Clement Webb in 1918, who held that since God was not personal, the Doctrine of the Trinity would imply a collection of personalities.

Prof. Leonard Hodgson in his Croall Lectures, delivered in 1943 and published under the name of 'The Doctrine of the Trinity', thought that he was following in Webb's footsteps. He wants us to revise our idea of arithmetical unity and adopt the idea of aesthetic or organic unity (which also is a unity). Hodgson quotes Prof. John Laird, who says that 'the human self is known to us in the three activities of thinking, feeling and willing',¹ and goes on to add, 'The man who is a real unity is the man whose bodily organs and threefold activities are unified in one consistent exercise of personal life'.²

How far has Prof. Hodgson got away from Augustine? 1,500 years earlier he had said, 'We inquire about memory, understanding and will. The greater the memory, the more the understanding; but if he has the two, he also wills... But there are not three minds but one... The three activities named are one in as much as they constitute one life'.³ And having said that human analogies are imperfect, he explains why; because 'the human faculties of memory, understanding and will are not interchangeable, whereas in God you cannot confine memory to the Father, understanding to the Son and love or will to the Holy Spirit'.⁴ And how far does Hodgson go beyond the Fathers when they said *Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* (the work of the Trinity towards everything outside is a whole and is indivisible). It does not look as if the third option has been exercised (if it were exercisable at all by any Christian theologian).

Therefore, there were not even two options; there was only one. The Fathers, Barth and Hodgson after all, say the same thing.

¹ L. Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, (Nisbet), p. 85.

² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³ *Augustine's Later Works*, pp. 84 & 88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book XV.

Summed up :

We have seen that Christianity claimed to be a fulfilment and consummation of Judaism but how it based its claim on an assertion which the Jews considered to be a total contradiction of their religion. Therefore, we saw how in Christianity, on the one hand, its Heritage and how, on the other hand, its special belief in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit stood confronting each other and how it could give up neither.

To give up the one God, belief in whom runs through both the Old Testament and the New, the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, who spake by the prophets and who raised up Jesus would have been heinous. Yet to take out of their religion their belief in Jesus, the continuance into eternity of the familiar lineaments as he had on earth, walking amidst the fields of Galilee, talking to his disciples and to Mary and Martha would have been the murder of Christianity. On devotion to his person Christianity has hung; and W. E. Gladstone, the 19th century British Prime Minister, has but voiced the sentiments of countless millions of Christians through the centuries when he said, 'All I write and all I speak and all I think is based on the divinity of our Lord, the one central hope of our poor wayward race'.

Yet how could there be two or three Gods? So the Heritage and the Revelation had stood confronting each other. Yet people knew by instinct that there could not be any incompatibility between the two, because though they firmly believed in one God, their religion had been trinitarian from the start.¹ And they were proved right when thinkers discovered the fact that Christ is in God. Devotion to Christ, therefore, is not vain sentimentality but something which can be sustained by the deepest theological thought. 'The whole of the Father is in the Son and the Holy Spirit and the Son in the Father and the same Spirit in the Father and Son', says Anselm.² With this it may be said that the solution to the Problem within, becomes one with the solution to the Problem without.

¹ 'The peculiar characteristic of the Christian religion is conditioned by the fact that every reference to God is at the same time a reference to Jesus Christ'. Harnack—*History of Dogma I*, pp. 73, 74.

² Quoted, 'Word of God', Karl Barth, I-I, p. 425.

Transcendence in Christianity :

In all Monotheistic religions it is God who fulfils the requirements of the Transcendent. In Judaism and Islam it is easy to find a concept of God which meets them beyond doubt. However, since Christianity also asserts the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, it might have been doubted whether these requirements are equally fulfilled in it.

But as John Whale has properly pointed out 'All Christian Doctrines are about God'.¹ God is One and Only in Christianity, though it makes the assertions it does about the Son and the Holy Spirit, because though He is One and Only, in His inner-being there is a variegated richness and not a severe bareness. It is not that He has changed between the Old Testament and the New, but that the concept about Him has changed and widened. It is the same 'everlasting God, the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth (who) fainteth not nor is weary', of whom Isaiah spoke, to whom the writer of the First Letter to Timothy refers as, 'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and lord of lords who only has immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable.'

This God is, therefore, as transcendent as the Old Testament prophets conceived Him to be. But because the Christian concept of Him has widened, it has not so widened as to include any pantheism. He is still a transcendent God, who towers over the Universe of which He is a Creator and sovereign Lord.

