

Protestant Christianity

WILL IT
SURVIVE
IN CENTRAL




P.G. de Silva

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PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY



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P. G. DE SILVA

1957

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THANKS

I MUST THANK the many friends with whom I have discussed the contents of this book, for their patient listening, criticisms and suggestions, and to my kind reviewers for their criticisms and encouragement, a few of whom have been kind enough to send me their written comments. The Rev. G. Basil Jackson is almost brutally frank when he wrote that he thought to publish this would be a mistake as it contained misleading statements and inaccuracies. His strongest contention, however, seems to me, to be that the Protestant Churches are not declining. He writes "You speak again and again of the decline of the Protestant Churches. The truth is that the Protestant Churches have grown more rapidly during the last hundred years than in any previous century." My statement of facts with regard to this matter is drawn from Reports of Commissions appointed by the Church itself and from statements made by leading men of thought everywhere. I am content to leave the verdict on this issue to my readers. I am indeed encouraged by the last paragraph of Mr. Jackson's critique where he states, "I am grateful for the opportunity you have given me of reading this manuscript. I think that you have a contribution to make to the thinking of the Church, if you would make it with regard to accuracy, and with the moderation which would make it command the attention of those to whom it is addressed." I am somehow convinced that where wrong religious bias has got hold of a man's heart milk and water methods are too ineffective—he needs something stronger like whisky and soda to stimulate him.

Here's another reviewer, Mr. Cyril Hamlin, M.A., D.P.H., the W.H.O. expert on Juvenile Delinquency. He takes just the opposite view. He states, "There can be no question of the validity of Mr. De Silva's premise that the Christian

Church is declining in its influence and in the numerical strength of its adherents." He is in agreement with my views and says, "This challenge ought to be flung out for all to see—here and now." Thus I already see the difference of opinion which I doubt not will be intensified when the book reaches the public. But out of conflict and criticism I hope my object will be achieved, namely, that the Protestant Churches should realise the urgent need for a restatement of the Christian Creed, Doctrines and Theology in language that could be understood by the present generation—the modern world—and acceptable to it.

I am indeed grateful to the Hon'ble Mr. Justice E. F. N. Gratiaen for an encouraging observation about the general tone of my book. He writes, "I am very conscious of the sincerity with which you have approached these problems—and I feel strongly that all provocative opinions (when firmly expressed) are good for the reader." and this from one whose judgment and wisdom are highly respected dispels my secret fears and doubts as to my own insufficiency.

A rare opportunity presented itself to me to meet an author from whose books I have quoted fairly liberally. He is Canon Charles E. Raven, quondam Vice Chancellor of University of Cambridge, an author, scholar and theologian of international fame. He was here on a lecture-tour in connection with Sir James Peiris Memorial Trust. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend (Deva Suriya Sena, son of Sir James Peiris). I told the Professor about my little venture and asked him if he would kindly grant me an interview. He readily agreed and requested me to telephone to him on a certain day at the Bishop's house. I did so and we fixed on a day to meet at the Y.M.C.A. The Secretary, Mr. Robert Buell, very kindly arranged a corner of the Chapel for us, here we met, the Chapel containing ourselves and no

more. I read to him the Foreword, Introduction and the Epilogue. He listened calmly and occasionally interrupted me to discuss some snippets of Scripture or theological opinion. Then I continued reading. My personal vanity was tickled when I heard him once ejaculate "beautifully put". This process lasted over forty five minutes, when at the end of it he rose and warmly gripping my hand said, "God bless you; don't let fear, or loneliness or anything like that prevent you from publishing this book." The following day he wrote this letter:

Bishop's House,
Steuart Place,
Colombo 3.

23rd February, 1956.

Dear Mr. de Silva,

I greatly enjoyed and appreciated the introductory sections of your book which you read to me last night. Both the general point of approach with its deeply Christian conviction and its penetrating Christian insight and the form and content of the particular discussions gave me great satisfaction. I feel that your criticisms of our present weaknesses and your proposals for new and fuller discipleship are alike relevant, justifiable and of high importance. I sincerely hope that you will press on with the publication of your manuscript and then I shall soon be able to read the whole of it.

With gratitude and good wishes,

I am,

Yours sincerely,
Sgd. Charles E. Raven.

The Revd. Robert A. Nelson writes:

“I am very grateful for the privilege of being allowed to read it and to share something of your thought in this way. I feel that you are writing out of real concern and also out of real spiritual conviction and faith, and that such thinking can always be of help to other Christian minds. There are so many things that you have said with which I am in full and hearty agreement, and it is refreshing to see them said as effectively as you say them.” Mr. Nelson then makes some useful criticisms and suggestions and winds up saying, “I am sure that I have written more than enough and I must not weary you, but do let me say again in closing, what a pleasure it has been to share with you in thought and to comment upon much of what you have written. I know you will go on thinking and I know that our sharing of thought and conviction can never be other than of real help.”

My warmest thanks are due to the following for useful and helpful criticisms, suggestions and encouragement.

Dr. C. V. Aserappa, M.R.C.S. (England), L.R.C.P. (London),
D.P.H. (Oxford), L.M.S. (Ceylon), Fellow of the Royal
Sanitary Institute, Retd. Chief Medical Officer of Health,
Colombo.

The Rev. Herbert Keuneman.

The Rev. G. Basil Jackson, M.A.

Professor Justin Labrooy, B.A., Ceylon University

Senator E. W. Kannangara, C.B.E., J.P.

Mr. J. N. Arumugam, C.C.S.

The Rev. James Cartman, B.A., M.T.H.

Mr. S. J. Jegasothy B.A., B.D.

Mr. Cyril Hamlin, M.A., D.P.H.

Mr. B. E. de Pinto, J.P.

The Rev. Celestine Fernando M.A., B.Litt.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice E. F. N. Gratiaen

The Rev. Wilfrid Pile B.D.

The Rev. Robert A. Nelson

Canon Charles E. Raven, D.D., Ex-Vice Chancellor of Cambridge.

Mr. C. Clancy de Silva

The Rev. H. W. Tattersall

Mr. S. C. Fernando, M.B.E., M.A., C.C.S. Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Rev. Bryan de Kretser, Ph.D.

I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Alban Rodrigo B.A., Dip. Ed. (Oweenee) for having read the proofs,

I must also thank Messrs. V. A. Rodrigo, G. K. P. Wickremasekera and A. L. Melder for their kindness in typing my manuscript.

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 The Rev. Celestino Fernando M.A., B.Litt.
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 typing my manuscript.

FOREWORD

ALTHOUGH the title of this book is called "Protestant Christianity" I have in the course of developing my argument, gone a little beyond and have included certain aspects of Roman Catholic Christianity, and I am afraid I have unwittingly trespassed into other fields outside the legitimate bounds of my theme. I have explained how this came about, below. I am torn between fear and hope. Fear, that the book may remove the last flickering faith of some to whom religion is only a fashionable label or habit. Hope, that my own ideas and the reproduction of many considered views of great world thinkers, among whom are not a few saintly and scholarly theologians, on the main substance of the book, may help some to get a more correct and reasonable view of the religion they follow. And above all I entertain the hope that the hierarchy of the Church may find in the truth of my assertions and averments the need to pause and think—think a little differently to their accustomed manner of habituated thinking and realise before it is too late the urgency for definite action.

One of my reviewers, asked me if I would not add a chapter or two to focus all the arguments to a final logical conclusion. I must confess my thoughts are rather disconnected, desultory and divergent. This can be understood and perhaps appreciated when I reveal the circumstances in which I came to write this essay. I have often been impelled by an irresistible impulse, particularly in the small hours of the morning, often about three, when I would rush out of my bed to the writing table, and find my hand too slow for the incessant stream of thoughts that flowed. Then there was often a break and I would relax and perhaps many months passed by before I sat again to write. This explains in part the disconnected thoughts and lack of sequence. But let

not my inexperience and literary shortcomings be counted against whatever material substance the book holds. I find it very difficult now to rearrange my thoughts in logical sequence, I am content to leave them as they are for what they are worth trusting to the readers' indulgence. I believe I have stated enough to rouse honest intelligent and independent thinking on the matters discussed in the book.

INTRODUCTION

TO PUBLISH OR NOT. This thought has weighed heavily on my mind for the past few years. I have read over and over again the pages of my manuscript, sometimes with my friends, among whom were men fully ordained in the Ministry, lay preachers and stalwart members of the Christian Church including a few members of the Roman Catholic Community. Needless to say it is not all who wholly agreed with my views. One at least, a staunch member of the Anglican persuasion (High Church) asked me, whilst seemingly appearing to agree with my observations, what, I thought, would be the reaction of this book upon the enemies of Christianity. I have not stated anything new or extraordinary that would give the non-Christian critic a new line of attack. In fact, my plea is that such matters as are contained in our doctrines, dogmas and rites as even appearing to offer substance for debate and sneer should be kept well in the background in the practice of religion. I do not think all such matters are essential to the building of a truly Christian personality. Besides, these are the very factors that divide the Christians themselves and make a reunion today so very difficult. The sooner we realise that these seemingly profound doctrinal and metaphysical issues tend more towards learned dissertations and disputation without an end rather than an aid to useful Christian living and amity the better it will be for the organised Church and the cause of Christ.

Jesus had no enemies but those of the Temple. It was the false prophets, the religio-nationalists and "pious" priests who formed His bitterest enemies and who finally crucified Him. The masses always followed Him even into the shadows of the night to hear Him and be healed by Him. The leaders of religion on the other hand were bitterly against Him and constantly laid plots to ensnare Him. I am very

firmly of belief that their tribe is not extinct. It is very much in evidence today among all sects of warring Christians and it is these that I have to take into account rather than the non-Christian critics.

The question is one of psychological interest whether it is good or necessary to disabuse the mind of children with regard to their simple and firm belief e.g. in Santa Claus. What days and weeks of sweet anticipation, what moments of joy and happiness do not Christian children and their entire households derive from this simple deception. Does it not appear even wicked to tell the children the truth and remove all this relish of innocent joy and happiness? What harm is there in this innocent form of make-believe, this unreality that brings joy in reality? Do children grow into manhood and womanhood any the worse for such false beliefs? So also it can be argued that men and women who remain children in religion should not be disturbed from their simple beliefs in religious matters that give them a sense of comfort and consolation. Is it right to remove infant ignorance in religious truth from the mind of the adult who simply follows the religion into which he was born and in which he is satisfied and remains a child? But Jesus said "Ye shall know the truth and it will make you free." Mark the "shall know."

Arnold J. Toynbee, in his "A Study of History", page 214, states a fact that must generally be accepted as true. He says "If we glance at the great religious organisations existent in the world today, Christian, Islamic and Hindu, we shall find that the great bulk of their nominal adherents, however exalted the creeds to which they profess lip-service, will live in a mental atmosphere, which, so far as religion is

concerned, is not far removed from a simple paganism." It is this simple fact, which leaves no room for honest dispute, that those engaged in the preaching and propagation of their particular creed always pretend not to see.

If the Church will face facts frankly and fearlessly, facts that reveal themselves as time, knowledge, experience and science advance, we shall be making approaches to the truth that makes us free—Truth that makes us free from our ignorance, superstition, untruths and fears. In all other realms of life we are not afraid to test and change our age old beliefs. Men for centuries believed in obviously false things, but with the march of science, intelligent men have opened their eyes and seen things differently in their true perspective and meaning. But the Church stands adamant in what it considers the Divine truth divinely revealed to its hierarchy. But why will not the hierarchy believe also in the proven facts of science as later revelations of God?

History records the cases of poor Roger Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, Giordano Bruno, William Smith and Lyell and the early geologists who showed that the Mosaic accounts of Creation and the Deluge were doubtful and unbelievable. I have elsewhere given other instances of intolerance towards even the saintliest scholars of the Church itself. This viewpoint of the established Church that it can never be wrong is its own undoing, for truth will prevail. Not many believe today in the infallibility of the Pope or the divine right of kings. It is not wise to insulate the Church against truth, "For truth is truth for evermore."

Should religion be divorced from the realities of life and living? Should it not seek to relate itself to the day to day activities of life rather than keep it for special days and occasions? Its present form seems to have been calculated

as a medium for a workaday Christian to come to Church for spiritual recreation, refreshment and succour. It is the oasis to the weary traveller. All its beautiful hymns, sermons, fellowship and worship seem to suggest that it is the sanctuary of the Lord. How beautiful is all this. But this is not sufficient. This is only a part of religion, which solely concerns our endeavour to come momentarily into intelligent conscious communion with the Divine, through worship and prayer.

Religion is vital and it is more than the performance of certain rites and rituals. It must not be separated from our everyday life—our games, joys, business, marriage, home, health, money matters and everything in every department of life. If religion has no place or meaning in all these, it does not seem to fulfil its true purpose or justify its continuance, for it travels on a different road from that Jesus took. The world seems to be going through a change in the pattern of thought and is beginning to look upon the various forms of organised religions which have hitherto held themselves together in firm beliefs, with perspicacity. The liberated mind, or as Krishnamurthi calls the *unconditioned* is generally serene because of the genuine intellectual certainty and conviction. But unfortunately here in Ceylon, which is still considered a backward country, the spirit of religious intolerance is fast assuming serious proportions. The vast Buddhist population conscious of a new-born political power seems to be afraid of the growing strength of the Roman Catholic Church. And the Christians as a whole are afraid that the Government, which is now called a Peoples' Government, will soon develop into a theocracy completely controlled by only the Buddhists. This growing mutual distrust and fear may assume proportions that may need physical interference to settle. It is strange that religious beliefs that are held most passionately and devotedly are very often those for which there

is least evidence, as Russel says, and as we all should know. Few, alas, will stop to think that fear, distrust and animosity are quite alien to the spirit of true religion and should never lodge in the heart of a reasonable and religious man. I sometimes think that the purpose of religion is now manifesting itself in other ways than through Churches and Temples. The UNESCO has within the short space of ten years achieved more in the moral, social and intellectual solidarity of mankind than what the different religions have done for centuries in that direction. The purpose of the UNESCO is to 'contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction or race, sex, language and religion.' Through the agency of such international world organisations as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, The Moral Rearmament Movement, The Red Cross, Rotary, Scouts, Guides, Y.M.C.A., and Y.W.C.A. and many other similar voluntary organisations, we find that peace and goodwill, which the different religions with their own peculiar, bigoted and exclusive solitariness are striving to bestow. In all this gigantic international endeavour one may discern the hand of God pointing the way to peace on earth and goodwill to men.

My conception of religion and the practice of it is vastly different to that of the Jew of the early first century. To him all his common place acts were prescribed by ceremonies, precepts and codes, how to rise, wash, eat, work, clothe himself and pray. The exact observance of these constituted to him his religion. This artificial manner of living was considered "Righteousness". To me this is either superstitious fear or rank hypocrisy.

Charles E. Raven D.D. in his "Good News of God" was perhaps thinking on the same lines when he states (pages 39 and 42) "What justification is there for supposing that because the Jewish priesthood before Christ or the Roman gentry after him wore certain gorgeous dresses, they are still an appropriate method of honouring God? Yet hours of time and reams of paper are devoted to controversies over the cut of a chasuble, and it must be among the hardest tasks of a new bishop to discover when to wear, and how to manage his Mitre. Unhappily these and other ceremonialisms are so inextricably confused with religion in the public mind that to suggest that nowadays they belong to museums and art galleries, or, like Santa Claus to the Christian bazaar, seems almost a blasphemy. And, my dear Henry, (*The Rev. Henry St. John Hart Dean of Queen's College, Cambridge*), if what you and I and the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Birmingham and (I had almost said) all intelligent and modern minded Christians believe about God is true, then these things are not only false, in fact, but radically contradictory of that belief. The conspiracy of silence which makes such a situation possible, makes impossible any genuine co-operation with scientists and the scientifically minded. It fosters the belief that intelligent Christians know their religion to be an outworn sham, but are concealing their knowledge in the interests of their emoluments and public influence. It allows (and this is its most sinister effect) real hypocrisy on the part of many Christians who deliberately exploit the position." Raven further and in unmistakable language condemns the attitude of Christians who, knowing the defects of orthodoxy, and of certain practices, condone them by a conspiracy of silence. "They are", he says, "doing their utmost to reduce Christianity to the level of a vulgar and degrading superstition." (*I am much beholden to Prof. C. J. Eliezer for the loan of this book*)

My thoughts in this little book, may appear to some, as outrageous, but they are thoughts generally talked about in Christian and other circles. Therefore, my friend's fear that enemies of our churches would make much out of the fact that the book is written by a son of the Manse will not matter much. I am comforted by the thought that it is most unlikely readers will attach to it an influence which it is not entitled to on its own merits, because of the fact that its author is a son of the Manse and an accredited lay-preacher of long standing.

The 'Rise of Christianity' is different. It has moved Sir Frederic Kenyon C.B.E., K.C.B., Litt: D, to join issue with Dr. Barnes lest Dr. Barnes' position in the Church as Bishop may well have an influence much greater than the book deserves. There is no cause for such a fear in my little book. I feel I am only one, however feeble my voice, in the fast-gathering army of thinking men and women all the world over, who are in quest of truth and who feel the decline of the Church keenly.

I am undeterred by the bonds of dogmatic traditional training and instruction and unafraid of the consequences that may befall me or the Churches, and in that deep conviction that ultimately the Divine Truth must triumph, I forge ahead. I may be pardoned if I most humbly claim God's guidance for I feel I can do no less and may God defend me.

Perhaps, someday, Christian preachers will find a completely new method of presenting—shall I say—Christianity, giving it a new meaning, a new way, much like unto the way Jesus our Lord and His disciples lived in their day. Some one will say that the world has changed since Our Lord's day. Yes, but the Church refuses to change its age-old

traditions and dogmas. To it the Bible is the word of God, "faultless unerring and supreme". From this obviously false assumption has sprung up many an untenable dogma and theory which have caused no little disputation, differences and even bitterness among the various schools of Christian thought.

The so-called custodians of the faith besmirched the name of Christianity by foul deeds pretending to believe and intending to deceive that such barbarous and cruel deeds were the wish and will of God. Moses and others of the Old Testament began brutal massacres in the name of the Lord saying "Thus saith the Lord". The Followers of Moses down to recent times burnt "witches", "Heretics", and other innocent men and women in the belief that it was the will of God.

Today the State Laws have fortunately intervened to prevent such awful penalties being imposed upon those whose views do not strictly fall into line with those of the established Church.

But the Church can still excommunicate though not imprison or burn. Now, the most charitable view we can take regarding such conduct of the Christian hierarchy is that foolish religious fanaticism led them to the false belief that their actions had the sanction of God and that they only carried out the will of God. So it was when poor Giordano Bruno, the Italian philosopher of the Renaissance, who himself entered the religious order in his fifteenth year was persecuted for his views—not much dissimilar to those of our Dr. Soper or Dr. Barnes about the immaculate conception and transubstantiation—and was finally burnt at the stake on the 25th February, 1600.

As a living rebuke and reproach to a set of intolerant religionists who burned Bruno, the next generation erected on the very site he was burned alive a monument with this simple and telling inscription "Raised to Giordano Bruno by the generation he foresaw."

I dread to think what might have happened to Dr. Donald Soper and the present Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. E. W. Barnes, had they expressed their views a few centuries ago.

I fear that reading through these pages, a doubt may arise in some minds as to the exact stand I take in my religion and more particularly in my own Church—Methodist—. Therefore, I hasten to state very definitely and emphatically that it is my unswerving loyalty to my Master and Lord and to the institution set up by the people called Methodists for fellowship, worship and for the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus, that has prompted me to undertake this humble task.

If my observations, comments and exposures or the language I have chosen to clothe these, will offend some, I can only crave their indulgence for a temperament that feels strongly and expresses similarly. Believe me, I can with truth and candour aver that it is not my intention to hurt anybody in particular although I am not unaware that some of my darts may find recognisable targets. To such as these I can only say that I share the view with St. Jerome who said "If an offence come out of truth better is it that the offence come than that the truth be concealed."

I claim the right to criticise because of my love and loyalty to the Church of my grandfather who is affectionately called "the Apostle of Moratuwa". (whose name I so unworthily bear) and of my father, brother and two uncles

who served my church for many long years as ordained ministers. The aggregate number of their years of service exceeds a century. I myself have been an accredited lay-preacher for the last 42 years. I can by the Grace of God claim the right at least to attempt to draw attention to what I honestly consider to be causes of the Church's decadence or decline or stagnation.

Some of these defects, it may be argued, are not unknown, and therefore pointed reference to them is unnecessary. Here I disagree with those good Christians who knowing the existence of defects make no attempts to remedy them. I firmly believe that I owe it to myself, my Church and my God to attempt to cleanse the Church of the impurities that complacency seems to ignore or condone. I know that established authority always resents any expression of views against it. It is impatient of criticism and anyone within the fold who dares to criticise is in ill odour with the rest. But as Joad says, "It is pre-eminently to those who differ and express their differences that any progress of any society is largely responsible". I hope that what I have stated in these pages may be viewed without any bias.