Can such a sovereign Lord become man and be involved in all the squalor and misery of life upon earth? Yes; because he is so sovereign that He can afford it. Peter the Great of Russia said to one of his courtiers who found fault with him for trying to learn a ship-wright's craft, in a ship-wright's dress, in the dock yards of Amsterdam, 'Nothing is too small for a great man'. And nothing is too small for the sovereign Lord of the Universe, particularly when there is something great to be done. And says Tertullian '*Nihil tam dignum Deo quam hominum salus*' (nothing is so worthy of God as human salvation). This is what pin-points what Christianity is all about; for says Harnack, 'the dearest

¹ *Christian Doctrine*, p. 14.

possession of Christianity as a religion (is) the belief that the God of creation is also the God of redemption'.¹

Immanence

In a religion in which its concept of the Transcendent has been under suspicion for its undue inclination towards Immanence, there need be no fears that its concept of Immanence is not adequate. But it must be made plain, if it is not plain enough already, that we are here concerned not with the immanence of the immanent, but with the immanence of the transcendent, with the fact that the God of redemption is the very God of Creation. This is what gives it its whole value.

In all monotheism God the Transcendent is expected to have sufficient contact with men and sufficient interest in him. Otherwise, the transcendent becomes irrelevant to man and not worthy of worship. In its doctrine of Jesus Christ the Incarnate and the ever active Holy Spirit, Christianity carries this to the very limit, because 'God so loved the world'. But it is the acceptance of the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that invests their immanence with its value.

So it will be maintained by Christians that both the Transcendence and Immanence of the Deity have been preserved in their religion.

¹ Vol. I, p. 282.

CONCLUSION

This is a book on the Concept of Transcendence in Religion. Since, however, Religion is the response of man to the Transcendent, if it has to have any meaning for man, the Transcendent must make itself felt and be present among the men ; i.e., it must also be immanent. The more immanent it is, the more meaningful it will be for man and the less immanent it is, the less meaningful and relevant it will be for him. Therefore, however much a religion may emphasise its concept of Transcendence, it cannot do without the concept of Immanence. But it is the immanence of the Transcendent with which Religion is concerned.

Such an attitude is one thing ; Immanentism on the other hand, is another thing altogether ; it excludes the Transcendent. It is a declaration of the immanence of the Immanent. It may be said to be similar to the difference between Morality and Moralism. Every religion teaches some form of morality ; but Moralism is something that can, and does often, get along without religion. In fact, some great Moralists have looked with contempt upon all Religion, and we have found objections being raised against Religion on the very basis of Moralism.

In the first Chapter of this book we cited Materialism as the first in order among the Schools that conflict with Religion. Materialism does not admit that there is anything beyond the senses. It is a crass, bumptious and vulgar creed ; it has no use for the finer things of life and sticks to what it can feel and touch. If it is true to itself it must positively deny that there is anything beyond it. It is not merely irreligious it is irreverent. Immanentism, on the other hand, is elegant, refined and sophisticated and reverent and wants to be considered religious. We have seen in the first Chapter how many prominent figures in the 19th century who were not willing to admit the existence of anything beyond the senses yet considered it indecent to be classed as ' Materialists '.

Despite the different adjectives with which we have characterised Materialism and Immanentism, the question is whether they are at bottom the same. This we shall see.

We have noticed how Materialism could (unfortunately for him) be traced back to the Greek philosopher Parmenides of the 6th or 5th century B.C. Stoicism, founded by Zeno in the 4th century B.C., and influential both among the Greeks and the Romans for some centuries also held such a theory. It had also been avowed by quite a few others. But in those cases it was a philosophical theory; and, of course, anyone is free to hold, reject or leave alone any philosophical theory.

The man who performed the strange feat of giving Materialism a religious turn was Spinoza in the 17th century. He did so by including both Matter and Mind in what he called 'Substance' and equating that with God. The feat however, did not impress his fellow-Jews who promptly excommunicated him. But the theory was sufficiently ambiguous to lead him to be called 'God-intoxicated', a hundred and fifty years later.

The advance of Immanentism in the 19th century may be assigned to three causes :

- (1) The reaction from the Deism of 18th century.
- (2) The Romantic Movement.
- * (3) The growth of the Natural Sciences.

The 18th century had taken its charter from Newton's Law that 'every body continues to be in a state of motion or rest unless acted upon by some opposing force'. This meant a rare and occasional intervention from outside. The control was so remote that it was possible for all practical purposes to ignore it. When Laplace a century later proved that Nature corrected its own irregularities, it was possible to consider Nature self-sufficient.

The Romantic Movement that took place during the early part of the 19th century made itself felt in many fields. The writings produced during that period are the glory of European literature. The impact of the movement as a whole, in the words of Dr. A. C. McGiffert, 'led to a sentimental exaltation of the beauty, sublimity and harmony of Nature'.