I confess I may be a little out of step with the general rank and file of Methodists or other Christians. My views may not fall in every instance, into line with some of the generally accepted definitions of doctrines and orthodoxy. But my belief in the fundamental truths of Christianity and in its ethics is firm, enduring, deep and strong. Jesus Christ to me in spirit is a bright, living present reality. Church's organised worship and communion provide me with a medium of coming into closer, intelligent, conscious communion with the super-human Presence, I call God. Sometimes at a Sunday service, in the Sanctuary we have reserved for the worship of God, when certain favourite hymns are warmly

sung and the atmosphere created by the personality of the leader and my mood are conducive to worship, I have often felt as if a whiff of God's breath had touched the surface of my soul and vibrated within me. This spiritual emotion, alas, is very short-lived, but beautiful and real, for I know it is so. It must be the common experience of most of us. I cannot describe this feeling of immediacy nor do I desire to prove it to others. I only know it to be real, absolute and immediate. Such experiences go to deepen my spiritual life. It is not at every service that I am able to catch this certain invisible something I call the Whisper of the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God, the Master's look as when he turned and looked at Peter. This experience is exquisite and inexplicable. It is perhaps at such a moment the thought to write this book first entered my mind. I know that for many many years past the urge someday to write down my thoughts regarding the many shortcomings of my Church has agitated my mind. Perhaps my close friends will remember some caustic comment or unorthodox view which I have expressed at many a time and place. Here, then, in the eventide of my life, with my journey's end in sight, I have attempted to arrest my scattered thoughts and put them into book form with an earnest wish that some good may come out of it, for

*"It is not all who seem to fail have failed indeed,
It is not all who failed therefore worked in vain."*

Go then my little book, in the spirit of fearless reverence, break in upon the deadly monotonous complacency, dive into the deep dug-outs of religious convention and lay bare the multifarious shibboleths of foolish controversy, expose the bitter racial, caste and communal ranklings among Christian groups that go to form the many denominations, sects and cults of Christendom, arrest the subtle under-currents of class and race discriminations, show them that in

Christ there shall be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Scythian bond nor free, nor Pope nor priest, nor Burgher nor Sinhalese nor Tamil, nor white, black, brown or yellow. **In Christ we are one.**

Christ is all in all. Go thou, the persistent perturber of my soul and let me breathe in peace for the brief residue of my days here, conscious of a task completed.

I care not what may befall me. Put me to suffering, put me to shame. Let malice, hatred, censure, criticism and ridicule be poured upon me thick and fast. They cannot drive me a hair's breadth from my God in whom I trust and whose guiding hand I seem to see.

CORRIGENDUM

Since writing this book a few events have taken place which necessitates a change in certain references. Shaw, Laski, Stalin, Joad, Dr. Munthe, Dr. Barnes, Sir Stafford Cripps, Sir Andrew Caldecott and Dean Inge are no more. I leave references to them in the present tense unchanged.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Chapter I 10
Chapter II 20
Chapter III 30
Chapter IV 40
Chapter V 50
Chapter VI 60
Chapter VII 70
Chapter VIII 80
Chapter IX 90
Chapter X 100

CHAPTER 1.

1 FOR NEARLY 500 years the people of this Island have been subject to foreign influence under three different Christian nations, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, whose influence has very considerably changed the ways of life of our people, not the least in respect of religion. I am excluding the impact of the Nestorians in the 6th Century.

Our forefathers who came into contact with the Portuguese must have soon realised that it paid them to fall into line with their mode and manner of life, their government, politics and religion. The easiest passport for service then was to become a Christian which they must have readily become without any qualms of conscience, because of the immediate material gain. Even those who were constrained by duress or coercion to embrace Roman Catholic Christianity must soon have found that it profited them in many ways, not that they cared much or knew anything about this new religion or their own. There may have been some who voluntarily embraced Christianity from honest conviction. This form of change in men's ways when their country comes under foreign rule is but natural and almost inevitable. The Britons under the Roman conquerors soon adapted themselves to the ways of the Romans in language, manners, politics and religion. This influence did not suddenly die the moment the last Roman legions left the shores of Britain. There still lurked a strong element of Roman culture mostly in the towns which had grown up at the Roman centres. The English naturally imbibed or acquired the Roman habits, customs and religious practices in the long course of 300 years of Roman domination. Perhaps it is not too audacious to presume that the Roman impact upon English

thought and literature lasted considerably longer than we generally suppose, for it is significant that the chief literary works that reached continental fame and popularity were Sir Thomas Moore's *Utopia* in 1516 and Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*, 1660, which were written in Latin. This, even so late as a 1000 years after the Romans had left Britain. Fisher and others give the explanation for this, when they point out the fact that Latin was the *Lingua Franca* of Western Europe at this period. Again, when William of Normandy conquered England in 1066 the Court language of England became Norman French. This lasted nearly three centuries till Henry the Fourth adopted English as the official language in 1399. But we after nearly five centuries of foreign domination expect to go back to our own language Sinhalese, overnight.

We have now emerged as a free nation after nearly five centuries of foreign domination, almost bankrupt in any outstanding work in our literature during the period. Whether we shall ever reach international fame in any literary work in our language is rather remote.

There is another comparison in contrast in the history of these two island peoples. The Romans after 300 years of governing left Britain of their own accord. A. D. Innes in the *History of the British Nation*, says, "In the year 410 A.D. the Roman legions were recalled and the province of Britain was cut adrift and left to shift for itself." The British after 133 years of ruling left us in 1947 to manage our own political affairs, still holding a watching brief. The English Queen still calls us "My people" and we recognise Her as Queen and swear allegiance to Her.

Again, like the British, we too find it none too easy to shake off the foreign influence that has got grafted into our lives. One is inclined to question the wisdom of desiring to relinquish all that we have acquired or assimilated to become once again national according to the pattern of our ancient standard of living. This, I am afraid, is just what our purblind nationalists seem to desire. It is, however, beyond doubt that foreign influence in both countries has been of very great benefit to the people in many ways. Under the British, in regard to religion, the people were given full freedom of choice and also encouragement to become Christians. Here too, it paid to be a Christian in more ways than one. Almost all our leaders today in almost every walk of life, in law, medicine, business and politics are at least English educated in Christian schools. Having as we say, so pleasantly won our freedom from, as some say a selfish exploiting nation, we have chosen their form of government to a nicety. We have modelled our Parliament after the Mother of Parliaments in England. Our Army Bill is also fashioned after the English pattern. It is well to remember these facts when our diehard nationalists shout themselves hoarse "A Sinhalese is not a true Sinhalese unless he is a Buddhist" and that we all must speak our mother tongue and put on some very effeminate form of garb.

This queer "national dress" brings to my mind a phenomenon of the last century when our men and women began to adopt a hybrid form of dress. Women, the more educated ones, wore the Dutch blouse and skirt for State occasions, and men shortened their loincloth sufficiently to let a pair of European pants peep out sheepishly at the ankles, and donned an Elwood or Bowler to conceal an ancient comb and 'konde'. Now in the change of the political situation a type of the sinhalese mind seems to be emerging. Groups of Konde-wearing males have banded themselves to-

gether and proudly proclaim the virtue of their ancient hair style, this type of mind seems almost a peculiarly Sinhalese national trait and seems to manifest itself in high politics also. But the pity of it all is that there does not appear to have a sane leader to ridicule this sort of foolishness. However, I believe I am not less patriotic because I speak the English tongue and wear the English style of dress and follow the Christian faith than the most vociferous, querulous, and rabid Buddhist nationalist.

2 Whilst it cannot be denied that a certain degree of not altogether unwholesome foreign influence in the lives of certain sections of the community is obvious, we must not forget that the vast majority of our people have remained immune from it, despite the bicycle, the boutique wireless set, the omnibus, the train and the motor car. They still retain their age-old social customs, religious practices and language. These people are mostly Buddhists and live in remote villages. It is not difficult to conceive of a time, not far distant when the voice of these people will form the deciding factor in our political destiny. It is this factor, this rapid process of resettlement of the national life that the Christian Church must take cognizance of remembering the fact that the Buddhists rightly or wrongly imagine that the foreign religion is an hinderance to their national progress. It is our plain duty so to arrange our Christian activities that we do not in the least cause just offence to the national aspirations of the people. Should offence arise as a result of the growing strength of the Christian message, as indeed it must, if the message is preached by devout and faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, such offence is to be welcomed because it would then quickly be turned into a means for the furtherance of the Gospel. The Christian message has in it an inherent quality to soften opposition by its very beauty, love and truth—these are irresistable forces of transformation. Absence

of the warmth of these in the hearts of Christian witnesses accounts for the poor results. We who profess to believe in the sublime beauty of the life and teaching of our Master do not always show evidence of that belief in our own individual lives. I wonder sometimes whether we are not too bound by form and ritual that we lose sight of the realities of religion. Are we truly very greatly different from those early Romans described to us by Alcroft Mason and Stout, in the Tutorial History of Rome (pages 68—69) who developed a religion "closely interwoven with politics," The worship of the Romans was always businesslike. Are we not today very businesslike? With them it was the letter and not the spirit that was most important. B.C. 300 seems so far away from A.D. 1950, and yet so near in the cold formalities of religious observance and superstition.

From earliest times among even the most powerful nations like the Romans, religion and state were closely mixed. The king as the head of the Pontifical College was supreme controller of the Roman religion. These people interpreted the will of the deity by means of the signs they (the Gods) sent down to mortals; the cries and flights of birds (auspiciam) thunder and lightning and other natural phenomena. Although we live in a greatly advanced age and can understand and explain these phenomena, still how many millions of the race believe in omens and practice foolish ceremonies to appease the wrath of the gods that send down floods, famines, fires, earthquakes, epidemics and droughts.

Do we not see in the superstitious beliefs of our day, even among the most civilised systems of religious worship, traces of these ancient cults? The modern young man with a University education and with a scientific background finds belief in traditional doctrines not a little baffling and

untenable. The more fearless ones boldly denounce the early religious dogmas inculcated by parents and priests and drift into religious communism, if I may coin a phrase to describe the revolt of youth against religion.

In every age there are many people who follow some form of religion only because they happened to be born into it and follow this inherited faith or belief with great devotion and fervour. They have never examined their religion in the light of science, experience and knowledge. They simply do not want to, they are content to follow the "faith of their fathers". The question arises whether it is necessary to disturb this paradisaical equanimity, particularly if it is thought not harmful or inimical to the progress of the race as a whole.

Here I am reminded of that parody of argument, as Russel calls it, in Samuel Butler's book, "Erewhon Revisited." In Erewhon there was a certain man called Higgs who had come to a remote country and having stayed there for some time escaped from it by going up in a balloon, and on his return to it again after 20 years, he found that the people were worshipping him as a God, they called him the "SUN CHILD" who had ascended into Heaven. When the High Priest and the people were just preparing to celebrate the Feast of Ascension, Higgs threatened to expose the entire hoax and to tell the people that it was he, the man, Higgs, and that he went up in a balloon. He was then told not to do so for all the morals of the people were woven round that myth—so he was persuaded to go away quietly. One is tempted to ask whether under such circumstances it is right or good to disturb this false belief or whether such a foolish belief should be continued because of a fear that disillusion may mean a moral disaster. I feel that I am placing too much of a strain upon my desire not to offend my church when I attempt to resist the temptation to draw a parallel with some of our present-day beliefs with those of the people described above.

In the early days of Christianity when primitive pagan influence swayed the minds of men who could easily be led by romantic stories and legends, people believed what were actually evident illusions as positive facts. This is known as *empathy* which is a state of mind common to people obsessed with certain preconceived notions who finally and conscientiously believe illusions as facts. It was then not difficult for the Church to make ignorant men to believe anything it said. The Rev. J. Peterson Smyth, B.D., Litt. D.C.L., in his book, *Our Bible in the Making*, gives one of these foolish legends which I feel certain was believed by many people of those days and there may still be some Christians who believe it now. It runs like this—(pages 9 & 10) “there is an old Church fable that at the time of the Council of Nice all the books were placed near the altar with a prayer that God would decide between them and that immediately the true canonical books jumped up on the altar and the others remained quietly on the floor”. Perhaps this is an easier method of deciding which books should be called the Word of God, the Holy Bible, and which not, than the voting at the Council of Nice.

Many stories of this nature are found in almost every form of religion. But with regard to Christian stories of myth, mystery and miracle, the thought comes irresistibly to my mind that at the source of almost every Christian legend or entirely all, is Roman Catholic inspiration. Modern stories too seem to emanate from the same source, as the story broadcast recently of a broken statue of terracotta, which bled human blood and another which shed human tears, and all these seem to be supported by evidence of doctors and divines. I happened to come across one ‘Miracle’ that has been broadcast by Reuter throughout the world. It was published in Ceylon in broad banner lines in the local Press. It stated that a Ceylon woman who was dumb for 17 years spoke the moment she stepped into the waters of

Lourdes. When I saw this in the Times of Ceylon I immediately wrote to the Editor that there must be some mistake for I knew the lady personally and conversed with her a few days before she embarked with the other pilgrims. The Editor wrote back to me that he too thought that there was something wrong and that he was cabling to the Times Correspondent in London to check up, who, however replied that the news was substantially correct. But in truth it was entirely false. The lady is still with us and will testify to the truth that she was never dumb for 17 years.

Whilst it must be admitted that organised religions have contributed towards progress, it must also be remembered that they have also retarded progress or greatly obstructed it.

If each form of religion is left to itself to practise its tenets unobtrusively, without interference from other forms, or the State, I think there will be greater understanding and harmony in every community. This, however, is not possible for each sect feels that it is incumbent upon it to declare its "truth" and win men into its fold. In this way proselytism is bred and also religious jealousies and hatreds. When this state of religious existence goes on for a long period, something is bound to happen, some phenomenon is bound to arise, and that has already arrived. It does not seem to recognise organised religion in any form or shape—it is Communism. The masses are rapidly turning towards it. The Pope fears it as a plague. He is reported to have said to a Sicilian in 1946, "It is not impossible that one day the Pope may be hanged on the gallows in St. Peter's square."

If this happens, as Pope Pius XII thinks it not unlikely, what then? It would convince the ignorant masses that the Pope is not specially protected by God against violence, and that he is subject to the same force of circumstance as the humblest member of his church. As long as Stalin is at the

head of this world movement such an eventuality is not only not impossible but quite probable because Stalin appears to have a deep grievance against the Roman Catholic Church. Stalin's mother, a poor cobbler's wife, entered her son into a seminary in Tiflis at the age of 14 from which he was dismissed at the age of 18. Stalin's own words show his deep disgust. Emil Ludwig who writes about Stalin says that when he put the question what it was that made him a revolutionist, Stalin replied thus, "I became a Socialist only when the discipline of the Seminary aroused my indignation. The place teemed with spies, and there was no end to deceitful tricks. While we had our morning tea, the tutors would rummage about in our drawers and papers in our dormitories, and quite similarly they would in their never ending suspicions rummage about in our souls. That was the thing I could never stand. It turned me into a rebel." Also incidentally, imperceptibly, Stalin may have imbibed the very vices he now condemns. This incident of his school life, at the most impressionable period of youth, steeled his heart against religious craft. How much of this sort of religion was responsible for the revolution that swept through Russia few historians can surmise. But it would be safe to say, that had Russian religion been a little different and not so heavily involved in politics, a different story might be told.

Religious beliefs and views are held so violently that it would appear nothing short of a revolution would make those who hold them think a little differently. They perhaps take the stand that it is God's will that they should defend their faith even unto death. Perhaps their reward is in Heaven, for it is certain that here below, they not only seek martyrdom but cause great upheavels with bloodshed. Such martyrdom is indeed laudable if only there is evidence of divine support for their actions.

People are ready to die for various reasons, love, hate, greed, country, family, friends, sorrow and shame.

It would not be difficult to understand if people, without deep conviction changed their ill-conceived and vaguely understood form of religion to some other, perhaps equally vague, but which offered them immediate and concrete material gain and an advantage in life, such as a job, money status and other amenities of life. It is their common sense, or would horse-sense be a better word? They would consider it foolish if they denied themselves these benefits, pleasures and comforts for themselves and their loved ones because of their refusal to change a religion which they so half-heartedly observed, to some other which at least would give them immediate gains. To them one is as good as the other. Their philosophy, they say, is practical and not influenced by the dubious ethereal vapourings of some unknowable promises of a future reward, when they have done with this life here. Perhaps they are prepared to take what comes to them in that other world of which they know nothing for certainty. If, they argue, a man lived according to his lights, a normal, moral and useful life by the best standards known to him and left the judgment on his life to some Power to deal fairly and justly by him in the hereafter should he be condemned because he did not follow a certain creed or orthodoxy of some man-made form of religion? The Arbiter of his life, he claims, must surely be just and merciful. Who can tell, he further asks, what particular form of religion among the many conflicting and contradictory forms, all claiming that each is the one and only true repository of divine truth and the only true religion, that Power would want man to accept and follow.

Judging from the normal standards of the well-being of an individual, his health, comforts, education, wealth and happiness, we could scarcely blame our forefathers who left Buddhism, which they indifferently followed, only to say that they were Christians in a Christian Government enjoying the benefits of such a change. Our Buddhist friends, of course, will strongly decry this "betrayal of one's sacred faith for a mess of pottage" and describe such men as "Rice Christians". But they say, they would rather have the rice here and now than starve hoping for it in some distant doubtful future in another world or life.

Should religion interfere with the normal well-being of a man? Should any religion demand the complete renunciation of the material comforts of life as long as they are enjoyed with moderation and without hurt to others? Does not the proper enjoyment of all the good things of life fulfil a function implied as ordained by the Giver of all good and perfect gifts? It is I think a duty of organised religions to teach us the proper way to use and enjoy the pleasant things of life without losing our hold or balance of the spiritual. Sorrow, pain and suffering seem to be common to our natural state. Religion should be so organised as to teach us how we may nobly face them when they visit us. These afflict us, we are told, because of our "Thanha", so that if we wish to rid us of these, we must rid ourselves of desire. Asceticism attempts to advocate this method of getting rid of sorrow. There does not seem to be a panacea for sorrow or a specific except one's own philosophy, that it must be endured with grace and fortitude, and this certain religions teach, particularly Christianity.

Life is not all Dukkha, it is also a great adventure, given right opportunity it is capable of great achievement. I feel, that if Gauthama gave his mind to the study of Science he

might have done wonders no less glorious than those achieved by Einstein, Newton, Darwin, Galileo, Harvey, Edison, Marconi and other great scientists. Enlightenment dawned on him as he contemplated on the religious plane. Newton saw the light of a science watching an apple drop; Archimedes in his bath shouted "Eureka! Eureka!" and jumped out of it and ran naked down the streets of Syracuse to write down his discovery of the fundamental law of hydrostatics, that suddenly dawned upon him in his bath. There are marvellous avenues on every side for human adventure. So it is not wise to look upon life as something unpleasant and full of sorrow and suffering from the cradle to the grave, and the only way to escape which is to renounce every form of pleasure, comfort and even possession of all worldly material goods. In such renunciation is a deep-rooted and concealed desire to save one's own self which is not altogether noble. The Sadhus of Orissa State think that the only way to get rid of, and to cleanse desire, is to achieve satiation in all things considered evil, therefore, they indulge in an orgy of crapulous debauchery with their "Love Slaves" in the monastery.

But Christianity alone offers "Glad tidings of great joy to all mankind". The following lines written in my album in 1914, by a dear cousin of mine, who is now, alas, no more, are so full of meaning that I think I ought to insert them here to show how nobly and usefully man can live his life:—

*Stand not aloof, nor apart,
Plunge into the thick of the fight
There in the Street and in the Mart,
That is the place to do right.
Not in some cloister or cave,
Not in the kingdom above,
Here on this side of the grave,
Here should we labour and love.*

Youth at the threshold of life looks up and sees the glorious vistas opening out before his eyes in every field of human activity, in Art, Science, Law, Medicine, Travel, Music, yea even in Religion and wants to excel in one or the other, and deems it an act of cowardice to become a recluse to save his own soul.

3 Of how many, even among the most learned exponents of particular forms of religion, can it be honestly said that they are of this, that or the other religion, as a result of deep and careful research and study. Their convictions are a mere result of long practice, and instructions and training from their childhood. Can a man trained in his inherited form of religion from his early childhood so completely divest himself of his bias as to bring his mind to a study of other forms? Of course, he can, but what usually happens is that he who is trained and taught in one religion becomes so bigoted or biased that he does not want to think of any other or too closely examine his own. "If your heart does not want to, your head will assuredly never make you believe" says Professor William James. But very little of the head is employed in the choice of a religion. People simply grow into a religion not by choice but by chance of birth.