The third factor involved was the growth of Natural Science, which compared to that in earlier times was phenomenal. Man

discovered so much within Nature, that he could wonder why he should look for anything beyond it. Those living in the 20th century are faced with so many discoveries and inventions in their own time that they tend to look upon those of the 19th century as primitive. But as compared to those of earlier times those of the 19th century were breath-taking. So much is this the case, that C. S. Lewis has said that there was far more in common between the time of Sir Walter Scott and the Brontë sisters on the one hand and the age of Seneca who had lived 1800 years earlier than there is between the time of the later writers and ours, though we are separated from them only by 150 years.

What, however, made Immanentism a theological and religious possibility was the attitude of Schleiermacher (1768-1834). To Schleiermacher, 'The Universe is God and God is the Universe'. 'The religionists' he asserted 'have obscured this simple truth and denied this grand relation'. He said, 'The usual conception of God as a single being outside of the world and beyond the world is not essential to religion. It is only one way of giving expression to it'.

While there seems to be a substantial identity of views between Spinoza and Schleiermacher, there was a substantial difference between them in other respects. Spinoza was a philosopher, interested in philosophical issues; Schleiermacher was a Professor of Theology and a preacher of great reputation, who held a church to the end of his life and was passionately interested in the advancement of religion. The words which had meant little when they came from Spinoza meant much when they came from Schleiermacher.

Religiously, with Schleiermacher Immanentism may be said to have 'arrived'. Those who could not subscribe to the tenets of religion, as understood till then, now felt they need no longer drift into irreligion and had no need to adopt a cynical contempt for the values considered sacred by the community. The opinion could go further, it could appeal to certain theologians, as the form of religion best suited to the Spirit of the age.

Schleiermacher had defined Religion as 'an openness to the Universe'. But in a mere openness to the Universe there is no

possibility of reciprocity, which is expected in religion. So, we are being told that in such a relationship it is the 'spirit of the Universe' or the 'soul of the Word' with which we are in communion or with 'Being'. We need not agree with the American philosopher John Dewey who said that 'Being' is a 'zero word'; Being is all that is or in other words Existence.

Existence, by itself, is an abstract concept referring to the fact of the Universe. But the Universe, however big it might be, is an inert thing. It is not even aware of the laws by which it works; they have to be discovered for it by man. From where does it get its 'soul'? That also has to be supplied to it by man. Unlike its laws which are there to be discovered by man, its 'soul' has got to be invented for it out of the imagination of man. So, according to the new outlook what are we left with? In the Universe we are left with the presence of the Universe. What pervades the Universe? The Universe. What is immanent? It is the Immanent. One may use religious language about this new outlook, but it is obvious that one is left with a 'dud' currency note not worth the paper it is printed on. The old Materialism had honesty in its favour; Immanentism does not. A religion that does not deal with the Transcendent is not partial religion but no religion at all. It is void of the very thing that could make it a religion. An institution that maintains a cashier's counter with no vault to back it up has no claim to be regarded as a bank. It is a hoax.

It is sometimes said that Religion does not have to depend on the Transcendent, because there are various other uses for it. It is said that whatever be the concept back of it, Religion promotes morality, upholds civilisation, maintains law and order and makes society itself possible. But religion does not always promote the kind of morality we may approve of; each religion promotes its own type of morality, some of which may not commend itself to us at all. And instead of peace and order, it often provokes dissensions, riots and wars and sometimes disrupts society.

But whatever be the effects Religion produces, it cannot be said that Religion arose and has existed, for the sake of producing them. Plutarch (c. 40-120 A.D.), the ancient historian, has said that in his wanderings he had come across cities without kings, or soldiers or walls, but never a city without a temple. People

from ancient times seem to have had a devotion to Religion with no particular morality, or peace or war in mind. Religion arose and has existed as a spontaneous response, with no ulterior motive, a response not to something within the Universe but to something outside the Universe ; *i.e.*, the Transcendent.

Immanentism, therefore, being a creed that disavows the Transcendent, must give up its pretence of posing as the kind of religion best suited to the present age and declare itself to be an anti-religious movement.