I am firmly of opinion that some are born religious-minded, that is not to say that they are born Christians, or born Hindus, but are like those who are born with poetic, artistic or musical talents. But when religion is a profession anybody can profess a faith and belong to a religious sect or organisation and perhaps develop a religious attitude.

If it is only one Supreme Being that all mankind is striving to know and worship, that Being being omniscient, will I am sure, humanly speaking, at least, appreciate all

human efforts to worship regardless of the crudity of some and the intelligence of others in their various stages of ignorance or intelligence.

But whether He indicates His pleasure at some or displeasure at others is a matter of our conjecture. It is now, I think, generally agreed that it is not an action akin to wisdom to say that any particular form of religion is the only true one and others are false. Our own beloved Rev. James Hope Moulton M.A., Litt. D., who met with a tragic death when he was leaving Ceylon said, "We are glad to think that there was a measure of truth all the world over, and we are not afraid to say that wherever there is truth, even in the heart of an agnostic, it is inspired by God. For truth can come from no other source; after all it was God who put it there". But alas the totalitarian attitude of the Christian Church in her exclusive dogma will not readily admit this. Yet even after 2000 years of its preaching, it seems today to be almost at a standstill. The only section that seems to progress in numbers, wealth and influence is the Roman Catholic Church, not, I believe, because of any direct divine dispensation but because of the manner of its government and discipline. Non-Catholics often say it is the anti-Christ. But it, in turn will say, it alone of the Christian Churches progresses whilst others wither, or wane. It has inspired in its followers a profound sense of piety and loyalty which others should fain emulate. Critics may say that they worship the symbol more than the thing symbolised, that it is anachronistic, that the "true" representative of Him who had not where to lay His head should have a military bodyguard to guard him and live in palatial mansions in such seemingly supreme physical comfort. Yet we see no ill-effects falling upon it for all that. It goes on from strength to strength while others languish, can it not therefore claim God's blessings? There is however one thing it fears that gives away the show, namely its fears

of the advancing tide of Communism. If its priests and bishops and Popes are appointed by God as claimed, and if it is believed that the Gates of Hell cannot prevail against it, why then this fear that has almost become a terror? Say for instance, Communism gains ground and completely gains mastery of the world, sweeping off all forms of religions organisations, cannot Communism also then lay claim to Divine guidance and purpose?

Throughout the ages men have held on to beliefs without examining them. "The psychological mechanism of beliefs being what it is, small wonder that beliefs however incredible or contradictory, are not merely held, but held with tenacity or violence", says Professor Julian Huxley. This blind bull-dog pertinacity with which men hold on to their ancient unexamined beliefs defies reason and retards progress, thus the world of organised religions goes on from age to age unchanged till perhaps they strike against the politics of a country, when behold, firmly held beliefs change overnight. With the stroke of his pen Mustafa Kemal changed the religious outlook of Turkey. He removed the outward symbols of an ancient religion and emancipated a people long enslaved by strong and foolish religious vows and practices. The long enslaved women saw a new day, a new life, a better life, a more useful life to themselves, their country and to their God. But still the old diehard priesthood would fain send Kemal's soul to Hell-fire. "In 1925, the National Assembly abolished the Caliphate and brought the rule of the Ottoman dynasty to an end; Dervish monasteries and religious congregations were dissolved and their sources of income, religious tithes were abolished. immense judicial reforms were begun involving suppression of the old ecclesiastical law by a modern code".

In Japan we see an advanced race of people still clinging on to the most primitive form of worship. It is indeed difficult to understand how an educated Japanese can honestly subscribe to and perform the senseless rites of Shintoism. So do many religious rites appear to the thinking men as strange, transubstantiation, burnt offerings, men pardoning sins of other men, etc: As if all these rites and beliefs are essential to living a good life—acceptable to God and man.

I often wonder what Jesus would do if He were here now, what He would say to all these bewildering rites, dogmas and doctrines that His followers now quarrel about. I believe the time is most opportune for His second appearance on Earth. I think He would laugh at some of the things done in His name. I almost think He would say that certain things attributed to Him were never said or done by Him.

It is boldly said that Christianity has not failed, but that it has never been tried, and that those to whose hands its propagation was entrusted have not been faithful to their sacred trust. This, at least, is what our apologists including our late Governor Sir Andrew Caldecott said. However the Commission appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York frankly testify to the fact that there is "a wholesale drift from organised religion".

It further states in their report, entitled "Towards the Conversion of England", page 3—"The Present irrelevance of the Church in the life of the Community in general is apparent from two symptoms which admit of no dispute. They are, (1) the widespread decline in church going, (2) the collapse of Christian morality." "Depravity", it further states, "is a mere symptom of spiritual disease". Then it goes on to show that the last war has revealed and also accelerated common vices which it is the duty of the Church to suppress; vices such as untruthfulness, dishonesty and

sexual immorality are now widespread. "It is not a difficult job for a Commission to sit and analyse the prevalent vices which militate against the teaching of the Gospel, but it would have been very profitable if the Commission had also tried to fix the responsibility for such a state of affairs in the right quarter. Can the organised Church plead not guilty? If she has failed during these past centuries, is there any sense in attempting to rebuild on the same lines, but rather should we not seek new paths, new methods, discarding what has proved to have failed. The late Archbishop William Temple was considered by Joad as the one man who could have brought about such a change.

The Report of the Commission has the redeeming trait of candour when it states that "great numbers of priests neither know how to pray themselves, still less how to teach the art of true prayer to their people." I am rather intrigued by the phrase "true prayer". It implies that there are prayers which are not true, false and meaningless. It is perhaps this sort of prayer that Our Lord condemned among the Pharisees.

Not many weeks ago a great Buddhist leader bemoaned the fact that not more than 25% of their priesthood is worthy to preach the Dhamma. He used strong language to describe the rest. I personally think that he rather exaggerated the fact of the percentage. We have known Buddhist monks with concubines arraigned before courts for murder, arson, theft, and forging currency notes and rape. That there are black sheep in every religious fold cannot easily be gainsaid. It is foolish to deny or to palliate this fact however sad and unpleasant it may be.

In the symposium edited by E. W. Martin, "In Search of Faith", page 27, we read the following:—"It is unfortunately true many parsons are purblind and selfish snobs. They

make no attempt to practise what they preach, they neglect the demands of their high mission; do not face up to the needs of the time nor deal boldly with spiritual and intellectual problems. By the standards of the faith they profess to accept, these men are condemned as hypocrites. One cannot make sweeping generalisations, but they are a minority." He further says, "these bigoted religionists who proclaim and profess with loud voices, anxious like the Scribes and Pharisees to impress everyone with their outward show of piety, who sneer at the devoted simplicity of the humble Christian and look with horror upon the intellectual atheist, who is only following where his reason bids him follow, are themselves chastised by the Apostle James." The Church must not wait till the public discovers the complete unworthiness of some of its paid personnel. Can any Church prosper with such undesirable elements in it? This is of course, not a new phenomenon, it comes from Christ's days. He rebuked the leaders of His time as hypocrites, whited sepulchres and a generation of vipers.

4 What explanation can be given to the fact that at great upheavals of society, during wars, earthquakes, floods, famines and fires, the very worst in man comes up to the surface unabashedly. Sir Arthur Newsholme, K.C.B., M.D., in his *Health Problems in Organised Society*, makes a special point of this fact, when he writes:—

"The desperation and despair of the Blackdeath of 1348—50 which destroyed nearly a quarter of the population of this country were associated with a common abandonment of all restraint and reckless indulgence in wild debaucheries. So also in the famine and plague years of 1491—95, in the words of a mediaeval historian the corruption of morals reached a height without a parallel in ancient times. The murders of the French Revolution, 1793, and recent Bolshevist

crimes, and in vice, the sexual laxity during the Great War (1) show the mastery which the primitive animal can resume over the inherited human culture of the ages." (page 187) This ought to set the Christian Church thinking as to how deep the roots of her teaching have gone into the hearts of the Christian people. Those who are caught up in the vortex of an upheaval in Christian lands are indeed men and women reared in the Christian faith. If at such awful moments they are unable to withstand the severe ordeal with Christian faith and fortitude, it suggests that either their fear of and faith in God as professed are not real or that religious convictions are not strong enough to endure the trial and test. The latter cannot certainly be the case, for history proved again and again Christian fortitude, and martyrdom under the severest ordeals. It then suggests that the custodians of faith have failed to instil this sufficiently strongly to enable the adherents to stand fast in the path of virtue in the dark hour of their temptation, trial and tribulation. This phenomenon we saw in the aftermath of the world War II—how boys and girls, men and women, broke loose from the bonds of religious instruction and training into unbridled vice, lust and profligacy.

5 Apart from the shortcomings of those set apart to preach the Gospel, there are many things in the Old Testament and the New Testament which are not easy to understand, in spite of the theological dogmatism and the various interpretations.

The Very Rev. Dr. R. W. Matthews picks out these ethical maxims of the Master "Resist not the evil man, turn the other cheek", appears says Dr. Matthews, to support pacifism and to condemn all resort to law or the police for protection. Evidently the Church does not take these sayings in their literal meaning, but it is by no means clear in what sense they are taken".

There are many alleged sayings of Jesus that puzzle the mind of the student and which have been variously interpreted or misunderstood. The doctrine of Eschatology, the Undying worm, Eternal Hell-fire, the Second Coming within a given period of time and a definition of territory (St Matthew x. 23) "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come." These passages and many more similar ones have almost been done to death by scholars, theologians, preachers and apologists interpreting them in their own ways. The honest student, however, finds it none too easy to harmonize some of the sayings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels with the life He lived. How much of all these was actually said or done by Him must always remain uncertain. Barnes, of all the scholars I have read, gives a most reasonable explanation when he says that "Jesus taught by picturesque imagery, by deliberate over-emphasis, by ludicrous exaggeration. He laid down principles of conduct, not rules of action. On the surface there was a rippling play of fancy, underneath there was profound seriousness." His characteristic exaggeration of stories like the beam and the mote in the eye, the mountain and mustard seed of faith, the gnat and the camel, the indiscriminate charity, to give the rogue who steals part of your garment, the balance also, can be understood if we do not attempt to explain them with all the seriousness preachers invariably ascribe to them, but look at them from a humorous background. If we fail to picture Jesus as a man of good humour, we shall have a wrong picture of Him. Look again at that beautiful story of the rich man and Lazarus, how fantastic, if it was only intended to teach a simple moral. But we try to draw more things out of it than the story originally meant to those people who listened to it. For instance, we could safely deduce that the rich man was sent to hell only because he was rich, and the beggar to the bosom of

Abraham only because he was a dirty beggar with unclean sores; how he came to be in that position we are not told, perhaps it may be owing to his own faults, indolence or vice. We are not told the type of sores he had either, nor could we think that Jesus here gave a correct glimpse of life after death. Abraham, so the story goes, spoke unto the rich man in Hell tormented with the heat of Hell fire, who desired to quench his tremendous thirst with only a drop of water from Lazarus' finger, said "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." This judgment is irrespective of the religious beliefs of both men; the contrast is between the rich and the poor. Now, if we fail to see the humour which must have suited His hearers admirably, we miss the point that Jesus was trying to drive home.

Jesus' sense of humour is again clearly visible to those with like humour. When an angry crowd brought before Him a woman caught in an act of sin and wanted Him to pronounce His judgment, I could just picture to myself the impatient crowd of self-righteous men, the woman with a look of guilt and Jesus calmly looking at the crowd, then at the woman and slowly bending down and writing His sentence "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." I can see Him again standing erect and calmly noticing the immediate reaction. One by one the accusers read, wrinkle their brows in disgust spit and slink away in discomfiture. I think Jesus must have smiled to himself at the success of his clever device. To think differently, I feel, is to deny Jesus a most natural human quality. Jesus, the eldest of a family of five brothers and at least two sisters, shared with us our common desires, emotions and passions. Viewed against such a background, He would always appear to us as a model for

all time. We cannot, today, at this great distance fully comprehend the modes of thought and ways of men of Christ's day with whom He lived and therefore we fail to understand many of those cryptic and enigmatic or ambiguous sayings alleged to have been spoken by Jesus. What is doubtful or difficult is often attributed to His Divinity.

6 The general attitude of the Christian Church towards a critical examination of the Bible is illustrated in a statement made by one of the finest men who ever took to the robes. The late Dr. Temple wrote to Dr. Tait, who advised him to study the Bible critically, thus "to tell a man to study and yet to bid him under heavy penalties to come to the same conclusions with those who have not studied, is to mock him. If the conclusions are prescribed, the study is precluded."

The intensity of purpose and personal enthusiasm of the Master and His disciples with which they commenced their mission 2000 years ago will, I do not doubt, direct the destinies of the nations in spite of a seeming drawback or drift. Our Lord formulated no fixed creed or doctrine, but men, lesser men, have woven round His name a farrago of bewildering theological and ecclesiastical jargon that divides rather than unites His followers.

I wonder if the Christian message would not have been better received if it had been preached in deed and word by men like the early disciples and like Christ Himself. Go among the masses in all one's simplicity and love. Let the beauty, truth and goodness speak in terms of personal service. Hearts are not won by rhapsodies upon the beauty of the sun, moon and stars, and eloquent sermons from pulpits, but by touches of genuine friendship shown in deeds of kindness and service. The pulpit as a means of evangelism is now a spent force. The hollowness of our proud

civilisation has been shown up by the last war. It is foolish to attempt to rebuild it on the old lines of the old model. Perhaps our spiritual eyes will see in the distressed East a solution to a troubled world. In Ahimsa, in non violence and in love—the acme of Christ's teaching,—will be found what the world is looking for.

In the East you will not find Parsons turning recruiting Sergeants during a war, and Popes blessing weapons of war in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. One frail piece of humanity in his ardent love for humanity and in his faith in God has profoundly influenced the thought of the world as no other after Jesus. How much of Gandhiji's life and work is due to his reading the Sermon on the Mount and to the friendship of a humble Christian the Rev. C. F. Andrews, we cannot tell. But this we know, that the Mahatma has often confessed his great admiration for both. He always had great faith in God to whom he always prayed and with whom he communed. Let the ordained men and women break away from the traditional trappings of an organised system and go among the people, live, eat, move and have their being with them, it is thus that the love of God is preached. This is just what Our Lord did.

But today when an attempt is made even to unite the various Christian Churches there comes the cry "The Church is in peril." But I hear in my dreams the cry "Jesus Our Lord is crucified again." It is the Church and the Bible that our Christians are now concerned with, and not Jesus and His message of love and goodwill. And we wonder why Christianity is on the decline!

CHAPTER II.

7 In the evolution of Christian doctrine and dogma there appears to be something analogous to what we see in nature. Certain accrescences still cling like parasites on the doctrinal structure of the Christian Church, much like the rudimentary organs in animals, organs which today are absolutely superfluous, for example, men possess vestigial or appendices mammae which are of no use whatever. These rudimentary organs may be compared to letters in certain words still retained in the spelling but useless in pronunciation, only serving as a clue to the derivation. How silly it would appear if sensible men tried to develop these organs now. But this is just what our ecclesiastical experts attempt when they try to defend customs and dogmas which are not necessary for an intelligent understanding of that power we call God, or to preach Christ.

Perhaps Weatherhead too, was thinking on these lines when he wrote desiring "Surgical treatment of our adhesions to a spurious orthodoxy, bewildering ritual and a meaningless mumbo-jumbo of effete phrases", (page 69— Thinking Aloud in WAR Time)

If a person made serious study of our orthodoxy and its earliest historical sources, he would find it none too easy to maintain some of the present generally accepted facts concerning its religious history and dogmas. Here I am constrained to give an instance of a generally little known fact which Sigmund Freud mentions in his book Totem and Taboo—(page 237) and which is attributed to Frazer—It is regarding our Holy Sacrament, and states "The Christian communion has absorbed within itself a sacrament which is doubtless far older than Christianity". I think that our nervous opposition to considered criticism on these is a weakness.

Organised Christianity taken as a whole, as a Church, or as a collective body of churches, is not without its weak spots which make it an easy target for criticism. These vulnerable points have been exposed not only by non-Christian critics but also by most scholarly theologians, the latter of whom most unfortunately are too often inhibited, excommunicated, maligned and in many other ways molested and insulted. The famous case of the Bishop of Natal, John William Colenso, (1814—1883) is not a rare or solitary instance of ecclesiastical intolerance. “The exquisite rancour of theological hatred” as Gibson put it. Perhaps it is more correct to say *ecclesiastical* hatred than theological.

Bishop Colenso was a man of great learning, a Fellow and Tutor of Cambridge, Master at Harrow and author of valuable text books on mathematics. He wrote a learned commentary on the Pentateuch. His treatment of it was admittedly reverential. He plainly pointed out that much of what the books contained was purely mythical and legendary. No sooner had the first part of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, critically examined appeared than a torrent of Church abuse common to the time was hurled against him. He was excommunicated in his own Cathedral by Bishop Gray of Cape Town and “given over to Satan”. His book was condemned. But what a strange irony of fate! Bishop Wilberforce who addressed him at his consecration thus—“You need boldness to risk all for God—to stand by the truth and its supporters against man’s threatening and the devils’ wrath; . . . you need a patient meekness to bear the galling calumnies and false surmises with which if you are faithful, that same Satanic working, which, of course, would burn your body, would assuredly assail you daily through the pens and tongues of deceivers and deceived, who under a semblance of a zeal for Christ, will ever more distort your

words, misrepresent your motives, rejoice in your failings, exaggerate your errors, and seek by every poisoned breath of slander to destroy your powers of service"—should turn out to be Colenso's bitter enemy. Poor Colenso, under the circumstances had no other redress except to go to law and this he did. The Privy Council held in favour of Colenso making his excommunication null and void and safeguarding his salary as bishop. Then the angry and defeated Bishop Gray of Cape Town loudly denounced the Privy Council's decision as "awful and profane" and the Council as a "Masterpiece of Satan".

I have gone to the extent of quoting these details from Charles T. Gorham, merely to show the intensity of religious feeling that is roused when a considered criticism is made in good faith but counter to the traditional beliefs of the Church.

Colenso is only one of the scores of other equally honest men who had to pay the price for their courage in publishing their findings and convictions. The Rev. J. M. Thomson, a Fellow of Magdalen College, made a most reverent plea that religious faith should not involve a belief in the probable or supposed events rooted in mere legend, whereupon the Bishop of Winchester promptly inhibited him and thus drove him from the Anglican ministry.

This furious orthodox mentality against considered views of highly respected and scholarly students of the Bible is really unfortunate for it gives the non-Christian the idea that angry defence is an indication of an anxiety to conceal what cannot be defended. This foolish attitude betrays to my mind a want faith in God. If the Church is divinely instituted and

the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, why should anyone be perturbed when criticism is made against the Bible or against the doctrine, or dogma or its history? When Dean Milman wrote a scholarly history of the Jews treating the subject purely from the point of view of the development of an oriental tribe ignoring the claim of its being God's chosen people the book was banned and further publication stopped. Again in 1862, Dr. Samuel Davidson published his introduction to the Old Testament when the usual storm burst and he was driven from his professorial chair. Renan also was similarly punished for his Life of Jesus. Abbe Loisy, Theodore Parker, Dr. Williams, Wilson, Winston and Professor William Robertson Smith, the editor of the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and many other learned and noble hearted men were heavily penalised for expressing their honest convictions and scholarly findings. Even now in this twentieth century, honest criticism is viewed with deep displeasure and if it comes from an ordained Minister it is viewed with intolerance.

In our own day there is the case of Dr. E. W. Barnes of Birmingham who is also an acknowledged scholar whose book "The Rise of Christianity" has caused no little unrest among the hierarchy of Christian Churches. Already the Archbishop of Canterbury has donned his gloves and made a preliminary attack, see how times have changed—when he said "if his views were mine I should not feel that I could still hold episcopal office in the Church." Dr. Fisher's point is that Dr. Barnes has discarded from the New Testament "much which holds the central place in the generally accepted Christian doctrine and belief." This is a serious enough charge to drive the author from at least the rank of Bishops. And there can be no doubt that a 100 years ago, if a book of this nature was published, its author would

most undoubtedly have been peremptorily hounded out, but the hierarchy perhaps remembers the Privy Council's decision in Colenso's case.

It is this fear, this perturbation, that suggests insecurity. If the Book contains errors and false historical and scientific data that disturb our own unexamined traditional beliefs, it is necessary for the Church closely to examine the facts.

There are still many people who believe that God inspired the prophets and even gave them instructions face to face. Take the case of Moses, found in the 31st Chapter of Numbers, which starts like this "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites". Then Moses the servant of God gave this awful order to his soldiers to go to war against the Midianites. The soldiers obeyed and devastated the land of the Midianites and slew all the males and the kings of Midian. Moses' soldiers took the women captive and their children, all the cattle, their flocks and all their goods and burnt the cities. When the triumphant army returned home with all their spoil Moses was furious to see the women. He then gave the following order (17th verse) "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him, (*in cold blood*) (18th verse). But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves".) These numbered 32,000.