INDEX

- Abbasides-235 ff.
 Abduh Muhammad-267-271
Abhedā-111 f., 128 ff., 139
Abhidhamma-49, 50
 Abraham-175
Āchārya-103, 109
 Acts of the Apostles-300, 317, 322, 323
Adhān-216
 Ādi Buddha-87, 96
Adon-308
Adonai-295, 308
Advaita (Kevala)-107, 122 et passim
 up to 151
Advaita-(Visishta)-122-135
Adhyāsa-114
 Āgamas-131, 148
 Agnosticism-10-12
 Akshobhya-81
 Akbar Emperor-101
 Akhnaton-175
 Allah-182, 216-292, passim
 Alexander Bishop-337
 Alexandria-331, 337, 342
 Ali Caliph-224, 228, 241, 281-284
 Aligarh University-266
 Allo Upanishad-101
 Altizer, T. J. J.-209-212
 Ambedkar, Dr.-76
 Ambrose Bishop-337
 Amidism-84-86
 Amitābha (Amida)-84-86
 Ameer Ali-216-262, passim
 Amos-176
 Amsterdam-354
Ānanda-112
Ānandam-112, 124
Anattā-54-97, passim
 Andaman Islands-8
 Ānava-153
 Angra Mainyu (Ahriman)-190
Anicca-58, 59
 Anomians-340
 Anselm Archbishop-169, 173, 353
 Antioch-331, 334, 337
Anumāna-142
Aparā Vidyā-115-127
 Apollinaris-341, 342
 Aquinas Thomas-160, 349
Aql-239, 256, 260
 Arabia-217, 222
 Arhants (Arhats)-79
 Arianism-335-340
 Aristotle-223, 235, 256, 265
 Aristotelians-248
 Arius-335 ff.
 Ārya Samāj-293
 Ashari Abu'l Hasan al-241-248,
 253-258
 Asoka-49, 50, 103
 Aswan Papyri-178
Asvantantra-140
 Assyrian Church-343
Atakkāvacara-65
 Ātman (attā)-57, 107-130
 Athanasius-337-340
 Athanasian Creed-348
 Athens-19
 Athenians-53, 196
 Atheist-19, 52, 53, 199, 200, 207
 Atomic Theory-5
 Auden, W. H.-39, 172
 Augustine Aurelius-346-358
 Authorised Version-19
 Avalokiteswara-81
Avatār-131, 132, 153
 Avicenna-254
Avijjā-60
Avidyā-114
 Babylon-295, 308, 310
 Bacon Roger-219
 Baghdad-235 ff.
 Balfour, A. J. (Lord)-11, 20, 43, 161
 Baquilani Abu Bakr-246 f.
 Barclay, W. Prof.-40
 Barth Karl-28, 163, 164, 187n, 192,
 194, 345 ff
 Beelzebub-190
 Bergson Henri-24, 32
 Bernadotte Marshal-241
 Bertrand General-167
 Beven Edwyn-197
Bīrkath-ham-mini-324
 Blougram Bishop-8
Bismullah-229
 Bistami Abu Yazad al-251 f

- Bhagavad Gītā-103, 104 ff, 119, 148
Bedha-112, 128 ff ; 139 ff
 Bhikkhus-61, 103
 Blake William-167
 Blayth Chay-40
 Blik-16
 Bodhidharma-83, 92
 Bodhisattvas-79 ff
 Bodhi tree-73
 Bolshevik Revolution-120
 Bonhoeffer Dietrich-42
 Bosanquet Bernard-168
 Bradley F. H.-12, 32
Brahman (Brahma)-110-130
Brahmā-53, 111n
 Brahmin-53, 112, 116
 Brahmobandev-121
 Braithwaite, R. B.-17, 36
 Braun von Werner-40
 Browning Robert-8
 Brown Robert McAfee-210
 Brunner Emil-85, 90, 180, 305, 345
 Bryce James (Lord)-293
 Bube, R. H.-18
 Buber Martin-158
 Buddha Gautama-50-97
 Buddha Vairocana-83
 Buddha Amitābha-81
 Buddhism-Thera Vāda-49-77
 Buddhism-Mahā Yāna-77-97
 Buddhist Encyclopaedia-61, 84
 Bultmann Rudolf-202-207
 Buri Fritz-207
 Butler Bishop-39
- Caesar Tiberius-294
 Caird Edward-243
 Cairns David-196
 Caliph-220 ff
 Caliphate-222
 Calvin John-138, 186, 345
 Cambodia-48
 Cappadocian Fathers-351
 Carlye Thomas-4, 168, 264, 335
Caryā-153
Cattari Ariyasaccāni-59
 Categorical Imperative-71
 Chalcedon-342, 343
Charvakas-4
 Chicago-198
 China-46, 47, 82, 167
Chir-150
 Chichester Sir Francis-40
- Christ-308-355, passim
 Christology-345 ff
 Churchill Sir Winston-19, 160
 Clement of Alexandria-26
 Comte Auguste-7, 41
 Communism-150, 217
 Cordova-337, 338
 Constantine Emperor-336 ff, 344
 Constantinople-339 ff
 Conze Edward-78 ff
 Correlation-197
 Covens-191n
 Cragg Kenneth-243, 260, 262, 267n
 Cromer Lord-268, 271
Culla Vagga-50
 Cullmann Oscar-295
 Cyril Bishop of Alexandria-342 f
 Czar-120
- Darwin Charles-6, 171
 Damascus-222, 319, 322
 Das Gupta-107
Dasien-211
 David King-176, 302, 311
 Death of God School-208-212
 Democritus-5
 Demythologisation-206
 Descartes Rene-27, 234, 277, 349
 Devasenapathi V-182
 Devanandan Paul-108
 Dewey John-7, 27, 62, 359
 De Smet, R. V.-121
 Devil-189-192
Dharma (dhamma)-54 ff
Dharma Kāya-87, 88
 Dialectical Materialism-9
 Dionysius Areopagite-223
 Disraeli Benjamin-65, 292
 Dodd, C. H.-176, 202, 312, 320
Dosha Bhogya-86, 312
Dulia-74
 Dumitiru Patro-201
Dvaita-135-145
- Ecumenical Councils-335-341
 Einstein Albert-44, 168
Ekātma Vāda-152
 Eleatic School-31
 Elijah-176, 211
Elee-296
 Eliot Sir Charles-80, 82, 86, 87
 El Alamein-246
 Emerson, R. W.-35

- Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics-111
 Enlightenment-194
 Epistemology-22 et passim
 Esoterism-286 f
 Eutyches-242
 Eusebius of Nicomedia-336, 338
 Existentialism-24, 197, 204 f

 Farabi al-248, 254
 Fatimah-283
 Ferre Fredrick-16n
 Ferre Nels-198, 203
 Feuerbach Ludwig-7, 27, 161, 163, 201, 205
 Fitchte, J. G.-24
 Forsyth, P. T.-28, 306n, 327
 Fosdick, H. E.-188
 Franklin Benjamin-44
 Froude, J. A.-166

 Galen-26
 Gaudapada-108
 Gettysburg-245
 Gibbon Edward-6, 314, 338
 Gibb Sir Hamilton-260, 271, 283
 Ghazzali al Abu Hameed-253-263, 269
 Gladstone, W. E.-353
 Glover, T.R.-319, 324n
 Gnosticism-332, 343
 God-passim
 Goethe Johann W. von-163
 Goety Ronald-195
 Gollwitzer Helmut-158, 199, 203n
 Gore Charles Bishop-18n, 316, 318, 325
 Gospels and the Gospel-303 ff
 Gospel of St. John-307, 317
 Green, J. R.-184
 Greece-21, 53
 Greek(s)-53, 72, 223, 237, 242, 289, 313, 341
 Guillaume Alfred-221
 Gunas-156
 Gunther Anton-352
 Guruge Ananda-73
 Guru parampara-105

 Habakkuk Prophet-165
 Hadith 228-285, passim
 Hamilton Sir William-12
 Hanbal-239 ff
 Hanbalite-244
 Hanif-271
 Hare, R. M.-16
 Harnack Adolf von-300, 308, 314, 318, 348, 353n
 Hartshorne Charles-33
 Harvard University-196
 Hasan Imam-227
 Hardy, G. H.-172
 Hallaj al-251, 252
 Heine Henrich-193, 328
 Hemmingway Ernest-205
 Heraclitus-31
 Heraclitian-33, 34
 Herod Agrippa-299, 300
 Hillebrant, A-111
 Hikmah-287
 Hilary St.-159, 160, 349
 Hina Yānā-46-77
 Hinduism-98-156
 Hindu Scriptures-100-102
 Hijra-221
 Hodgson Leonard-352
 Holy Spirit-316 ff, 339 ff
 Honen-84 f
 Horton Prof.-271
 Hudhyal Abu Muhammad al Alaf-237
 Hulūl-254, 279
 Hu(y)potasis-348
 Humphreys Christmas-47, 52, 86
 Hume David-6, 20, 32
 Hui Neng-83
 Hui Yanan-84
 Huxley Thomas-10, 164n

 Ihaya-255, 270
 Ijma-228, 230
 Illingworth, J. R.-2, 161
 Ikhtiar-289
 Imām-283 ff
 Imām Ghāib-285
 Immanence-passim
 Indonesia-216
 Inge, W. R. Dean-15, 34, 230
 Iqbal Sir Muhammad-271-275
 Irving Washington-219
 Iraq-227, 281
 Iran-281
 Isnā Asharias-284
 Isnād-229
 Isaiah-176, 311, 312, 354
 Islam-Sunni-216-291
 Islam-Shi(i)a-281-291