In the first place, if the above is a true account of what Moses did, words fail us to express our anger at such brutal deeds, and we could scarcely resist the temptation to agree with Tom Paine who when writing about this story, says "Among the detestable villians that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account be true."

It is most absurd for us today to charge the commission of such barbarous acts upon the God of Love we worship. To believe this and other similar stories in the Old Testament as God inspired, we have to change our sense of justice, morality and goodness. He must be a cold stranger to the generous impulses of a noble mind who could read such stories without a deep sense of indignation and disappointment. No amount of parsonic parlance could remove the wrongs done by men in His name.

Which nation today would dare to declare war and say that the Lord God Almighty wanted it done, and after the war to allocate so much of the booty to the Church?

The Old Testament, it must be admitted, contains many instances of crime, fornication, incest, adultery, murder, unnatural sexual offences, debauchery and awful atrocities which we cannot accept as being recorded through the inspiration or command of God.

The God we worship today is to us a God of Love, Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, and one most unlikely, even at the worst period of man's moral and intellectual development, to give the following prescription to Ezekiel, namely, to put wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and fitches into one vessel and make bread thereof, and bake it with human dung and eat it (Ezekiel 4th Chapter) or that equally fantastic declaration in Isaiah 111—17, "Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts."

Again in the 20th Chapter we find a command to walk with buttocks uncovered. By no canon of reason can we conceive that a God of Love and Justice would ever at any period of man's history do such wicked and foolish things so plentifully attributed to Him by Bible writers.

Sir Edwin Arnold in his preface to the 'Light of Asia' makes reference to a palpable fact when he states "The Extravagances which disfigure the record and practice of Buddhism are to be referred to that inevitable degradation which priesthoods always inflict upon great ideas committed to their charge". This charge is applicable to almost all organised religions.

8 In spite of the great strides in education there are still many Christians who attach a sort of magical or mystical power to the Bible. There is still the queer practice of suddenly opening the pages of the Holy Book and putting one's finger to some verse at random there to find an answer to perplexity, anxiety or fear. Tennyson gives an instance of this practice in Enoch Arden. Enoch had left Annie many years ago and no news of Enoch came. Let me quote the beautiful lines:—

*At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep but earnestly
Prayed for a sign, my Enoch is he gone?*

.....
*Then desperately seized the Holy Book
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign
Suddenly put a finger on the text
'Under a palm tree' That was nothing to her
No meaning there, she closed the Book and slept.*

She evidently put her finger on the 5th verse of the 4th chapter of Judges which has no reference whatsoever to her troubled mind. But the answer came when she slept and dreamt "Her Enoch sitting on a height under a palm tree". She knew now that Enoch was dead and sent for Phillip and said "There is no reason why we should not wed". But alas, her divination was falsified, Enoch was much alive!

Scores of such instances can be cited, but I am tempted to give one more interesting case of Robert Knox who in his awful solitude as a prisoner in Kandy, came across an old man who had a book to sell, perhaps purloined from the Portuguese in Colombo. This book happened to be, to Knox's unbounded joy, a Bible. He at once opened it and his eager eyes fell upon the 16th chapter of Acts and the 30th and 31st verses where the jailor asked Paul, "What must I do to be saved?" This was most comforting to Knox who was always hoping for an escape.

People who practice this sort of divination seem to find satisfaction and an answer to suit them.

Long before the Bible came to be put into this sort of divination Vergil's Aeneid was employed in like manner. The custom called the Sortes Virgilianae came into use a few years after the poet's death in B.C. 19 and prevailed among some people till comparatively recent times.

I think it is a duty incumbent on the Church to remove all foolish beliefs associated with the Bible. The Rev. Rowland Jones, B.A., Ph.D., a theologian of no mean scholarship, writing about the truth of the Bible in "Psychology" of August 1942 states "Quotations are often inaccurate and dates are often wrong. One statement of history conflicts with another. Even Jesus when He quotes a happening gives the wrong date for it. There is no attempt made by Bible writers to verify their references".

History has sometimes falsified certain Bible prophecies. For a person who goes nosing about the pages of the Bible many defects must appear. Critics pick up these and shout from housetops that the sacred and holy book of the Christians who call it the Word of God contains these contradictory,

false and fantastic facts. Our equally enthusiastic exponents gird their loins and shout from the pulpits that "the Bible is none other than the voice of Him who sitteth on the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every syllable of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High...faultless, unerring, supreme". This bold utterance was made by no less a person than Dean Burgon from the pulpit of St. Mary's, Oxford. He is not the only Christian who thinks and believes it to be so.

Even today, we find many men and women in every denomination who too believe the Bible to be sacred and holy, because everything recorded in its pages is directly inspired by God and therefore absolutely true in every detail and aspect. This belief has been engendered by preachers like Burgon and certain present day self-constituted lecturers who proclaim their knowledge with much pontifical dogmatism. This unintelligent attitude I am afraid, has contributed in no small measure to a reaction against the Bible as a trustworthy guide to God. For it depicts God as someone like ourselves, revengeful, censorious, seeking delight in burnt offerings, and performing many things that average human judgment would not hesitate to condemn as stupid. H. E. Fosdick in his "Adventurous Religion" on page 26 says, "What then, shall the religious man do? He cannot take in earnest the man-sized representations of God on which, it may be, he was brought up—a God walking in a garden in the cool of the day, making woman from man's rib, confounding men's speech lest they build a tower too high, decreeing a flood to drown humanity, trying to slay a man at a wayside inn because his child was not circumcised, showing his back but not his face to a man upon a mountain top, or ordering the massacre of his chosen people's enemies, men and women and children without mercy."

These are but a few that Fosdick picks out. I have mentioned a few elsewhere in this book. Any one going through the Old Testament will come across instances of uncouth, even obscene things attributed to the God we worship as Creator and Preserver of Life, God of Truth, Beauty and Love and feel indignant at the blasphemous daring of those who ascribe these to God. There are, however, learned theological apologists who find explanations and excuses for all this. They are more ecclesiastically enthusiastic than honest. Perhaps listening to preachers of this type Paine was induced to write, "A man by hearing all their nonsense lumped and preached together, confounded the God of Creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none. Of ail the systems of religion that ever were invented there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity." *This angry total denunciation of a system of religion that has survived for centuries is too bold and sweeping to merit serious thought, still that there is an atom of truth in the criticism it will be difficult to deny. Much the same thing has been said by most devout and scholarly men in softer and more reverent language.

Still, after all, when everything is said and done, there yet remains an irrefutable and indisputable fact that in this book men and women have found and still find comfort and peace, satisfaction and inspiration that no other book could give them. Scholars, artists, musicians, poets, orators and simple folk find in its pages their inspiration and hope.

It was of course natural that the men who so loved the Lord should get together and build a system to propagate the message, that system being of human organisation must

* The age of Reason: Thomas Paine—Page 165

contain the errors common to them and their day. The fatal blunder, I humbly venture to think, is that anybody should ascribe to it divinity, as if God Himself spoke to them face to face and told them how the system should be constructed.

Our fear to alter the system is indicative of our own want of faith in God. What men of old with less knowledge had put together we can with equal justification revise and improve upon. Our systems may change, but God is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

God, when He thought it necessary and in the fulness of time, as we now say, sent down not a creed or a system, but a life. And Jesus did not write down a creed or build the present system of the Christians. Into this system men have built up men have imported a sense of sacredness and belief that it is only through it that man can be saved from eternal damnation. This religious system of faith includes in it strange doctrines, on which the Churches themselves are divided.

It has not taken into account any possible changes that science and later revelations through experience may necessitate; let me take an extreme case in point. In 1631 Father Inchofer said "The opinion of the earth's motion is of all the heresies the most abominable, the most pernicious, the most scandalous: the immovability of the earth is thrice sacred: argument against the immortality of the soul, the existence of God and the incarnation should be tolerated sooner than an argument to prove that the earth moves." This outburst against a proved fact of science had undoubtedly behind it popular assent. So was it when Galileo was condemned for heresy by a religious tribunal.

9 We have clothed our religion with feeling of deep reverence and awe and that is as it should be. For we cannot dare to come to an intelligent conscious communion with that Supreme Power we call God in any other way. But to attempt to attach the same feeling of reverence to mere forms and doctrines, beliefs, shrines, rituals, objects and places as holy and sacred is to forget that they are only means to an end. The attempt to stabilise the practice by the attribution to these material objects, of supernatural powers, is to further delay a clearer and saner knowledge of God.

“Religion like the instinct of Love,” says Renan “at times elevates the most vulgar man above himself to acts of sacrificial heroism and at other times becomes perverted and ferociously lustful.” Dr. Rudolf Otto, the popular German Protestant theologian attempts to analyse the complex nature of religious emotion when he says “It may burst in sudden eruption from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsion or lead to the strangest excitement, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demoniac forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. . . . and again it may develop into something pure and glorious.” We have known this strange behaviour of religious experience manifesting itself in most horrifying and brutal deeds, in persecutions and massacres, in Holy Wars like the Crusades, and the Inquisition. And also at revival meetings when intense feelings work themselves out in most strange and unaccountable manner.

Havelock Ellis states that “Religion like love, develops and harmonizes our rarest and most extravagant emotions. It exalts us above the common-place routine of our daily life, and it makes us supreme over the world. But like love also, it is a little ridiculous to those who are unable to experience it.”

Is there, I wonder, any mortal outside the cloister of a mental asylum or outside the class of the congenital idiots who cannot feel love or appreciate being loved? However, both religion and love seem to have two dangerous imposters always associating themselves with them. Religion seems to have a bastard walking beside it and sometimes pretending to represent it. It is Fanaticism; and Love, an equally dangerous companion in lust. The difference is very subtle and sometimes mistaken, but in reality they are poles asunder. The brilliance and the purity of the genuine article in its natural and native setting is unmistakable and shows up the baseness of the imitation-article in all its foulest aspects.

Marjorie Bowen in her book "Wrestling Jacob" gives an instance of men and women rolling on the ground shouting "I want to be saved, I want to be saved" under the influence of John Wesley's oratory. This religious hysteria—This exuberance of religious feeling is found in almost all forms of organised religions, fasting, torture, suicide, sati and rock 'n' roll. True religion is serene, sensible and patient, even when it reaches a state of mysticism it is reverential. Genuine intellectual certainty, belief or conviction is generally serene and does not break itself into unseemly behaviour.

In our moments of deep devout worship and fervent prayer we momentarily reach the realm of mysticism where God-in-man is one with man-in-God, "Partakers of the divine nature". When we thus plunge into the unplumbed depths of mysticism, our speculative religious insight is quickened and God, as it were, ceases to be an object and becomes an experience. Perhaps Eckhart tries to explain this occult religious significance in his own daring way when he says "the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye, one vision,

one recognition and one love". Eckhart, a distinguished son of the Church, seems to find a faint echo in Robert Flint, D.D., L.D.D., Professor of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, who defines mysticism as a "phase of thought, or rather perhaps of feeling, which from its very nature is hardly susceptible of exact definition. It appears in connexion with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest."

This aspect of mysticism in religion is apt to be forgotten when we attempt to rationalise religion, nor, I am constrained to believe, is the fact sufficiently realised at our Sunday Services in the Protestant Churches, the silence we observe there is born out a sense of civility and good manners rather than a stillness implied in God's command: "Be still and know that I am God", that mystic anticipation of the spirit of God to draw us towards Him to the absolute forgetting of everything else completely dead to self and the world. This is a facet of religion—the spiritual relation of man with God. This practice, this experience will form a strong foundation, a background which will colour our ethical, moral and social behaviour. It is the reservoir from which spiritual inspiration is drawn and our faith fortified. As Christians we cannot too often seek this mystic union with the Being of beings.

God is a spirit and those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit. It is implicit in most of our great hymns and in the mutual worship and fellowship in the Sanctuary of the Lord. It is essentially a religious motive. However, there is also a danger if the practice is carried to a rigid intensity or to an excess of religious fervour when it tends to be of little value in the worship of God and makes a votary of its art an ascetic, or a fanatic.

Coming to more civilised and cultured communities we still find traces of foolish practices reminiscent of primitive fear and superstition. It is, I venture to say, a waste of time to join issue in respect of the various and conflicting theological interpretations that the different Church groups have placed on doctrine or ritual or dogma. Debate on these will only make confusion worse confounded. The average man, I venture to think, does not care "two hoots" about all this intricate, metaphysical, mystical, conjectural and speculative theology, nor does he care for totalitarian dogmatism like Limited Atonement. He pleads, show us the Christ, He who fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the sorrowing and lived and moved and had His being among the poor, the down-trodden and the outcast. "Give me that Jesus", he implores, but the Churches are far too busy to hear his cry. They are too busy at conferences, synods and other learned world Councils, at Lambeth, Amsterdam, Oslo, Delhi, Tambaram and elsewhere discussing some knotty point of doctrine or dogma or ritual that never as yet changed a character or caused a conversion.

This man has a theory to propound; another reads a most learned dissertation on some abstruse subject while the people soul hungry for spiritual sustenance languish. They yearn and cry for Christian love and practical sympathy in their almost hopeless struggle against economic and social disabilities, but the hierarchy are too busy discussing how to save their souls. It is not to be wondered if a matter-of-fact non-Christian should ask how it is that there does not appear to be any visible and tangible sign of God's interference, intervention and guidance to cleanse His own revealed religion from impurities such as those which arrest its normal growth. The Church can always show instances of divine intervention and cite Luther, Wesley, Wycliffe and a host of others in

almost every age. The non-Christian questioner is perhaps not satisfied with such spasmodic and sporadic phenomena. He would like to see Christianity transcending all other religions, because of its avowed claim of God-intention and God-revelation, unimpeded in the triumphant course of its divine purpose. The Christian believes that "His purposes will ripen fast unfolding every hour," and that:

*"Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."*

Cowper's thought is undoubtedly a comfort to the Christian taught and trained in the tenets of Christianity, but the non-Christian does not see the hourly unfolding of His purposes through the Churches when particularly the Churches quarrel and fight among themselves and are so defective in other ways as well. "See", says the non-Christian, "how your Churches are becoming emptier and emptier, the dearth of candidates to the ministry, and dearth within dearth of the right quality of candidates. These facts are borne out by your own Commissions and in all these we do not see the ripening of His plans." "Man", says the Christian, "who are we to judge God's plan and purposes." "Just so, I there agree," says the non-Christian, "but to me this Christian message is clear in what Jesus Himself said in the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, where the Master unmistakably declares that our salvation or future happiness depends on our good deeds and loving kindness to our fellow men. It is a solemn declaration of the criterion of judgment when He comes to judge the quick and the dead." "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered and ye gave

me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me."

"Then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee? or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick or in prison and came unto Thee?" And the King shall answer and say unto them, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

If we believe this as divinely pronounced, we could scarcely hope to get out of the truth that Christian socialism as expressed in direct service of love helpfulness and benevolence is the criterion of our salvation or future happiness.

But then there comes the other orthodox aspects of salvation, such as that of saving faith, belief in Virgin birth, the Resurrection, Atonement, which the established official Church seems to deem a sine qua non for salvation. We are also told that salvation cannot be earned, gained, merited, bought or won, that it is a gift given by God to whomsoever He likes and that this is the Christian doctrine. These factors set a series of questions and opinions on foot without ever reaching an agreed finality, till perhaps the second coming of Christ, for which the world has been waiting for the last 2000 years.

On these factors too Christianity is split into different camps whose ideologies run perilously near open hostility. In the past these have led to bloody wars and persecutions. On the questions of the Bible story of the creation in six successive days there have been and there always will be vast

volumes of scientific philosophic, theological and lay opinions, assertions and conjectures. So also in respect of every doctrine and dogma. What appears to some as palpably allegoric or legendary are fiercely contested by others as literally true. There perhaps can never be unanimity, but our divergence and disappointments must not be such as to give the non-Christians the impression that our religion is based on mere quicksand and quagmire. Let all these debatable doubtful doctrines, the playground of theologians, philosophers, critics, scientists and the priesthood be wrapped up in Hebrew, Greek or Latin and put away in the dusty archives of ecclesiastical libraries for priests to tear each others beards as a week-end relaxation, and let Christ as we find Him in the Gospels and in our personal spiritual experience, as a bright living reality be preached by life and not merely by words and other devices. It is practical religion and not theoretical that wins souls for Christ. This, however the organised official Church, is most loath to do, perhaps through a furtive fear of unemployment in the ranks of the paid officers, who are now legion. I wonder if there is any religion which has such an army of paid Officers. The section which boasts of purely sacrificial service is provided every physical comfort in food, clothing and shelter, except marriage, which vow some at least find convenient or pleasant to violate in secret. Some also there are, who voluntarily forsake the world and all to serve the Master. Here too we find quite a few who take to this form of life because of some disappointment or fanaticism. The following lines translated by D. G. Rossetti from the beautiful ballad of that famous vagabond poet of France, Francois Villon, give a reason for some to enter the Church:—

*“Where’s Heloise, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abelard I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on,
From love he won such dule and teen.”*

(Villon is not entirely right for Abelard was a cleric before he met Heloise) We even now find many a man taking to Holy Orders for a living and proving satisfactory as a preacher in the scheme of the Church; and also some who enter it because of a sincere religious impulse, who we say, are called of God, but who subsequently prove a failure because of their own inefficiency or because they are found unworthy owing to some moral lapse, or theological difference of opinion, or leave the Church because they feel that they would in some other walk of life serve their Master better. I have in mind a young Minister of my own Church, a Graduate who has now joined the Government Service. He frankly told me that he believed he was now serving the cause of Christ better than being in our ministry. It is at the same time beyond question that the Church with all its defects gave the world a wealth of spiritual and moral values which none but the purblind will attempt to deny, and but for which the world will be all the poorer. In music, art, poetry, song and literature, the Church has most assuredly enriched the world and brought man to a closer understanding of God. In Jesus Christ, to the end of time, men will see a model of all that is best in the human race. If this model is faithfully copied by all, peace on earth and goodwill among men will be an accomplished fact. This consummation can be best achieved only if those engaged in the service of His mission live up to the model of Jesus and do not try merely to fortify themselves with a thousand "gadgets" that only conceal their own multitude of weaknesses and shortcomings, imposing upon the unwary and unthinking their little designs and views as the will of God.

10 I often think that flights of poetic imagination come closer to the truth than all the logic of theological argument and ecclesiastical scholarship can ever hope to. To me

Tennyson puts all theology and experience into a nutshell in one beautiful verse when he says:—

*“Strong son of God, immortal love
Whom we that have not seen thy face,
By faith and faith alone ~~can~~ embrace
Believing where we cannot prove.*

It appears to me useless to enter into an endless argument about our most sacred experiences. They are beyond debate and cold calculation. You ask me why or if I believe in the Incarnation, Virgin Conception, Resurrection, Ascension, Trinity, Immortality, Atonement and Justification by faith. I think I can enter into a long and protracted discussion without ever satisfying my questioner or myself. Debate on any abstruse subject has attraction if one has read sufficiently on the points discussed. The world has been discussing these for 20 centuries; but with what satisfaction or finality? The Rationalist Press pours out regularly learned and logical criticisms; our theologians stand up and meet them as best as they can. An unbiassed judge if there be such an one, calmly declares “There’s much to be said on both sides”. But how do these things effect the humble villager in my little village of Secduwa who devoutly worships in the village chapel his ancestors worshipped in? He only knows that God is good and that Jesus is the friend of the poor, and they are all poor and want Him. It is His personality that draws them to worship, He is their Creed. What do they know of the Athanasian, the Nicene or the Apostles’ Creeds, the 39 articles of the Church of England? Nor is it a matter of any importance to them as to how these came into being, what sort of people they were who created or collected them. The simple villager of my old village is indeed typical, I think of at least 90% of professing Christians. Let,

therefore, the organised Church make itself a moral and spiritual force based on the sweet, kindly and winsome personality of Jesus.

Mr. Stace, once my chief in the Municipal Council, in his "Buddhism and Western Thought" asks "Why do men continue to believe in Christian faith in spite of the fact that its dogmas would scarcely be credible to a child of ten, if actuated solely by philosophical reason? This is a mystery to the Ingersolls and Tom Paines. They cannot understand it. But the reason is quite simple. Men can believe in Christianity when they keep their eyes fixed on the personality of Jesus. Consider the deity of Christ, philosophically it is unthinkable, unless taken in an allegorical meaning. As a scientific theory it can scarcely deceive even a Bishop."