- Israel-176, 177, 217
Ittihād-254, 279

Jabbaryyah-225
 Jabrias-258, 269
 Jacobite-224
 Jacks, L. P. Principal-173
 Jamal al Din-267
 James II-19*n*
 James William-34
 Japan-82 ff
 Jefferson Charles-164
 Jennings, I. H.-51
 Jerusalem-301, 302, 317
 Jesus-298-355, passim
 Jews-292-332, passim
Jinn-258
Jiriki-83, 91-97
 Jili Abdul Karim al-260
 Jodo Shinsu-85 ff
 Johnson Dr. Samuel-126
 Johnstone Sir Alec-40
 John St. of Damascus-224
 Jowett Benjamin-4
Jnāna-153
 Judaism-292-322, passim
 Junger Ernest-205
 Justin Martyr-324

 Kalabadi al-252, 260
Kalima-217
Kalām-241 ff
 Kant Immanuel-12, 24, 35, 44, 69,
 71, 169, 170, 188, 197
Karma-(kamma)-54, 67
 Karmic Law-67 ff, 134, 153, 186
 Kaufmann Y.-177
Kasab-243, 259, 269
Kashf-256, 260
Karamāt-254
 Kee Alister-29, 30
 Keith Berridale-50
 Keller Karl-121
 Kelly, J. N. D.-337*n*, 339*n*
Keru(y)gma-313, 320, 321, 345, 346
 Keynes, J. M. (Lord)-13
 Khandhas (skandhas)-55, 56
 Kharijites-224
 Khan Sir Syed Ahamed-266
 Khedive-268
Khulafā Rāshidun-282
 King, W. L.-54
 Kingsley Charles-214

 Kindi al-235
Koan-93
 Krishna-120, 132
 Krishnaswamy Rao, B. A.-137
 Krishnaswamy, C. N. Aiyar-137
 Kulandran Sabapathy-85*n*
Kurios-299, 308, 309
 Kyserling Count-74

 Lakshmi-132, 183
Latria-74
 Laos-48
 Laplace-357
Lawhul Mahful-226
 Leibnitz, G. W.-246
 Leucippus-5
 Lewis, C. S.-8*n*, 66, 358
Liberum Arbitrium-230
 Linguistic Analysis-14 ff
Lokayata-4 f
Logos-111
Lokuttara-65
 Luce, H. R.-19
 Lucretius-5
 Luther Martin-27

 Macdonald, D. B.-237, 246, 248*n*, 257,
 262, 265, 279
 Macedonians-340
 Mackintosh, H. R.-187, 310, 334, 335
 Macnicol Nicol-116, 146, 155
Mādhyā Mika-77 ff, 92, 108
 Madhva-5, 135-145
 Maghadhi-50
Mahā Vākyas, 111 f, 143
 Mahdi al Muhammad-284
 Magisterium-263
 Malabar-136, 138
 Malalasekara, G. U.-88, 91
 Malunkyaputta-59
 Malik Abdul-227
 Manjusri-81
 Mann Thomas-205
 Mansel, H. L.-12 ff, 169, 257
 Mao Tse Tung-167
Mana-36
Maqālat-259
 Marshall Sir John-146
 Marcion-294, 322
 Marburg-202
 Marx Karl-9, 150
 Marx daughter of-179
 Martel Charles-220

- Mascall Eric-19
 Materialism-4-10, 356
 Maurice, F. D.-13
 Max Müller, F.-2, 113-134, passim
Māyā-115, 130, 152
 Mc Cabe Joseph-7
 Mecca-217 ff
 Medina-217 f, 221n, 222
Melek-297
 Messiah-299 ff
 Metaphysics-passim
 Michelangelo-4, 72
 Middle Ages-5, 194
 Mill John Stuart-13, 34, 168
 Monarchianism-334 ff
 Moses-181, 307, 308
Moksha-118
 Monotheism-38, 156-215 et passim
 Mookerjee Satkari-58, 59
 Moralism-34, 356
 Mu'āwiyah-221
 Mufti Grand-268
 Muhammad Ali-227, 276
 Muhammad Prophet-217-291, passim
Mukhālafā-244
Mukthar-289
Mujtahid-285
 Murji'ites-225
 Murti Prof.-57
Mustaquill-289
 Mutakallimun-232, 241
 Mu'tazila(s)-232 ff, 241, 247, 288, 289