Stace is one of the 10% who really take the trouble to study the religious beliefs one is asked to accept. Stace in a few well chosen words points when Jesus was superseded by the Church. Says Stace, "But the abstract theory of Christianity, that is to say, its theology, was totally absent from the teaching of Jesus, and had to be supplied by such relatively inferior men as the Apostle Paul. Jesus the prophet and poet, poured forth in molten and visionary language, the truths of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man." All the subsequent paraphernalia of orthodoxy, the dogmas, doctrines, rituals, church systems and official personnel were merely the inventions of Paul and others. Let me quote Stace again. "After Paul had done his work, it became choked with incredible dogmas, weighed down with an impossible, prosaic and self-contradictory theology, with its priests and confessors. The Christian Church has become a parasitical growth on civilisation, a sort of poisonous fungus which chokes freedom and sucks vitality: The poetry of

Christianity was turned by Paul into prose, its flowers into dust, so that while Buddhism lasts, Christianity is no longer extant. It died nearly 2000 years ago. In its place we have had Paulianity ever since."

Anders Nygren, Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Lund, Sweden, seems to say the same thing but in a different way. Dr. Nygren states on page 76 of his book "Agape and Eros" as follows:—

"However much Paul may have regarded himself as simply the apostle and servant of Christ, his actual work was not the continuation of the work of Jesus, but rather a completely new beginning; he is therefore given the title of 'Second Founder of Christianity'! It was due chiefly to him that Christianity branched off on a new line, and became something quite different from anything that its 'First Founder' even contemplated, and it is the teaching of Paul rather than that of Jesus which has its mark on the faith of the Church."

Joad pleads, as do many other thinkers, that orthodoxy and all that it stands for may be kept well in the background in Christian service and Jesus and all He stood for may be preached. Let us by all means keep our Churches as sacred places of common fellowship and worship, as a means of keeping the flock in love and harmony, which I am constrained to believe the Churches have not altogether been successful in achieving. Let us not, as we now do, make the Church the be-all and end-all of the Christian religion. If the Church is in the way of giving Jesus to the world, then I say it must go.

Weatherhead is impatient with the general run of Christians. He says, "Christ was crucified by religious people who do it again now even while they bow before His cross. And many who consider themselves religious have got this

spurious substitute a smug complacent, conventional sham in which they hide from which they are hard to drive out, and in the enjoyment of which they hate to be disturbed. It is this insincere cruel, hypocritical, counterfeit thing made of easy compromise that makes religious people the best hated in the world by the jolly pagan. Let them realise that it is not religion but a bastard substitute, not a tonic but a drug, an anaesthetic, a species of dope, a subtle means of hiding from God used by many who are supposed to have found Him." (Page 93. How can I find God?)

F. Earnest Johnson says very much the same thing in his "Social Gospel Re-Examined" (page 43). He says "Christianity has one central truth, one abiding contribution to make to the religious life of the world, and only one. That contribution is Jesus Christ Himself, the Gospel is Jesus Christ. He is prior to all theologizing and vaster than all creeds. The validity of Christianity is precisely the validity of what is revealed in His life and in His teaching. All through Christian history the authority of the creeds has given way before the testimony of men and women who have awakened by the contact with that revealing personality and have declared one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

I am constrained to believe that the orthodox Christian is driven to seek refuge in the orthodox view and that the truths he holds are revealed not by any personal contact with the Lord, but as a mental acceptance without deep conviction. Johnson further says, "The cleavage between liberal and orthodox Christianity lies just here...the liberal has demanded to know the criteria of revelation. How does it happen that something is revealed to one person, or one sect, and not to another? To whom and under what circumstances

'the Word' come? The inability on the part of the orthodox theologians to give convincing answers to these questions repels liberal minds, and the result is that the very word 'revelation' is suspect among large numbers of Protestants."

If, as it is admitted, Jesus is 'our all in all', 'The Alpha and Omega', 'Jesus the first and the last', 'the be-all and end-all of Christianity', 'the Saviour of mankind', and 'Our Redeemer', why then these dubious and conflicting opinions expressed in the varying theologies?

Before we attempt to establish a speculative philosophical hypothesis as a fundamental rock-bottom truth of Christianity, let us examine the very preaching of Our Lord as we find it in the Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke do not seem to have heard anything about so important a declaration as that declared by John who stated, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." J. Arthur Findlay in his 'Rock of Truth' says, "The Gospel of St. John was written not earlier than the second century at a time when a certain section of the Church believed that beliefs were necessary for salvation." Christ's teaching seems to centre almost entirely on social, moral and ethical conduct and behaviour and belief in the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man but He never as far as my knowledge goes, made salvation conditional solely on the beliefs embodied in the Christian Creeds, "The enduring truth of Christianity," Johnson further states, "is in the intrinsic authority of the personality of Jesus. The combined testimony of men to the validity of that personal "Revelation" is more significant than anything that theologians have ever said about Him. The Christian Church has had through the centuries, and will continue to have just as much authority as the personality

of its Founder has upon those who expose themselves to the influence of His life. The Christian message is Jesus Christ." (The Social Gospel Re-Examined by F. Ernest Johnson, page 48) This simple truth seems, I am afraid, to be forgotten amidst a thousand theological views.

If our salvation is solely dependent on our beliefs on Virgin Birth, Resurrection, Ascension would not Jesus have emphasised this?

CHAPTER III.

PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

11 Will the Protestant Churches survive another 50 years in Ceylon? If the observation made by Prof. Harold Laski in his Faith, Reason and Civilisation that 2000 years of Christian history suggest that religious creeds are subdued to nationalism and even to political opinion rather than that they possess the power to transcend them," is based on fact, it is necessary that the Christian Churches should take serious notice of it. It is indeed a fact too obvious for honest rebuttal, that our churches particularly in the West, are becoming emptier year by year; a fact openly deplored by high Church dignitaries and testified to by Commissions. If then, it is an admitted fact that Protestant Christianity is on the decline, we who are still loyal to our various Denominations, must perforce face it frankly and fearlessly and try to find out, as far as we are able, the cause or causes that have led to this decline. The main causes, as far as my humble observations go, are not many. A few I have ventured to identify in the pages of this book. If politics and nationalisms give a colouring to our ways of living and thinking, different from and stronger than what religion enjoins, it is only because the tenets of religion are observed lackadaisically or with indifference. In a country where there is only one religion, or a religion vastly predominant, the laws of that country would naturally tend to uphold and maintain the way of life which that religion propounds. Even so, it cannot long hold on if it does not modify or change its doctrine to meet the changing tide of events and circumstances which science and modern knowledge and philosophy create. In such a conflict the antiquated ideas and beliefs of religion are bound to suffer unless as Dr. E. W. Barnes of Birmingham says it sheds its old garments.

Renan says, "If ever the worship of Jesus loses its hold on mankind, it will be precisely on account of those acts which originally inspired belief in Him. Times have changed and we no longer need miraculous stories to support our acceptance of Our Lord's divine mission." Almost the same thing is said by Weigall when he says "I am convinced that concentration upon the historic figure of Our Lord and upon His teaching can alone inspire in this twentieth century that fervent adherence and service which in former ages could be obtained from the average layman by the expounding of theological dogmas, the threat of hell, and the performance of elaborate rites and ceremonies." (The Paganism in Our Christianity—page 16).

For three hundred years after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth His faithful followers continued to follow His teaching in their own way and against what Philip Brooke says "the great accepted tendencies of things" (the world) Then almost unexpectedly the libertine Emperor Constantine declared himself to be a convert to Christianity, and made it a State Religion by the Edict of Milan. Thus Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Stanley Jones is not far wrong when he declares this incident as a conquest of Christianity by a pagan warrior. Since then Christianity has bristled with incredible doctrines and debatable dogmas, splitting itself into different schools of thought.

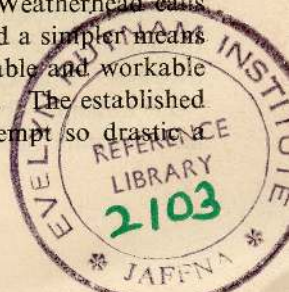
These divergences and differences of theological views soon created mutual distrust, hostility, intolerance, the Inquisition, torture and murder. One really wonders how a divinely revealed religion based on supreme love, peace and good-will can ever manifest such hatred and antagonism

towards another of the same faith. And although at the present time much of this diabolic animosity has largely disappeared, yet when a move is made for a reunion there rises up strong opposition.

Denominational division is so deep rooted that even a threat to their very existence does not seem to bring them together. There is a strong element in every Denomination which opposes a union. Most inconsequential details of interpretations of dogma and doctrine are trotted out, making mountains of molehills. I can only see in all this the absence of the spirit of Christ. Any Church which has not in the fore-front love, tolerance, forbearance and goodwill, is bound to be embroiled in these trivialities. Sir Stafford Cripps says "to appreciate the meaning of what He taught we do not need to be any more skilled in theology than were the simple folk whom Jesus chose as His disciples." Here Cripps puts in a nutshell the real reason for the decline of the power of the Churches.

We have been too long cut adrift from the simple ways of the Master and find ourselves bereft of power to lead the masses who no longer look up to the Church for moral and spiritual guidance.

I am not advocating a wholesale transplantation of the modern Church to the exact manner of life of the early disciples of Jesus. The world has changed considerably since then, but I think it is not impossible to imitate their simplicity, trust and intensity of purpose unencumbered by rigid dogmas and doctrines and "theological jargon" as Weatherhead calls it. It is not beyond our imagination to find a simpler means of propagating the Gospel in channels suitable and workable in its application to the present restless age. The established Church seems to be too frightened to attempt so drastic a



change because, perhaps, as Cripps again says "it will create a demand for far reaching social and economic changes whicy may undermine its own financial and organisational stability. (page 12—"Towards Christian Democracy".) But an almost complete change is palpably indicated.

The Buddhists are now planning to bring about uniformity. The Publications Committee of the World Fellowship of Buddhists has already undertaken to compile an anthology of their Scripture as a new standard text. Buddhism is a much older religion than Christianity, and still they find it necessary to recast and to produce an orthodoxy acceptable to all.

What our theologians of a past period formulated according to their light, knowledge and needs, may with equal justification be recast today according to our present day needs, experience and psychology. What exact shape it should take I cannot with my very limited spiritual grace and insight visualise; that our best men and women both among the ordained and the lay can find a solution, I have no doubt. The Christian message, as I understand it, is Jesus Christ. If this simple truth is fully recognised, the social and ethical character of the Christian religion will self-assert. Jesus' way of life makes a profound effect on the whole order of human values and relationships. That the Church is quite aware of her present precarious position is evident from more than one fact. But why she refuses to act frankly and fearlessly is not understandable.

The Protestant Churches are fully aware of the danger threatening their very existence and are now trying to come together. The Ceylon Churchman of January 1950 states "Our unhappy divisions have now reached a stage where they have become the greatest menace to the future of the Chris-

tian faith. While the Church has been burying its head in the sand the world has undergone in the past century the most far reaching and fundamental changes in its history. Some of these changes have made the unity of the Church a decisive condition of its survival." Here is a frank confession of failure due to "our unhappy divisions" and complacency.

The suggested remedy is the proposed Church Union. I am not so sure that if and when Denominations come together as one Church in Christ, the decline will be arrested. There seems to be something deeper than mere division of theological opinion that seems to gnaw at the root of Christianity. Time and more enlightened knowledge seem to expose its traditional beliefs as no longer tenable. This is frankly admitted by most devout Christian scholars. It is this aspect more than a desire for a reunion of Churches that should engage the most anxious thought of those good souls who now earnestly work to find a formula for reunion. A reunion will, I feel, naturally result if all the doubtful and debatable matter is removed from orthodoxy. The very severe opposition to a reunion indicates to my mind the greater need to review the entire set of our Creeds, Doctrines and Dogmas.

One could scarcely believe that in this age of culture and civilisation the Christian hierarchy should make bold to so audaciously pronounce, declare and define a dogma so obviously unbelievable as the bodily ascension of Mary the mother of Jesus, for which the Bible does not seem to contain an iota of evidence. But when even such a declaration is made it is believed by the millions of Catholics only because of their belief in the infallibility of the Pontiff of the Church. They do not want reason, evidence or proof, they simply

must and will believe. Weird fantastic and ludicrous explanations are given trying to justify all these incredible and preposterous happenings.

The Presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Church in Ceylon has raised a hornets nest in the declaration of their peculiar doctrine of Limited Atonement. A strong section of their theologians have formed themselves into a sort of religious Limited Liability Company expelling those who refuse to subscribe to their views. The following queer doggerel was given me by a Presbyterian friend and I insert it here for the amusement of many although it may give offence to the local Calvinists. Here it is:—

*“We are God’s selected few,
The rest of you be damned,
There’s enough room in Hell for you,
So, why should Heaven be crammed?”*

Thus another split has been created in the ranks of the followers of Christ in Ceylon. The saddest part of it all is the amount of bitterness and hostility this difference of opinion has engendered in the hearts of these servants of God.

It is this sort of dogma and behaviour that bring discredit to Christianity and make it the laughing stock of all thinking people.

Some cunningly manoeuvre miracles, visions and apparitions or carry through public streets, with all ceremonial solemnity, some man-made image of plaster of Paris, ascribing to it divine qualities, power of healing and forgiving; or organise pilgrimages to objects and places supposed to be holy, sacred and miraculous. All these to my mind, when torn out of their immediate environment and detached from pure fanaticism or deception appear in their stark and naked reality as devices to impress the ignorant religious mind.

Almost every form of religion from the most primitive to modern times has its own alleged sacred and holy wonder working objects and places:—Mecca, Jerusalem, Lourdes, Kailas, Kataragama, Sri Pada etc: etc: Most religions have also prophesied the advent of a world teacher. The Christian world has been expecting the second coming of Jesus for nearly 2000 years, the British Israelites even give dates; the Zoroastrians expect their Soshos; the Hindus the last Divine manifestations; the Kalki, Avatar.

In some of the practices and customs it is not easy for an honest observer to divest his mind of the impression that they are insidious attempts at revenue earning.

In the sixteenth century when the Roman Catholic Church made money by the sale of Indulgences, and when the immorality of the Priests of God began to assume scandalous proportions, Luther broke the barriers to free thought in religion and declared that each individual was directly responsible to God for his life and actions, and not to the Priests. Sydney Klein in his "The Way of Attainment" says "The Church received from the dying vast sums of money in exchange for a pretended absolution of their sins and a free pass to heaven." Pope Leo X, in order to build the great Church called St. Peter's Dome raised money by selling Indulgences. This method of raising money reached fantastic proportions when even private tradesmen were given commissions for selling them at the rate of thirty three and one third per cent." (page 224—How the Great Religions Began—Joseph Gaer).

Quite apparent chicanery is so deep rooted in organised religion that it would appear as if nothing could remove it from its orthodoxy except, perhaps, Communism which aims at abolishing all religious systems root and branch. That remedy may be much worse than the disease.

Surely, it is time, that a God of Love who cares for His children, should manifest Himself in some way that can be understood by man; in a way that would leave no room for doubt whatsoever as to His authenticity, which may appear to us as mysterious and beyond our wildest dreams, and cause a movement that may give the world that is floundering, evidence of Divine intervention and intention and direction.

Instances of such phenomena have occurred in the past—the Evangelical Revival Movement of Wesley that caused a social, moral and spiritual revolution, and the movement led by John Tauler, Friends of God, and the Franciscan Movement. But it seems an action unakin to wisdom to wait for such things to happen whilst the Churches do nothing to expedite or anticipate.

Whether such extraordinary, super-normal, or humanly inexplicable occurrences happen or not, the Church at all times must show evidence of its faith by the quality of life manifested by its adherents, a quality the excellence of which must mark a vivid and unmistakable distinction to the rest of the world. Thank God we always had and still have such men and women both in the ranks of the clergy and among the laity, but alas, they are few, very few, far too few.

12 I am not quite sure that an all powerful and benign Being will be offended if one honestly doubts and humbly questions the validity of the alleged truth of certain doctrines and dogmas supposed to have been originated or inspired by Him.

The fear that if we now tamper with traditional beliefs we might lose our belief in everything is singularly narrow minded. Truth is truth. That religions have misunderstood

it for centuries and have taken the false for the true does not make truth the less true. In our search after truth we may find it necessary to discard much of what our forefathers held to be true.

Of course there is always fierce opposition to the slightest attempt at deviation from ancient traditional beliefs, This, I believe, is one reason why certain religions are not progressing while the world marches on.

The more a community is ignorant, uneducated and uncivilised, the greater is the sense of dependence and abject fear. When such people are educated and civilised and come to see the reason for things they desist from their earlier weaknesses and begin to take a more sober and reasonable view of life and the objects and phenomena round about them. Their approach to supernatural deity is then a little different and more reasonable. They no longer want to sacrifice pretty girls to avert or abate the wrath of the gods who send down floods, droughts and epidemics.

Readers will remember the incident mentioned by Sir Arthur Newshome, K.C.B., M.D., in his "Health Problems in Organised Society" (page 3,) when a Scotch deputation waited on Lord Palmerston, Prime Minister of England, and urged upon him to arrange for a national day of fasting and prayer to avert the spread of cholera and the practical advice of the Prime Minister who advised the deputation to go home and organise to remove all the accumulations of filth and take all necessary sanitary steps. This was in the middle of the 19th century. The masses of mankind, however, still remain mostly ignorant, therefore superstitious. Organised religions without attempting to dispel these handicaps seem to foster and exploit them. Everything hoary with age and hallowed by tradition may not be true although it is upheld by men for a livelihood.

When Bismark was Ambassador at the Court of Alexander II. in the sixties of the last century, he, one day, looked out of the Peteroff Palace and saw a man in the middle of the lawn on duty. He asked the Czar what the man was doing at such an odd place. The Czar in turn turned round and asked his Aide de Camp who also did not know; the Officer Commanding the Troops was sent for, he too did not know beyond the fact that it was an ancient custom. "But what is the origin of this ancient custom?" inquired the German thinker. The Officer Commanding did not know and was ordered to find out and report. Three days later the Officer Commanding appeared before the Czar and reported that eighty years ago when Catherine the Great was walking on the lawn she noticed the first flower of spring thrusting its head above the ground and ordered a man to be placed there lest someone should pluck it out. That was in 1780 but still in 1860 a soldier regularly stood there guarding, nobody knew what. An ancient custom! a memorial to a little flower! and a pointer that everything ancient and traditional may not be worth observing.

Many ancient customs, traditions and religious beliefs are built on legend. Caesar surely knew he was not the son of Venus, and Hirohito must know that he is only human and not the son of Heaven, in spite of the fact that Japanese Constitution stipulates that the Emperor is "Heaven descended, inviolate, divine and sacred," whose Imperial Rescripts are treated as "the Voice of God."

France might have been different had she not, for a thousand years, believed in the Holy Ampula of Reims, which vase the rioters of the Revolution smashed into bits without any evil reaction on the perpetrators or others, proving that it was all a hoax practised on a credulous public. There are many instances of this nature mentioned in history. Animals

speaking some human tongue, suspension of natural laws at the bidding of man, supernatural cures (which may easily have a perfectly natural explanation), queer ceremonies, burnt offerings and sacrifice of beautiful maidens. At the height of Maya Culture in Yucatan, it was a part of religious ceremony that a host of individuals should be slaughtered annually to appease the wrath of the gods and ward off evil and disaster.

Till quite recent times in our country, Sri Lanka, beautiful girls were sacrificed to the gods. The last of such silly and barbarous acts was frustrated by a young Kandyan named P. B. Dunuville, who stole at night to the stake, upon a lonely mountain side, (Bahira Kanda), to which his sweetheart Welika Menika was fastened as an offering to the gods, and released and rescued her. This it is said was the last time such a foolish practice was permitted. All honour to young Dunuville! The only culprit in such beliefs says Renan is "humanity willing to be deceived."

The more ignorant a community is, the more readily it will gulp down the most absurd and incredible stories. Strangely however, we still find evidence of this fact even in the most cultured religious systems of our day. And Oh! for the rarity of courageous men who would dare to run the gauntlet not counting the cost. These few are marked as rebels and heretics and are in ill-odour with the rest. Doctor Soper of Tower Hill fame declares that he does not believe the story of the Virgin Birth. The point is there are many other good Christians who also do not, but would not admit it, and repeat the Creed, "I believe....." and so on, thus adding to their own lives an element of unthinking, insincerity, which to the non-Christian is rank hypocrisy.

Dr. Soper who declared this view in Colombo, is now elected as the President of the Methodist Church by the vote of the Conference and whether it was unanimous or not I do not know. This fact shows that the Conference either agrees with his views or finds no serious objections to his declared opinion on the Virgin Birth. But if Conference agrees with Dr. Soper it is strange that the Creed is not modified or amended in terms of such a declaration by the Head of the Church.

13 What the purpose is of God for this planet or for His creation, or for Homo Sapiens, prophets, poets, philosophers, seers, scientists and theologians can only dimly divine. None can with any adegree of certitude say it is this or that. Man's knowledge in this planet is finite, although an arahath or a yogi may claim superhuman powers. We say God the Incomprehensible, still man from the dawn of his intelligence has been persistently trying to comprehend Him, that varied effort is his religion. It varied according to circumstances, place, period and intelligence. Crude carvings on the rocks and trees are his first essay at theology. With the advance of the race his early religious views also changed. Our present trouble is that we now think we know all we ought to know or all there is to know of God. Our bold cock-sureness is our own undoing. There are many things in this world that man has not yet dared to discover.

Every discovery of man is perhaps just a step nearer knowing God. The Deist like Thomas Paine sees Him in nature, His creation, wonderful awe-inspiring and majestic. But W. T. Stace, our quondam Mayor, says that Nature is changeable, unreasonable and capricious. Others see Him in the light of reason, in moral law and order. He was to some a tribal God—God of War, Lord of Hosts, Mighty

in battle and revengeful; "Vengeance is mine" saith the Lord, and "I will repay." But to us of this age, He is Father God, God of Love and Compassion, from whose presence in Spirit we can always draw succour, peace and comfort. Sometimes we are inclined to think that life, all life is a blind force, moving irresistibly forward towards what we have not yet discovered, and perhaps can never discover. Life, a force, an urge, plunging rolling through countless aeons rocks, seas, fauna, flora, all created and living beings in land, sea and air, including the much boasting Homo Sapiens who claims to be created in the image of the Creator, God Almighty, all move ceaselessly and relentlessly towards some purpose but what that purpose is only God knows. "The one far off divine event ^{to} in which the whole creation moves."—or is it INTENT? Man perhaps can guess, only speculate and keep on guessing till "we pass and reach that other where we see as we are seen". Who knows but that we first get a glimpse of that purpose the hour we look on death. Even this is only speculation for who can prove to us satisfactorily, Science cannot, Immortality? Who can prove what is absolutely beyond the limits of human conception? A supposed state, of some sort of life outside time and space, which, we in these finite limits, can never comprehend. Is there on the other hand a universal desire for or belief in immortality? There are many who say "but why do I want another life"? Dr. F. C. Schiller of Oxford suggested to the Psychical Research Society to make an inquiry regarding man's desire for survival. Of the 10,000 people to whom the Society addressed a questionnaire only 3000 replied, sixty percent of whom simply did not care, as perhaps the 7000 who did not care to answer. The analysis indicated indifference. If we today try a similar plebiscite I wonder what the general concensus of opinion will be.

Arnold J. Toynbee, in his monumental, "A Study of History" as abridged by D. S. Somerville, Volume 1 to 4, says, "Many individuals who have had reasonably successful and happy lives have declared with conviction that they would not live them over again, and is history at large more worthy of an 'encore' than the average biography"?

14 I have not willed to be here. I was born a most helpless creature. I was not responsible for being born. I am thrust into a world circumscribed by various limitations. My life itself is limited to a bare three score years and ten and perhaps a little more—even this is not guaranteed. Disease, disaster, danger and death encompass me all the days of my life: even our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts, I have to regulate my life according to customs, traditions, rules and laws, caste, colour of my skin, language and religion of the community to which I happen to be born—and often torn by passions, emotions, impulses of fear and lust and the vices these entail, and with alternating hopes and love and worship, with all the virtues these entail, a mere plaything of capricious Nature or Force of Circumstance, a child of destiny, going whither I know not, to be reborn into a bird, beast or insect, or to the Judgment Seat of God, to eternal bliss or everlasting hell fire, or to just fade away into mere nothingness. If life after death be a continuation of this earthly life, why should I desire it? There does not seem to be much sense why a change of location is necessary. If on the other hand it is going to be completely new life without any feelings, emotions and passions of my present life, sexless, what sort of life could it be? Will I, who had not desired or willed this life, be given a chance to choose a new form of life, or must I only accept that other life, or will that life be fashioned by the manner of life I have spent here? If that were so it should not be too difficult to assess the merits and

demerits, the worthiness or unworthiness of my full three score years and ten here. But what about those who died at birth, in infancy, in early childhood, in the prime of life? Life is a mystery full of woes with alternating glimpses of joy and happiness. Yet in this context of gloomy and despondent philosophy of our earthly life, there lies also the glorious truth of great achievement—man's life may be short, fleeting and disturbed. Yet in that space of time what wonderful things can He not achieve. He can fly through the air with an amazing velocity; he can hear his brother speak thousands of miles away and what is more he can also see him. He can do many more amazing things which his forefathers would never have dreamt possible. Why then fret about the lot of man? In short he can find his Heaven here if he so wants.

Man in his primitive state believed and still believes that there is a life after death, though he is not sure as to its nature. But whatever ideas he may hold about that life the belief that we are all children of God is helpful and hopeful. If this belief is honestly and genuinely held it cannot but produce good results here on earth and if there is to be a next it certainly cannot be worse. This human adventure in grouped effort in the field of religion is a common desire to make men conscious of their duty towards a better life. In the pursuit of this goal each form of religion has employed various methods and doctrines which contain thoughts of fear for wrong doing and rewards for right-living. Success is assured in the degree that each group is able to inculcate belief in the dogma and doctrine each one promulgates, and in the degree such beliefs grow into faith, but whether there is absolute reality behind each belief is not, and perhaps, cannot be definitely proved beyond reasonable doubt.

15 Thoughtful men at various periods of time have propounded theories regarding life after death, these theories are at best merely human conjectures, philosophic views which do not lend themselves to any scientific examination. Some of these appeal to some minds and others to other minds.

Without any religious bias attached to Pantheism it would seem to be attractive and even a reasonable theory and perhaps not an unlikely thing to happen after death, Pan...all, Theos...God. The doctrine that the universe is God. To put it in another way, it is a system of theology which claims that the universe is the Supreme God. God is all and all is God, there is nothing in the universe without God, God is not independent of or distinct from the universe. That the individual soul is immortal only because it is a part of the Immortal God and at the death of the body the soul is reabsorbed into God and as far as human reason or imagination can conceive there it rests or ends, like a river that ends itself in the great ocean. If this theory is true as Spinoza and his followers think, it then denies what the Christian theologians have promulgated regarding the personality of God, that God takes a personal and special interest in each individual person as distinct from His other creatures. This thought is not far removed from what the Church teaches as the Immanence of God. That God is in everything and present everywhere. In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts XVII—28). "Raise the stone and there shalt thou find me, cleave the wood and there am I." This idea seems to have a family resemblance to the Philosophy of the Absolute, which enunciates God as the Absolute Being, Absolute Force, Absolute Life, Absolute Spirit, and Absolute Good. Please read the article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica by the Revd. Robert, D.D., L.L.D., Professor of Divinity of Edinburgh (Theism page

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247). These thoughts seem to be a short cut from the Buddhist Philosophy which says that life goes on and on through myriads of births and rebirths in various forms of existence till finally it reaches Nibbana.—complete cessation, end of everything, “Perfect Silence.” Nihilism. What a consummation to look forward to!

Cardinal Newman’s thoughts expressed in his Dream of Gerontius and the vision of St. John the Divine are so beautiful that we can almost believe them to be true.

I like to quote the beautiful lines of Newman:—

Soul

—*Dear Angel say*

*Why have I now no fear at meeting Him?
Along my earthly life, the thought of death
And Judgement was to me most terrible.
I had it aye before me and I saw
The Judge severe e’en in the crucifix.
Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;
And at the balance of my destiny,
Now close upon me, I can forward look
With a serenest joy.*

Angel

*Thou art not let; but with extremest speed
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge;
For scarcely art thou disembodied yet.
Divide a moment, as men measure time,
Into its million-million-millionth part,
Yet even less than that the interval
Since thou didst leave the body; and the priest
Cried “Subvenite” and they fell to prayer;
Nay scarcely yet have they begun to pray.*

These beautiful thoughts of life after death in such exquisite verse, always attract me, but do not convince me, it seems to me as it must have appeared to Omar Khayyam, when he says:—

*Strange is it not? that the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.*

These many ideas, theories and doctrines formulated by the different persons are useful and necessary to guide and control the mass of men still groping in the darkness of ignorance, fear and superstition journeying through their pilgrimage here.

Amidst a sea of conflicting and bewildering theories and points of view I am afraid even to dare to doubt and also find it equally difficult to believe. Will, I fondly ask, a God of Love and Compassion, punish me, a poor humble and earnest seeker of the truth, for my honest doubts, or for my inability to believe blindly.

Life is a mystery, but death and after is a greater mystery. Life we know and experience, but of death which ends life here we know nothing except its reality. What happens to us after death is still a mystery in spite of the assurance given us of a better place in Heaven to the believers and Hell to the unbelievers by the Christian Church, or some other form of life in the process of our Karmic evolution in the Buddhist Philosophy. I love to quote the Persian Poet once more. He speaks of Heaven and Hell in the following lines:—

*I sent my Soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that after-life to spell;
And by and by my Soul returned
And said "I myself am Heaven and Hell."*

16 When I come to consider certain views expressed and ways of some of the most saintly preachers of the Christian Gospel, I am frankly disappointed. The Very Rev. William Raiph Inge, K.C.V.O., F.B.E., D.D., a great modern thinker says "I know as much about the after-life as you—nothing. I don't even know there is one—in the sense in which the Church teaches it. I have no vision of Heaven or a welcoming God. I do not know what I shall find, I must wait and see". A doubt similar to this is also revealed when Charles Wesley wrote to his brother John regarding the state of health of their father, "My mother," says he, "seems more cast down at the prospect of his—(Samuel Wesley, the Rector of Epworth) death than I thought that she could have been; and, what is more, he seems so too." (page 73—Wrestling Jacob.)

It would appear contrary to their beliefs and professions to regret or feel sad and uncertain at the moment of their leaving this earth when throughout their existence here they preached and believed of a better place after death. Of course there are many who die with this belief and hope and lively anticipation of a more glorious life above. Is this a mere delusion? And is death the end? Weatherhead, Cardinal Newman, Dante and others give us glimpses of that other life according to each one's imaginative speculation, the nearest to the truth that life does not end with death seems to be Spiritualism which seems to lend itself to scientific examination and investigation.

17 That serenity and joy which ought to manifest at the end in the sure and certain hope of Heaven, of being with God for evermore in eternal bliss do not seem always to mark the end of even some of our most saintly preachers and believers. No one of course would like to be separated forever from those we love so dearly here on earth. There is

the most natural human element of grief at parting, but if our hope of Heaven is a surety then will not that hope outweigh our earthly sorrow at parting for we also hope to meet in that heavenly abode all we love or have loved and lost awhile?

Some traditions are indeed very beautiful, even necessary, but all traditions are not so. When religious practices steeped in ancient customs are blindly adhered to despite their proven superstition and folly it indicates a weakness in organised religion. Religion to be useful to man must be practical and keep abreast of the advancing tide of knowledge and science and present day human needs. To be eternally wrapped up in the past is not progress.

The mystical traditions have some aspects of the mythical and legendary accretions which the yet undeveloped mind of man had conjured up, but which the religious mind of today still observe sanctimoniously. The apparently solemn rituals and ceremonies, processions and pilgrimages still occupy the thoughts of most men. In the observance of these they find satisfaction and they even believe that much good will somehow accrue to them. To secure this form of consolation and satisfaction or merit people go through great hardships and privations. The greater the hardships and privations the greater the merit. If someone tells these good folks that the same satisfaction and consolation could be got if they only live a virtuous and helpful life to themselves and their neighbour it availeth them nothing. They like the other traditional beliefs because those who make a living by upholding such traditional beliefs tell them so.

Is this a form of the blind leading the blind, or the cunning misleading the ignorant for a living? Ancient beliefs die very slowly, and that only when the irresistible march of

science comes into direct conflict with them. The Church yields when she can no longer hold on. Initiative for change comes almost always from without.

The time has come when the Protestant Communion all over the world must reconsider its long cherished views and forms or retrace its steps to the parent Church from which it broke away. The Catholic Church is the only factor that does not seem to change in a fast changing world. With all its obvious defects, alleged fraud, and most unreasonable unscientific theories it still goes on increasing its membership, acquiring property, and becoming more and more powerful as a political factor.

The fierce divisions in the ranks of the Christian religion and their bitter controversies suggest that they themselves deny and refute some of their own fundamental doctrines and no formula or basis for a common understanding has yet been found for 2000 years and there does not appear to be the slightest chance of ever finding a universally acceptable Christian form of worship or doctrine. There are hundreds of inconsequential details that can and must be thrust into the background without loss to the Christian Faith. If this cannot be done Joad's prediction, I am afraid, will come true—"The Churches," he writes, "will no doubt survive for many years, empty shells from which the life has departed. . . . ultimately, however, they will be cast aside to join the mammoth, the witch doctor and the alchemist upon the scrap heap of history's discarded experiments." (In search of Faith—page 76).

18 Despite the seeming failure on the part of the Churches to come together as one Church in Christ, there are indications of trends towards a final unity. Since the Eastern Orthodox Churches separated from the churches of the west.

in 1054, all important denominations except, of course, the Roman Catholic Church, have been striving to find common ground for the propagation of the message of Jesus. They have met at various times and places to discuss some important aspect. At Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927 four hundred and twenty seven delegates from 127 Denominations met to discuss two important subjects namely the Churches' message to the world and the nature of the Church and a few other kindred matters. The atmosphere, it is said, was one of peace and friendliness and helped much for a sympathetic understanding of the many and varied theological views and doctrinal implications and interpretations of the Faith they held in common. I am not thinking of the many sporadic attempts at unity here and there but I wish to note the more important and universal World Councils, I leave out for the moment our own efforts towards the Union of Churches in Ceylon—Ten years after the great Conference at Lausanne, known as the Faith and Order, another movement called Life and Work was set on foot whose purpose was to promote unity between the Denominations, not seeking an agreement on the vexed and divided theological views or doctrines but seeking agreement for an attack on the existing vices and evils resulting from political, economic and social conditions. The aim being that Churches irrespective of their individual ideologies should set up a united front to fight the vices of the day.

The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 led the way to greater enterprise and towards the present Ecumenical Movement.

In 1921 there came into being the International Missionary Councils which further inspired other conferences such as the conference at Jerusalem in 1928 and at Madras in 1938—Faith and Order grew out of this World Missionary

Conference, and the movement known as Life and Work out of the Conference between the Clergy in Great Britain and Germany who perceived the increasing political tension between the two countries. There was prior to this another similar effort at unity when the World Alliance for the Promotion of International Friendship through the Churches was organised at Constance Switzerland in August 1914. But a more colourful conference was the one held at Stockholm, Sweden in 1925 when the Chief Justice of the German Reich took a prominent part and also a German Bishop resplendent in his episcopal robes which attracted notice. Perhaps Mr. D. T. Niles attempted a weak imitation of this behaviour for the same psychological reason, at the Ecumenical Conference at Evanston when he wore some queer garb that he does not normally wear, (dhoti and jibba with angavastharam). He became the centre of attraction it was reported. This device is sometimes effective (?)

We all pray and expect great things from the present assembly of World Council of Churches which is being held now at the Campus of Northern University at Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A. (August 15—30). Again in July, 1937 another Conference was held in England, Oxford at which 119 delegates from the various churches except the Catholics were present and considered the Churches' relation to the Community, to the State, to the economic order and to education. Out of all these there sprung the World Council of Churches, when 357 delegates representing 147 member churches met at Amsterdam, Holland, from the 22nd of August to the 4th of September, 1948.

All these great periodical efforts are to my mind but nascent signs of Divine intent to remove once and for all the trammels and impediments that impede the natural growth

of the Gospel of Jesus, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Even the devastating criticisms both from within and without may have contributed not a little toward, this twentieth century endeavour to restate what Christianity actually is and should be. I seem to see an impending religious revolution and a new era opening out to release Jesus from the grip of theology, dogma and doctrine and ritual and ceremony; from that stranglehold to which the clergy of the Church with limited knowledge and with a definite pagan bias, in an uncritical age confined the message of Jesus our Lord.

19 Coming to our land where the Christian religion has been preached and practised for nearly five centuries, we are frankly dissatisfied with the progress the Protestant Churches are making today. My own fear is that with the British departure from our country, leaving the Government in our hands, the Buddhists who had long harboured the thought that the Christians had throughout been favoured by the foreign governments against Buddhist interests will react in such a manner as to promote their age long religion regardless of christian interests, following on the line of the foreign Christian governments, the last of which, the British, even passed an act called the Test and Co-operation Act which stipulated that a person must be a Communicant of the Anglican Church to be a member of the Public Service. (Repealed in 1829).

Apart from the effects of the immediate reaction, which often is short-lived the greatest danger to the progress of Christianity will be found in the gradual process of our settlement to a way of life in keeping with the traditions and decisions of the majority which is very largely Buddhist. In this natural evolution it is more than likely that the nominal

Christians will slip away from their ranks and join the ranks of those from whom their forefathers had broken away, unless, of course, there is now in them the depth of conviction of the truth of Christianity and an unswerving fidelity to it.

The present fears are that the Protestant congregations will find it extremely difficult to retain their weak loyalties against the strong currents of national and political upheavals and implications so closely bound up with Buddhist renaissance. Weak nominal Christians are sure to be caught up in the vortex of national and political changes. We must now be taught to adapt ourselves to the change in our national outlook without losing hold of our firm faith in our religion. This is not sufficient. We must so live and move with the people that the beauty and truth, and purity of our lives born of our religion may be reflected in and gently permeate through, the national aspirations of our country. But this can never happen if we remain an exclusive tribe and pursue the easy, complacent, half-hearted manner of church-going. Believe me, whatever ideas we have of ourselves, the average man does not feel constrained to follow us. To him we appear as insincere, and he feels that there is in our churches an air of unreality. As the very Revd. Dr. W. R. Matthews puts it, "It may appear to him venerable or even beautiful, but it is infected so far as he is concerned with an air of make-believe."

We, I am afraid, have stood too long aloof from the natural longings of a long subdued people for political and economic freedom. Our participation in the struggle was sporadic, spasmodic and individual, if at all. It is this aloofness, remoteness, this detachment from the national life that has made the Church to appear to lend colour to the charge that it is something foreign and alien, and a hothouse

exotic not native to the soil and injurious to the national life, and thrives only under hothouse conditions. We must disprove this wrong notion and prove that the seed of Christianity is universal and thrives in every race, period, climate and land.

CHAPTER IV.

CHURCHES' VIEW OF GOD AND JESUS

20 Christianity since its first formal set up has undergone many changes in respect of its theology at the hands of the Roman Catholics and the many Protestant denominations that comprise what is generally called Christianity. All its multifarious and elaborate fortifications, namely its different creeds, theological views, doctrines, dogmas, rituals and ceremonies, I am afraid shroud not a little what Jesus Our Lord stood for while on earth. The strict observance of these in part or whole, according to the different Churches' opinion, is considered necessary for our salvation.

These views of the theologians are not universally agreed upon. They are so variant and conflicting that much human blood had been shed. The most brutal lethal weapons of torture ever invented by the evil genius of man's mind resulted out of these theological differences during the dark period of the Inquisition. There does not seem to be any final agreement or formula.

Even today when a move is made for all the Protestant Churches to unite, ministers themselves wrangle over the most inconsequential details and exalt them into matters of paramount importance, as if our spiritual welfare here or the hereafter depends on them. They gather a following round them of enthusiastic laymen. They speak of "Our heritage". Apostolic Succession, Bishops, Consecration, Baptism, Marriage laws, Holy Communion, Limited Atonement and a score of other details which each Church has formulated for its own use and guidance, and to which certain sections cling with bull-dog pertinacity. They may be perfectly sincere, but they forget that their attitude helps to continue the most undesirable feature of division among the followers of Jesus.

What, I wonder, would Jesus say if He were here now with us. Of one thing I am certain, He would be surprised to see the many ramifications and strange developments that have sprung up from His simple teaching in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood just about 1950 years ago. Our theological ecclesiastical language would shock Him beyond measure. He would not, I am sure, understand them. He would even laugh at some of our pompous pontifical bearing and ministerial poses. "Who is he yonder in regal splendour clad in such glittering ceremonial regalia and surrounded by an armed body-guard?" "Lord," I would answer, "he is thine own truest representative here." We cannot even imagine what reaction that would have upon Our Lord, who had not where to lay His head.

But I suppose our hierarchy will continue to find intellectual pleasure in upholding their own peculiar opinions and assailing those of others.

The dross in the structure is too obvious for prejudice or fanaticism to completely conceal. It is apparent in its theology, doctrine, dogma, science, history and personnel.

Its eradication root and branch, may, it is feared, result in its collapse. The following words are found on page 15 of "Towards the Conversion of England." "As Dr. Manheim has asserted only the re-birth of religion, both in terms of a popular movement and of regenerated leadership will suffice for the reconstruction of man." And again on the next page it states "above all, the Church has become confused and uncertain in the proclamation of its message and its life has ceased to reflect clearly the truth of the Gospel." This is not

the mere statement of an individual. It is the considered testimony of a commission composed of fifty devout and scholarly clergy and laymen of the Christian Church in England.