 Nagarjuna-77, 84, 92
 Nallasvamipillai, J. M.-150
 Napoleon-160, 167
Naql-239, 256, 260
 Narada Thera-53, 64
 Nasr Hasayn Syyed-252, 287, 290
 Neill Stephen-305, 314, 315n
 Nescience-114-116, 126 f
Neti-112, 125
 New York Times-209
 Nestorius-342 f
 Nestorianism-343
 Newbiggin, J. E. L.-43n
 Newman, J. H. Cardinal-155, 164, 257
 Newton Isaac-12, 172, 345
 Niebuhr Reinhold-9
 Nietzsche Friedrich, W.-27, 161, 204, 207, 208 ff
 Nichren-83
 Nicaea-336, 339

Nikāya-51
Nirodha-60
Nirmāna Kāya-87
Nirguna-117 ff., 149, 150
Nirvāna (Nibbāna)-56, 64, 65 ff.
 Noah-271
 Nursi, M-280

 Olcott, H. S. Col.-47
 Old Testament-295 ff., 316
 Oman John-161
 Omar Khayyam-252
 Ontological Argument-168, 169
 Orthodox Church-45
 Origen-331
 Otto Rudolf-36, 179, 296, 312
Ousia-348

Pāli-50
 Pakistan-272
Pancha Kriya-152
 Pantheism-passim
 Parmenides-5, 31, 32, 199
Pāsa-149
 Pascal Blaise-27
 Paraclete-317
Pati-148
Pattica Samuppāda-58, 60, 63
 Paul, St.-52, 292, 318 ff.
 Paul of Samasota-334, 336
 Peter the Great-354
 Peter St.-320
 Pettinger Norman-33
 Philippi-314
 Plato-23, 31, 223
 Pliny the Younger-310
 Plutarch-354
 Philosophy-passim
 Pneumatomachians-340
 Plotinus-32, 235
 Pope Alexander-12
 Pope G. U.-146
 Pope The-340, 352
 Poseidon-183
 Positivism-7
Prachanna Baudha-109, 115
Prakriti-150
Pralaya-155
Pramāna-140 ff.
 Pragmatism-203
Prajñā Pāramitā-49, 82, 89
 Praxeas-335

- Prasthāna Traya*-104, 105, 110, 144, 148
 Predestination-137, 187, 226, 227, 274
 Prestige G. L.-335, 342
 Proofs for Existence of God-146 ff.
 Proofs-Relevance of-170 ff.
 Prometheus-288
 Psalmist-162, 181, 302, 316
 Psalms-308
 Pyrrho-6, 24
Purānas-131
Purushottama-129,
 Pythagoras-22

Quādr-232
Qiyās-228, 231
 Quran-217-282, passim

 Radhakrishnan, S.-31, 78, 82, 107, 136, 137, 168
Rajas-150
 Rahman Abdu, R.-256
Rahim-276
 Rahula, W.-56, 59_n, 60_n, 64_n
 Rama-120, 132
 Ramakrishna Paramahansa-119
 Ramanuja-77, 122-135 et passim up to 156
 Ramanujans S.-172
 Ramazān-281
 Ramana Maha Rishi-120
 Ramsay Sir William-300
 Raven Charles Canon-351
 Renan Ernest-267
 Renaissance-5, 219
 Resurrection-298, 302
 Revolution French-239
 Religion-passim
 Rhys Davids Mrs.-50
 Richardson Alan-199, 308_n
Risālat-218, 261, 267
 Roosevelt, F. D.-67
 Robinson, J. A. T.-200-202
 Roman Catholic Church-5, 165, 240, 263, 326
 Romans-98
 Russell Bertrand-15, 58
 Rune's Dictionary of Philosophy-205

Sabda-100 ff, 142
 Sabellius-335, 342, 346, 350, 351
Sad Vaishnavism-137 ff.