Mark, it speaks of "regenerated leadership" not a reformed leadership. Reformation can never take the place of regeneration. It further states "The Church is ill equipped for its unparalleled task and opportunity." The salt seems to have lost its savour. We, indeed, have many very loyal, and faithful Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans Roman Catholics, but few loyal and faithful Christians.

Great thinkers of different periods of time and nationality, both within and without the Church, have many a time and often pointed out the many shortcomings of organisations and orthodoxy. Its many fallacies and defects have been laid bare, but the Church has always been very tardy in admitting them or showing a desire to remove them or revise. Julian Huxley in his "Religion as an Objective Problem" (page 10) speaks of the breakdown of the traditional supernatural religious systems of the West as an admitted fact and points out that unless the trend of history is reversed, the breakdown is an irremediable one. His immediate argument is based on the fact that man had grown out of his past ignorance and fear in relation to his external environment—machinery, crop-production, physical and chemical invention, floods, disease germs. While we cannot but agree with Huxley in most of his considered opinions and even with certain prophesies, we feel we are on safe ground when we join issue with him with regard to the existence of God.

He speaks in the following lax tone, "God, equally with gods, angels, demons, spirits, and other small fry, is a human product." Again he almost blasphemous here, "a faint

trace of God, half metaphysical and half magic, still broods over our world, like the smile of a cosmic Chesire cat. But the growth of psychological knowledge will rub even that from the universe." In the development of his argument I am afraid, Huxley fails to see a self contradictory fallacy. In the very next paragraph he states thus—"However—and this is vital—the fading of God does not mean the end of religion." Here he seems to tacitly admit the existence of God, for He must exist even to fade. Huxley further confesses that even if God disappears Religion will remain. What, I wonder, is Huxley's notion of religion? He goes on to say that many things in life such as "poverty, slavery, ill-health, social misery, democracy, kingship this or that economic or political system are phenomena to be understood and controlled." But he does not tell us where we get that understanding and that power to control.

We shall not quarrel with him if he says that organised Religion has failed, or that man has not yet fully understood God. Man in a finite sphere with his limited knowledge, can never fully comprehend God the Infinite, the Incomprehensible. But that God is and ever will be, is our faith and conviction, strengthened by certain evidence we see all around about and within us.

I believe there is sufficient evidence even to a purblind sceptic or to an immature scientist that God is. Scientists and philosophers have not yet said that last word on many things of this life. Even the fulfilment of Huxley's prophecy that the religious impulse will eventually end in a Socialised State does not appear to me to disprove the fact that that too may be the will of God. If religion finds an outlet to express itself in the promotion of the ideals of good government in a Socialistic State, it will prove that God Is and that His plan for man is being realised.

Paine, one of the bitterest critics of Christianity, as he sees it, does not speak like Huxley, for he believes that God is, he sees Him in nature and believes that God has bestowed upon him the gifts of discernment and wisdom. There are many other great thinkers of the world, as great, if not greater, than Julian Huxley who acknowledged the existence of God by whatsoever name He is called, Universal Intelligence, Creative Reality, Life Force, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, Father God and scores of other epithets. Albert Einstein's God is totally different from a "Compassionate Father God whom the simple men worship." He seems to seek Him above and beyond the realm of the Atom.

The Christian belief that God is and that He revealed Himself first through the Jewish law and the prophets and then in the fulness of time He came down to earth in the physical form of Jesus Christ is fundamental. This Incarnation of God the Creator in human form gives rise to speculation, superstition and much debate. Scientifically it has not yet been proved for universal acceptance. Rationally, it is a difficult of belief. But there seems to be something which seems to defy both science and reason in the realm of the spirit. In spiritual experience it is not too difficult to experience and to believe certain factors on which science and reason have not said the last word. Our boldest cutest imagination cannot fully penetrate into all the mysteries of the universe. Our surest scientific theories of today may be laughed at by future discoveries.

I remember having read in my youth, in some magazine an article (I think the author of it was Edward Carpenter) which suggested that it was not safe to believe that the last word is said on anything of this transitory life. It said as an example a little dog once wanted to enter a house but found the door closed, it then scratched the door, pushed it and

snares and barked but found it was quite impossible to open it. Its mistress, a little girl, came home from school and just turned the knob and opened the door quite easily. The little girl tried to work out a sum in arithmetic and tried every possible method known to her but could not, till finally she gave it up as impossible. Her teacher glanced at it and with just a stroke of her pen solved what appeared to the little girl as impossible; the teacher sits to solve a moot point in a subject she is studying and finds it impossible, the Professor comes along and shows her how it can be done; the Professor is puzzled over something and gives it up as impossible. What is impossible for the Professor is impossible for the teacher, for the school girl, for the dog and perhaps for the rest, but yet it may not be impossible, some day someone will solve it. There is always the possibility of our knowing more and more. Einstein and Freud and others have not found or explained all there is to know. Man still gropes in the darkness of his abysmal ignorance and sometimes touches God's hand and becomes aware of some hitherto hidden secret.

21 Facts and circumstances are almost compelling us now to take a more sober and reasoned view of 2000 years of Christian enterprise. For a long time we were content to rest satisfied thinking of our wonderful progress, our many triumphs and glorious achievements, our self-sacrificial missions, our vigils, our buffeting, our army of saintly men and women who worked under most trying and terrifying conditions in foreign and hostile mission fields. But times have changed. It has become necessary to change our ways of preaching the Gospel. The message is the same and cannot be changed. Only the means to carry that message to the modern world of men needs adjustment. The Church-method today fails to impress, therefore it must be modified, changed or altogether done away with. If we have to admit the many weaknesses and shortcomings of its assemblage which the past generations did not question, but which are in question today, we must be prepared to frankly confess any fallacy or dogma, doctrine, scientific or historical data without continuing to fight a losing battle—an attitude suggested by Barnes and others. We must shed our old clothes, our worn out, battered, threadbare and shaggy garments.

Time was when our preachers could convert crowds by telling them of the miracles that Jesus performed in parts of Palestine; how He raised the dead, magically produced bread and fishes and turned water into wine, but if these are seriously pressed in their natural and literal setting before a modern crowd, what do you think would be the reaction? Mark do not please chase the idea that I do not believe the literal truth of the miracles. I only wish to impress upon our Church that these facts do not impress as they did centuries ago. The world has moved out of miracles long ago, so it is futile now to employ these to turn men's minds to the living truth of the mission of Jesus.

We can effectively preach it by the spiritual music that is in us, when our hearts throb with the love of Jesus with a desire to bring a little joy and comfort to our neighbour regardless of personal comfort or gain, or whether the neighbour is one of our own fraternity or race or status, and when we are unshackled by the binding rules of doctrine of our particular churches. We have too long been satisfied in merely feeding the flock.

There's music in our great hymns, in our scripture, in our religion and in every soul of mankind. It is easy to carry the music of our lives tuned by our religion in song and loving service. It never fails. We do not seem to realise the truth of this great hidden power. All other means and devices to preach Christ are only temporary expedients that wear away with time. Moreover these devices contain in themselves elements that lead to protracted discussions. Doctrines, dogmas, creeds and rituals by themselves carry no conviction to the modern mind. But their essence in music and service always allures and draws men's minds and hearts to the beauty of Christian religion. It is the music of Jesus' life that attracted the rough fishermen and hard-headed revenue officers to forsake all and follow Him. There was music in His thought for He thought with that divine certain Something which we call God. Therefore was there music in His speech and music in His actions. Without the divine quality of music in us—that certain something that emanates from one soul to another—all we do or say is merely calculated human speech and action and lacks that divine spark.

22 Strict adherence to rigid rules of organised religion tends to shut our minds to the greater wonders of the universe. There is a tendency in the teaching of religion to fear knowledge outside its own peculiar tenets. This is singularly

unfortunate in Christianity. Jesus was a world teacher and God is universal. To have God is not to shun God's creation and all its wonders. This sort of fear must have dominated the mind of Francis Thompson who exclaims:

*“For though I knew His love who followed,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest having Him, I must have nought beside.”*

This fear pervaded my own thoughts when I was a boy. I then loved fun and joy, and was not prepared to forsake all to take up the cross and follow Jesus. I was taught to believe that to own God was to forsake all. The Church seems to be satisfied with its own peculiar doctrine and has no desire to peer or probe into the unknown mysteries outside the narrow limits of its theology. Still there are many strange objects and phenomena that lure the inquisitive mind of ardent youth though they may appear contrary to orthodox views.

Having a firm faith in Jesus as our Saviour and the fear and love of God deeply rooted in our souls, why should we fear to probe into the mysteries of God? The answer may, perhaps, be found in a fear that our definitions, views, theology, dogmas, and doctrines may be found untenable in the light of new knowledge and discoveries. In what awful tribunal which condemned Galileo for heresy for his teaching of the heliocentric theory that the earth moves, there was at least one man who took a prominent part, who had the courage of his convictions to write afterwards, “I say that if real proof be found that the sun is fixed and does not revolve round the earth, but the earth round the sun, then it will be necessary, very carefully, to proceed to the explanation of the passages of scripture which appear to the contrary, and we should rather say that we have misunderstood these than to pronounce that to be false which is demonstrated.” (Cardinal Bellarime).

Knowledge must surely bring us to a closer understanding of the Great Creator, His mind, His purpose and His ways. It is either religious prejudice or mental sloth that keep us in the narrow confines of dogma and doctrine.

I am inclined to think that God, anthropomorphically speaking, would smile at the gigantic intellects of men like Huxley, Einstein, Laski, Shaw, Russel who seem to sneer at Him and also similarly at the ignorant, sentimental emotional views of religious men. Of all the concepts of God which the human mind is capable of, the Christian conception, to me, is the most likely, helpful and beautiful—Father God. Still we say that God is incomprehensible, but yet we persist in our pursuit. We may find Him in different ways. The Bible may be only one way and may not be the only way. There are many strange (because of our ignorance) phenomena which seem to challenge our research and excite our interest. There are not many scholarly theologians today, outside the Roman Catholic Church, who uphold the old attitude that forbids research or maintain that Jesus Christ said and did everything just exactly as the writers of the four Gospels allege Him to have said and done.

We must now evolve a mind that will not shirk or fear investigation and inquiry; a mind that will not be satisfied with copious doses of traditional dogmatism. Let us see what the following phenomena are:—spiritualism, telepathy, hypnotism, clairvoyance, clairaudience, telekinesis, levitation, ectoplasm, fortune telling, prevision, premonition, dreams, forebodings, faith-healing, necromancy, voodooism, black magic, astrology etc.

We cannot lightly pooh pooh these with puritanical parsonic arrogance. The English Society of Psychical Research has undertaken investigation in the light of various happenings. The late Dr. Cosmo Laing, Archbishop of

Canterbury appointed a committee of ten prominent clergy and laymen to inquire into spiritualism. A report was compiled in 1938 signed by seven out of the ten. The Report, say the "Psychic News" was suppressed by the House of Bishops. The minority report is still a closed secret.

In defiance of the seven year ban by the Church of England Bishops, the Psychic News published the findings in which we find that Bishops, though highly sceptical they must have been at first, now believe that psychic experience can be caused by disembodied spirits. "We believe that it is probable that the hypothesis that they proceed in some cases from discarnate spirits is a true one" it said. "It is important" it further proceeds "that representatives of the Church should keep in touch with intelligent persons who believe in spiritualism."

I am certainly not unaware of the very wide field of fraud, quackery and mal-observation. It strains one's credulity to believe in any of these things without intimate and first hand demonstration, for there is so much of deception and trickery. When we get at the root of what appears to be a mystery it at once ceases to be a mystery. However sceptical, we cannot lightly brush aside the averments of men like Sir Oliver Lodge, Rev. Stanton Moses, F. W. Myers, W. T. Stead and others. We must have an open mind. We demur to disbelieve the story of the budding rod of Aaron that blossomed with blossoms and yielded almond overnight, yet we laugh at the incredibility of Romulus' javelin which he hurled from the Aventine to the Palatine Hill where it grew into a tree.

Which is less believable, Balaam's talking ass or Achilles' talking horse? There are many nice and fascinating stories for children in mythology in the Bible.

CHAPTER VI.

ABOUT JESUS

23 HOW OFTEN have I not tried to get a clear picture of Jesus in my mind's eye. His face and form as He lived and moved among people in parts of Palestine in His day. The common pictures we see are drawn for us by some Italian artists or Holman Hunt and others many years after His death, from imagination. I really wonder what He could have looked like in the flesh. The pictures we see in canvas, glass and paper are all nice and beautiful, but I sometimes wonder how far or how near are these to the real face and form of our Lord. These pictures depict Him as a very gentle, meek and mild person. But we see Him in the temple with a whip lashing out at money lenders and money changers; another picture of a rather vain man using his divine or magical powers to curse a fig tree which gave Him no fruit, out of season; another at the house of Simon the Pharisee, when Mary Magdala unceremoniously came and kissed His feet, or again at her own father's house at Bethany when she poured rich and precious ointment Jesus said nought but looked on with a look of deep appreciation and praised her and forgave her sins. I again see Him in all the beauty of His human nature when as He listened to the mournful wailing of Martha and Mary over the death of their brother, He wept. Then immediately He transformed Himself to something more than human, super-human, super-natural, God-incarnate and yet in a natural human voice He called out "Lazarus come forth" and lo, that stinking, putrid piece of human flesh stepped out of its grave as normal as Lazarus was before he died.

How I wish Luke or some other narrator of this story has told us a few things that Lazarus did or said after his resurrection. Lazarus, says Dean Farrar, lived for 30 years after his resurrection according to tradition. The story has

a dead end after the man came back to life. Martha and Mary and their father Simon the leper are all silent, and so are the many neighbours and others in Bethany who must have been eye witnesses. It is on a par with that story of people who had been buried for long, rose again and lived when Christ was crucified and an earthquake took place, referring to which, Paine has made caustic cynicisms. There is another story about Lazarus told by William Harward Flanders in his book, "The Church of England and Her Reformation", (page 15) where we read that when Joseph of Arimathea was banished from Jerusalem, after the crucifixion, he took ship, along with St. Phillip, Lazarus and Martha at Marseilles and landed on the coast of South England.

Leaving this interesting side issue, to which I have unwittingly digressed, I wish to draw the picture of Jesus as He appeared to His disciples and others in the flesh. Of course such a personality as Jesus lends itself to various descriptions. Jesus human and Divine, Friend of the poor, Saviour of Mankind, Man of Sorrow, crucified and buried and risen, and whose words and deeds as reported by four or five people, written many years after His death, must almost certainly contain elements that make a real and true picture most difficult. It is therefore left to the individual student, lover or critic, to draw a picture according to what impresses him most. The Wesleys and other famous hymn writers, artists and orators have drawn most glorious and glowing pictures of Him. So have the humble and the devout, if somewhat ignorant admirers of the Master, a beautiful picture. These pictures do not often tally. Weatherhead has drawn a picture of Jesus "The Big Brother" teasing a poor distracted and desperate woman who begged, implored and worshipped Him beseeching Him most earnestly to cure

her daughter lying dangerously ill. Weatherhead says "The Big Brother loves teasing folk" and so He teases this woman in such desperate need and anxiety with such indifference as "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of Israel" or "it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." None but a purblind critic would deny Jesus a sense of humour, but teasing a poor woman in such a state of mind, to say the least, is out of place and most unlike Jesus. I cannot for a moment imagine that Jesus who was moved to tears when He saw Martha and Mary weep could be so callous to the deep fear and anxiety of a poor distracted mother. I may be forgiven if I venture most humbly to suggest that Weatherhead was only trying to find an excuse for Jesus. I would rather think that this story is badly reported or misreported by Matthew and Mark.

Many writers seem to colour the picture according to their own imagination, leavened by their knowledge of details recorded in the New Testament. For facts recorded by secular historians of the life of Jesus are extremely meagre. The ironical reference of Gibbon in the famous 15th chapter of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* shows what little notice Seneca and the elder Pliny had taken of the work and life of Jesus. The preternatural darkness that enveloped the earth for three hours in the reign of Tiberius does not seem to have attracted the attention of these two historians, although it is supposed to have happened in their life-time.

Josephus, a first century historian who deals with the period covered by the New Testament is also silent in respect of most of the happenings recorded in it, if we remove from his *Antiquities* XVIII. 3. 3. what Archibald Robertson avers is an "unblushing interpolation." However, Renan that scholarly and charming French writer, thinks that the passage

is authentic. He says on page 8 of his introduction to the Life of Jesus "I believe the passage respecting Jesus to be authentic. It is perfectly in the style of Josephus, and if this historian has made mention of Jesus, it is thus he must have spoken of Him we feel only that a Christian hand has retouched the passage, has added a few words—without which it would almost have been blasphemous—has perhaps retrenched or modified some expressions." This appears to be a strange self-contradiction. One would therefore prefer to reject Renan and accept Robertson on this point. It sounds strange that such great and scholarly men sometimes err in their judgment. Few will dare to even suspect this weakness in such a scholar as Renan. I came across the following in Hillaire Belloc—"Great as he (Renan) is in his scholarship and much greater in his power of expression in reasoning power he fails". (A Conversation with an Angel—page 108) Albert Schweitzer says on page 102 of his "Out of My Life and Thought", that "of the two passages in which the Jewish writer Josephus makes incidental mention of Jesus in his Antiquities, one was undoubtedly interpolated by Christian copyists". The fact that many great historians who wrote about this time on matters of importance of this period, have not mentioned those wonderful and miraculous happenings that the Gospel writers speak about, does not necessarily to my mind prove that Jesus did not live at this period or did not perform some of the things mentioned in the New Testament.

We must of course admit that it is very strange that Philo, who died about the year 50 had not the slightest knowledge of him. Justus of Tiberius, a contemporary of Josephus, almost casually refers in a few lines to his execution as an event of secondary importance. The explanation perhaps, is that Jesus was not a world figure then, not even

widely known in the Roman Empire. His world was a very limited place, among the most insignificant poor people in parts of Palestine and the wonders later attributed to Him were exaggerated or embellished or fabricated. This is a natural human weakness. Gandhi was worshipped even in his lifetime as a deity and many stories were started to prove this belief of the ignorant masses.

The miracles, even if they did not take place as related by the Gospel writers, whoever they may have been, must have tremendously influenced the men and women of a past age. They are today a stumbling block to the educated youth. I do not know why the Church should desperately try to uphold them now. I think there are at two reasons why men believe in the miracles mentioned in the Bible. Firstly because they are told that unless they do so, in respect of some they are eternally damned after death. Secondly because these are found in the Bible, the Word of God and therefore absolutely true. However, observant students find that by not believing, or having believed and then renouncing does not bring retribution on this earth. The retribution, if any, is in respect of life after death. They seem to be none the worse for disbelieving or rejecting. If the miracles are employed as a means of conversion, they are likely to fail with the thinking men of the modern age. The thinking men even in this enlightened age, are indeed in the minority, and majority still need to look for some supernatural power to allay their fears and supply their wants and to subdue their passions.

The process of development is very gradual. A few brilliant intellects emerge from the crowd as it were before their time who no longer require the aids by which the others still climb. The latter cling to every foothold they are told would lead to paths of safety. Religious leaders guide them

in different paths, the ultimate goal being the salvation of man. Christians believe the safest and surest path is via Jesus who taught us the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God, although Brotherhood was preached long before by the Stoics. Moral philosophy unaided by Divine assistance is inadequate whilst it must be admitted that the life of Jesus is unique and the grandeur of his character will always attract mankind and inspire it to the noblest and the best. Still it is doubtful whether the great mass of mankind can sufficiently exercise intellectual discernment to realise that mere moral excellence is not enough.

There is no form of organised religion which does not contain in it elements of myth, mystery and miracles in varying degrees and forms, these ingredients being so essential to impress and influence the mass mind of mankind still groping in superstition and hope.

Even among the most cultured and intelligent men and women traces of superstitious behaviour are apparent. If the mystical aspect in religious organisations is completely removed the residue will soon develop into some social, moral, economic or recreational and philanthropical institutions.

The Church can no longer lead an exclusive life sheltered within its own cloister. She must step out into the world of men in every walk and aspect of life and live and move and have her being in every haunt, hamlet, hovel and hut, the city's slums lanes and nooks and alleys where poverty hunger and squalor and disease shout aloud for help and charity. It is just here that Jesus our Lord built His Church. The followers of Jesus Christ who call themselves Christians can do no less. This is a natural breeding ground for Christian beliefs. "The heart of Christianity to me," says Weather-

head, "is the offer of a friendship." Weatherhead is not considered an orthodox Christian. I would to God that orthodox and ordained Christians were half as Christian as Weatherhead, the Church would be all the better for it.