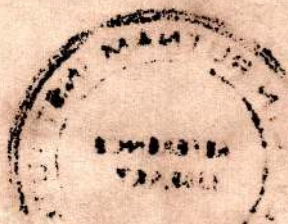
Saddharma Pundarika-82, 84, 86
 Sakyā Muni-84
Saguna-117, 150.
 Saiva Siddhānta-145-155
Sālokya-153
Samādhi-93
Sambhoga Kāya-87
Samkhāra-55, 58
Samudya-60
Sāmipiya-153
Samsāra-96
 Sanhedrin-298, 323
 Sangha-74, 75
 Sankara-23, 76, 107-156, passim
Sanna-55
 Santyana George-7
 Sarānagati Gadya-132
 Saraswathī-183
 Sariputta-64
Sartori-93
Sārūpa-153
 Saud House of-265
 Satan-190, 191, 210
Sat Chit ānanda-112
Sat Kārya Vāda-152
Satvas-150
Satyam-124
Sāyujya-153
 Schleiermacher F. E. D.-39, 358
 Schopenhauer, A.-32, 48, 234, 277
 Schweitzer Albert-314, ff.
 Scott Sir Walter-358
Sein-211
 Seneca-358
 Shakespeare, W.-162
 Shaw Bernard George-8
 Schultz-335
 Shingon-83
 Shinran-85, 86
Shirk-216, 332
 Sidney Sir Philip-18
Sifatīyah-225
 Silva L. A. D.-75 ff.
Sivajñāna Bodham-148
Siva jñāna Siddhiyār-148
 Socrates-14, 25
 Solon-280
 Spencer Herbert-11
 Spinoza, B.-27, 32, 133, 201, 357, 358
 Srī Bhāshaya-128-131
 Srī Rangam-123
Sruti-100
Sruti-hani-143

- Stace W. T.-7, 33
 Stepun Fredor-158
 Stecherbatsky T. H.-58
 St. Stephen-308
Sthaviras-49
 Strauss Friedrich-339
 Stupas-75
 Subordinationism-309, 347, 350,
 Sukhāvati Vyuhu-84,88
Sunna-229 ff.
Sūnya Vāda-77 ff.
 Susuki D. T.-93n, 95
Sutta-49
 Sylvester II-219
 Synoptic Gospels-303 ff., 322
 Sweetman-243, 247
 Swift J. Dean-126
- Tabatābā'i Husyan-281n, 285
 Tacitus-219
 Taimiya Ibn-264 f.
 Taittirīya Upanishad-112
Tamas-150
 Tāng Dynasty-82
Tanhā-60, 63
Tānzih-270
Tariki-84
Tatathāgata-51
Tawhid-216-291, passim
 Taylor Vincent-321, 348, 351.
 Temple William Archbishop-9, 123,
 168, 305
 Tendai-83
 Tennyson Alfred Lord-6
 Tertullian-26, 294, 331, 338, 346, 347,
 349
 Thackeray W. M.-4
 Thailand-48
 Theodosius Emperor-340
 Theopantism-121
 Thambiah I. T.-147
 Tillich Paul-158, 178, 191, 196 ff.
 Time Magazine-18n, 19, 209
Ti Pitakas-49
 Titian-4
 Transcendence-passim.
 Trent Council of-230
Tri Padārtha-149
 Trinity Doctrine of-345-352
 Trypho-324
 Tyndall John-11
- Udāna-64
Upajivaka-142
Upajivya-142
 Upanishads-56, 57, 100, 101, 155,
 passim
 Ulamā-251, 260
 Ummayads-222-228, 250
 Union Seminary, New York-9, 178,
 196
 Usman-282n
- Vachagotta-57
 Vahanian Gabriel-209, 212
Vajra Chedika-88
 Vaishnavism-67, 88, 122-145
 Van Buren Paul-207, 208
 Van Leeuwen A. T.-43
Vasattha-53
 Vasudeva (Hari)-131, 132
 Vatican Council II-209
 Vāyu-136
Vedantā-55
 Vedānta Sutras-104, 110, 113, 114,
 131, 137
 Vedārtha Samgraha-128, 129, 132n,
 133n
 Vedas-100 ff.
Verecundiam Argumentum, ad-174
Via Negativa-275, 276
 Viharas-74
Vijnāna Vāda-108, 116
Vinya-50
 Vireswananda Swami-119
 Vishnu-131, 132, 140, 141
Visuddhi Magga-56
 Vivekananda Swami-100, 120
 Voltaire-160
- Wahhāb al Abd-265
 Wasil Husaifa Abu-228
 Watts Alan-97
 Watt Montgomery-262
 Webb Clement-352
 Wells H. G.-35, 67, 828, 329
 Wensinck A. J.-230, 247
 Wesley John-39, 184
 Wilcox Ella Wheeler-185
 Whale J. S.-31, 348, 354
 Whitehead A. J.-33, 51, 62, 272, 273
 Wilder Thornton-205
 Willkie Wendell-245
 Wittgenstein Ludwig-19, 208

- World Council of Churches-207, 326
Wren Sir Christopher-19n
- Xenophanes-31, 161, 179
- Yamaguchi Susumi-89, 90
Yemen-291
Yoga-153
- Yogis*-156
Yuga-117, 154
- Zahrant Heinz-158, 197 f.
Zen Buddhism-83, 91 ff.
Zeno-357
Zoroaster-175
Zoroastrianism-190







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