Rigid inelastic orthodoxy too often retards progressive living Christianity. How often does a man whose heart warmed by the love of Christ long for the warmth of Christian fellowship and find in the frigid orthodox minister an iceberg against which he strikes and sinks with only God as his witness. He is required to subscribe to views he cannot comprehend and to submit to rules and rituals he considers unnecessary. He is not interested in metaphysical conjectures and speculations. He only sees the beauty and the love and sacrifice of Jesus. He sees God the Father in Him and wants to join in the fellowship of His people. The creed may puzzle his honest mind but the priest of God must needs insist according to his profession. He listens to the practised skill of elucidation of the Priest who quotes Paul, comparatively a much inferior person than Jesus. He begins to ask in his mind, is Paul infallible like the Pope? If Paul's injunctions are a sine qua non for our salvation would not Jesus, a greater than Paul, Son of God, God Himself have said so, he argues.

Surely, he communes with himself, if Christ did not rise why should all preaching of the love of Jesus be in vain? Why His message of love and good-will and service and sacrifice be of no value or avail? His mind turns to what he has read in "In Search of Faith" where Joad points out to "a Celebrated Report which the Commission on Christian Doctrine published at the beginning of 1938, after sitting for 15 years to determine precisely what Christian doctrine is.— Evil spirits, Satan, the Empty Tomb, Miracles, the Virgin Birth—none of these is, it seems in the Commission's view

a sine qua non of the contemporary man's acceptance of the Christian Faith." The modern mind seems to be unwilling to accept the Christian creeds, of which there are three, the Athanasian, the Apostles' and the Nicene. The first of these decrees that unless a person keep this whole and undefiled, "without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." This seems to be calculated to inculcate a sense of fear reminiscent of some ancient pagan practice.

The Apostles' Creed and the Creed commonly called the "Nicene" contain no explicit command or direct request to abstain from the evil ways of life, from sin and wrong, or to do good and serve our fellowmen, but only demand a belief in God and the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, one Baptism for remission of sins, and resurrection.

It would therefore appear that our salvation solely depends upon this belief and that concurrent with such belief if we sin, that sinning will not form a criterion for judgement. We therefore are not punished for any sins but for not believing. Belief and not sin is the criterion for our salvation. This is just exactly what Martin Luther propounded when he wrote to his friend and disciple and fellow professor at Wittenberg—Melanchthon. "Be a sinner and sin for all your worth. But even more heartily rest your faith and your joyful hope in Christ who triumphs over sin and death."

In such a medley of creedal beliefs it is not easy to find a common ground for belief as to what God, the Almighty Father of us all wants of His creature man—or does He want anything?

All these things confuse not a little the forming of a precise picture of Jesus in the mind of the student who would see Jesus—Jesus as He walked through the wheat fields plucking the wheat and crushing them in his palms; Jesus as

He turned the money lenders out, upsetting their tables, Jesus before Pilate, Jesus at the wedding feast, Jesus as He touched blind Bartimaeus, Jesus with the children, Jesus with the woman at the well, Jesus at Gethsemane, Jesus on the Cross, and Jesus at many other situations and places. When we try to picture Jesus through doctrine and dogma and ritual, the picture is not a little blurred. As for the artists' vision of Him, we only see the beauty of a painting in canvas or in glass. Perhaps it is this sort of picture of Jesus that made Sir Wilfred Grenfell, in his book "What Christ Means to Me" to write, "The Conventional pictures of Christ are abhorrent to me" (page 81). There is however a beautiful lesson preached to all mankind in the silent pictures of Jesus—it is the lesson of Meekness, and Gentleness which the proud nations of the world have yet to learn.

CHAPTER VII.

MAN—GOD'S SPECIAL CONCERN

24 God's special care or concern for man does not seem to fall into line with known facts. Man is said to have been on this planet, which is not the largest and most important of the planets, for millions of years. During the early periods he was no match for other stronger animals with whom he had to live. But with the gradual development of his wonderful brain he has gained control of the rest. We may therefore consider that this brain power is a special divine gift from God and that therefore he is favoured by God. This special favour began to manifest itself, however, after long periods of his struggles with the wild animals and nature. He cannot therefore be considered as one whom God had favoured above the rest at his creation from the outset, nor can he even now boast that all the circumstances that surrounded his life are congenial and calculated for his safety comfort and pleasure. He has still to fight against very heavy odds for his preservation and progress. He has mortal enemies everywhere and not the least among his own species. From the beginning of man's conscious intelligence he has ceaselessly worked himself higher and higher in the intellectual plane. And it is true that throughout his long career he clung to what he thought was supernatural influence. He had created many gods whom, in fear, he worshiped in queer ways. Perhaps his phenomenal success over all the other species had encouraged him to claim God's special favour towards him.

Could it be his vanity that induced in him the thought that he was made in the image and likeness of God, and that his species in a very special way, are the sons of God, and all the rest of His creation are made only for his convenience

to serve him as beasts of burden or for his food. Let us examine this claim a little closely. Sir Radha Krishnan wonders why, if man is God's best creature on whom He bestows favours, he is placed in an inferior planet—earth.

We also wonder why he is thrown among implacable enemies all the days of his life. The *Anopheles Culicifacies* (malarial mosquito) claims millions of human lives annually. I have before me an article from India which states that more than 20,000 people fall victims annually to snake bites, besides others who fall a prey to wild beasts like tigers, leopards, bears, elephants, crocodiles, wolves etc. etc. This will go to show that God on His own had not ordained that the wild beasts should not attack man, His favourite creature.

FIGHT AGAINST DESERT LOCUST

“Under the Commission (which consists of the Governor of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika) operates the Department of Desert Locust Survey. When this Department found itself faced with the threat of a new plague of Locusts on both sides of the Red Sea, discussions, attended by representatives of Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Italy and the Yemen, as well as by experts of the Anti-Locust Research Centre in London and the British Council Offices were held. From these discussions emerged the Desert Locust Control Executive Committee.

It had been realised from the start that the control of the locusts would be a long and difficult task, entailing at least three years of full-scale operations and another two years of lesser effort.

Now, according to latest information, heavy rains have promoted the start of locusts breeding in North Africa.—a threat not only to the Sudan but also to the South-West Arabia, Somaliland, Eritrea, and Persia. Unlike former years however, anti-locusts activity in the vast area is now co-ordinated and, according to reports received in London progress has been achieved in the first year.”

The latest discovery about locusts is that they can breed by parthogenesis—without male fertilisation. Specimens of young have been bred from females in this way up to six generations, and the offsprings are all females. What is more, these fatherless locusts live longer.

Dr. Malcolm Burr, a former Vice President of the Royal Entomological Society in London, reveals that there are more than 600,000 kinds of insects known to science. Some of the creatures, invisible to the naked eye, like the disease germs, take a very heavy toll of human life. They also cause staggering damage to man's means of sustenance. Dr. Burr further gives details of the damage done by some of these insects. In the U.S.A. alone about 2,000,000 dollars annually; in Great Britain 10% of all crops. The wot and warble fly alone annually cause damage to the tune of a loss of two million to seven million pounds. He winds up by saying “Man is only dimly aware of the powers of the undying, relentless insect foe, or the ferocity of the struggle in which he is engaged. With their prodigious powers of reproduction their endless diversity, and their incredible versatility, insects even now contend with man for the mastery of the earth.”

Considering this simple fact alone it must appear to every reasonable person unbiased by religious dogma that the Buddhist doctrine not to destroy any living creature under

any circumstance whatsoever is not only untenable but also dangerous and inimical to man's survival. The use of all forms of germicides and insecticides such as penicillin and aureomycin naturally fall within the orbit of this impossible doctrine.

Taking the human race as distinct from other creatures, what do we find there? The story is the same. Family feuds, tribal fights, communal discord, caste and colour discrimination, religions hotstilities, national greed and pride and war. Man's finest discoveries and inventions are soon turned to weapons of destruction. The discovery of the atom bomb has left behind it the appalling story of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Man is his own worst enemy. God only knows what is in store for us, if war breaks out again with the Hydrogen Bomb.

Does, I most reverently ask, anyone see God's loving hand in this? or His special concern for man, His own best creature? It needs extraordinary imagination to conceive even vaguely any divine solicitude in all this for man.

When we seriously and unbiasedly think of these factors that seem to hedge in all around him, we could scarcely with reason believe there is any special divine security for man denied to other creatures.

One fails to see God's concern in the awful carnage of innocent women and children in cold blood in their thousands during war or religious upheavals—which scenes appal us.

It was the same at Belsen and Bucanwald concentration camps, Jap atrocities in Malaya and at almost all centres of war and places of famine, floods and fires and earthquakes and revolutions.

How can man reconcile these appalling soul-saddening happenings with the solicitude of an Almighty and loving Father God for man?

There is another aspect to the question or problem of life in this planet. There appears to be more enmity than amity, more fear than peace. Even those groups of species which live by themselves in seeming peace, live in constant fear of attacks from others. They seek safety on tree-tops, in caves underground and lonely mountain sides or in the heart of the jungle. As animals do, so does man. He builds a house and firmly secures it against enemies. Every bar to his window and bolt to his door and key to his safe are an indictment against his brother whom he dare not trust.

So also does a nation. It fortifies itself in land and sea and air by the most terrifying lethal weapons armies, navies and aircraft, a clear confession of mutual distrust, fear and want of love.

Does it not offend our sense of loyalty and love to attribute to our God of Love and Compassion this eternal hostility among the creatures He had created? Has He any part in what appears to be the natural condition of life among the creatures? How can we reconcile the God of the Bible with the God of nature? But whence is this bitter hatred, this perpetual fear and hostility, this strong living upon the weak, this carnivora?

It cannot be that God so ordained it. Human reason would not permit us to believe that a God of Love desires ordains or permits if He could prevent such a state of affairs among His own creatures that He had Himself created. But whence in this fierce natural propensity? Is it a subsequent malevolent growth in the struggle for existence, or is it so ordained from the beginnings?

25 Is man moral by nature? Is morality absolute? Is it created by God for the guidance of man? or is human nature fundamentally wicked? Philosopher Hobbes says that the life of man is "Solitary poor nasty brutish and short". Is it a natural product of social conduct necessary in civilised community, where the idea of God is made a very useful and successful instrument to secure the performance of what society deems as moral, good and necessary for good government.? Plato thinks that if man can make himself invisible at will no virgin would be safe or a safe safe. It would appear as Joad points out, that man is made moral by law rather than by nature.

Is not morality a relative term? We now think that a brothel is an immoral institution but in Tsarist Russia it was a state recognised institution (as also in some other countries today) A new brothel was formally opened by the police officer and was hallowed by religious ceremony in the course of which the premises were blessed by a Russian Orthodox priest. This fact is taken by Joad from the Report of Labour Delegation 1925 and is mentioned in his book, Joad on the Future of Morals page 38.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCERTAIN ELEMENTS

26 In the pages of this book one may discern a spirit of restless dissatisfaction and a fear that the Protestant Churches in Ceylon may not be able to long withstand the onslaught of the spirit of scepticism, the godless march of Communism, the renaissance of Buddhism, the changed political situation, the awakening of the spirit of nationalism. Protestantism not deeply rooted, is sure to flounder at their impact. The Rev. Basil Jackson sounds a timely warning as if inspired. He speaks of "The disappearance of the great Churches of North Africa and Western Asia following the rise of Islam, the Syriac speaking Church of Edessa, the Latin speaking Church of North Africa, the Greek speaking Church of Asia Minor." And with prophetic vision he warns us of the danger of our complacency and further says "the chequered history of Christendom shows the peril of a static church, one which is not only static but which is also a minority community, predominantly middle class, can hardly hope to survive the colossal impetus of the social upheaval which is sweeping through Asia with a speed and magnitude quite without parallel in history."

This is not only a warning, it is also a challenge to all Christians. We have in this our day few religionists not much dissimilar to those whom Jesus found in His day. The Pharisees were a class of people considered as religious leaders in their day. They were the true Jews—the nerve and sinew of Judaism, Renan says that "They were in general men of narrow mind, caring much for externals, their devoutness was haughty, formal and self-satisfied. Their manners were ridiculous and excited the smiles of even those who respected them. The nick names given to them suggest the

vain type of men they were. Nikfi, the bandy-legged Pharisee, Kizaim, the Pharisee who went with his eyes shut so that he may not see a woman, the Midinkia or the Pestle Pharisee, who bent himself double, Shikai, who walked with his back bent as if he carried the whole burden of the law on his back, the "what-is-there-do-do? I-do-it" Pharisee, always on the search for a precept to fulfil, and the "Dyed Pharisee", whose externals of devotion were but a varnish of hypocrisy."

Who I ask, does not see in these descriptions, someone known to him in our midst? Every Church group seems to have a fair quota of these superior persons dominating every church activity, dictating to the pastor as to what he should say or do, strutting about the church assemblies with all important airs. Oh, these spiritual toffs! these arrogant know-alls! These Pharisees! But hush, follow them to their homes, and there gently ask them how they build houses, acquire property, buy cars, and 'do the grand' without a visible and legitimate source of income. I once happened to ask one of these, when he was bragging as to how he came to build such a big bungalow by the sea at Wellawatte, he smiled and said "God gives to those He loves".

This is one aspect of our present day religious life that makes me apprehensive as to its stability and future progress. The hierarchy must sit up and take full cognizance of all the factors that seem to militate against our efforts to preach the Gospel to the uttermost parts of our land, and not rest satisfied with small periodical and sporadic successes here and there. "Total evangelisation or extinction" should be our slogan.

There is also a very beautiful aspect of modern Church life, where we see bands of most enthusiastic and selfless workers, men and women of all ages devote much time and

energy towards the many and varied activities of the Church. This beautiful and loving service must be fostered and encouraged at all costs—for it is at once the glory, pride and strength of the Church.

Although Christianity has in its long course undergone certain changes in its orthodoxy, the present age seems to expose many more defects or doubtful data which the custodians of the Faith may well take up and consider in the light of God's grace and modern scholarship which the best among them do really possess, completely detached from traditional bias which their long service and beliefs have engendered. Now, what do we believe? Are we absolutely honest in our beliefs? Do our beliefs conflict with our reason? Is not reason also a God-given gift? Are not our beliefs brought into being by a sense of fear lest in some other life or world we will be punished if we do not believe? Unless the beliefs make us better men in the world in which we live and make others too better by reason of our social attitudes and behaviour resulting from such beliefs, our beliefs would appear to be only a formula or charm to ensure a better future for us after death. Our creeds seem to be calculated and designed to be a sort of insurance policy for salvation and eternal bliss in the hereafter. But the simple teaching of Jesus seems to relate almost entirely to conduct and behaviour rather than to any metaphysical speculation in beliefs. Righteousness and goodness, kindness and sympathy and kindly service to the sick and the poor and to all those in need of help, service is the key note of His life. It is the Church that has formulated the creeds and stipulated that unless a man sincerely believes in every word of the Creed, there is no salvation for him.

I am of opinion that it is a good thing to believe certain things even if those things may finally prove to be false as long as such beliefs keep us from falling into evil and are in

themselves quite innocuous. The mass of mankind is still largely ignorant and needs the assistance of organised spiritual aid to keep them straight. Some sort of speculative solicitude for a safe and happy hereafter is necessary. Without this religious fear (say foolish) men will give reins and spurs to that natural impulse to seek satisfaction as the lusts of the flesh would dictate. The rationalists will laugh at this silly childish fear inculcated by priests. They would condescendingly smile upon the simple credulity of the Christian's personal God who is ever ready to answer prayers made to Him in Christ's name. This fact is emphasised in various forms. To the majority prayer is simply asking God for some favour, a personal relief, gain or cure. This aspect of prayer has been preached beyond all reasonable limits. The practice of it developed to absurd heights in the Middle Ages when people were taught to pray to Saints to whom they had arbitrarily assigned healing jobs, like our medical Specialists of today. Thus St. Sebastian cured plague; St. Petronal, fever; St. Macurine, frenzy; St. Marie, the scab; St. Genow, the gout; St. Clair, sore eyes; St. Appolonia, the tooth ache. (History of Medical Profession by William Farr. The Medical Annual, 1839). Our Ceylon newspapers are full of instances of prayers made and answers received. Turn to the advertisement pages of any paper and you will see. Here, I take a few at random:—

1. Our grateful thanks to the Holy Face, St. Philomena, St. Rita, St. Sebastian, the Holy Family, St. Anne and blessed Martin De Porres for favours granted. . . .
2. Our grateful thanks to God Almighty, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Face, Holy Family, St. Joseph, St. Francis, St. Anthony, St. Therese, St. Rita, St. Anne, Sister Alphonso and all the Saints and Angels for the wonderful favours granted. . . .

3. Thanks. Grateful thanks to Jesus Our Lord, Our Lady Fatima, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Lucy, Blessed Martin De Porres and St. Gerard for very great favours granted thus proving convincingly the efficacy of prayer.
4. O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant me the special favour I am in need of. Bless my sister, see that she has a safe and easy confinement, and the child normal, healthy and well. I beg of You, dearest Jesus, grant me this special favour I am in need of. I promise Rs. 3/- for a Thanksgiving Mass. Re 1/- Your devoted client.

(I have culled no: 4 from the Messenger of the Sacred Heart, Ceylon, June, 1955, Volume No. 5—6.)

This sort of public display in the advertisement columns of our public papers of private favours received from many Heavenly Beings through the medium of secret individual prayer must be nauseating both to God and thinking man, yet scarcely a day passes but one reads these in papers.

It must be remembered that long before the Christian era, the Greeks used to pray to their Gods—the twelve Olympian Deities from Zeus to Dionysius. All their important creative achievements, like poetry, music, temples, statues, etc: were dedicated to “The Glory of Zeus”, for Zeus was to them both the Creator Artist and Father and Ruler of mankind. About 500 B.C. the poet Epimenides wrote the words which we so frequently say now in our prayers and worship—“In Him we live and move and have our being,” which Luke seems to have borrowed—(Acts XVII-28).

When the pretty Senora Eva Peron wife of the Argentine President, was ill a total of 580 masses were simultaneously said and a day of national prayer was also held, but all these

prayers proved to be fruitless. This would suggest to the thinking person that God had not heard them or having heard, ignored them, or there could not have been faith so much as a grain of mustard in the millions of hearts that prayed, for Eva Peryon died.

Even if all this is a form of religious delusion the practice affords some gratifications. Vows are made not only by the Roman Catholics but also by others. Even non-Christians pay vows at St. Anthony's Church, Kotahena. Perhaps the revenue through this means is not inconsiderable. If the Roman Catholic Church does not directly encourage this practice it certainly does not seem to discourage it.

A very strong plea for rational Christianity was made by Erasmus in his "The Christian Soldiers Manual." In it he seems to denounce monkish theology and superstitious bigotry—"You honour the bones of St. Paul hidden in a shrine but you do not honour the mind of St. Paul hidden in his writing," says Erasmus. This unreasonable rigidity to rules and vows is at once the strength and fatal weakness of the Roman Catholic Church. Doctor Axel Munthe in his "The Story of San Michele" gives an instance of this attitude. This is how he described an outbreak of cholera:—

"Terrible outbreak of cholera in Naples.
Over thousand cases a day."

He goes on to describe a scene in the Convent of Sepoitte Vive in this wise. "Padre Anselmo told me that after a long conversation between the Abbess and himself, it had been decided to ask me to replace my dead colleague, no other Doctor being available. Panic-stricken nuns were running to and fro through the corridors others were praying and singing incantations in the chapel. The three nuns were lying on their straw mattresses in their cells. One of them

died in the evening. . . . The old abbess looked at me with her cold penetrating eyes, severe and scrutinizing as those of a judge. Her face was rigid and lifeless as if cut out of marble, her thin lips as if they had never parted in a smile. I told her the whole convent was infected, the sanitary conditions were appalling, the water in the garden well was polluted, the whole place must be evacuated or they would all die of cholera. She answered it was impossible, it was against the rules of their order, no nun once inside their convent, had ever left it alive. They all had to remain where they were. They were in the hands of the Madonna and San Gennaro. . . . I looked at the rigid cruel face of the old abbess which even death had not been able to soften. It was almost a relief to me that her eyes were closed for ever. There was something in those eyes that had frightened me." (page 125)

And yet here is a woman who had renounced the world and all—and for what? As for being in the hands of the Madonna and San Gennaro it is certain that in this awful crisis their help was nil. The only thing that seemed to be providential was the most miraculous escape of Dr. Munthe himself from death. Whether it was partly due to increased doses of ~~Dr. Barthol's~~ miraculous speciality or to the copious draughts of black coffee I do not know.

— DON Bartolo's

Prayer in any form in any religion is a necessary adjunct for a type of mind to live a life which is so dependent on external circumstances. Without prayer we will become brutal and cynical.

Although prayer is misunderstood and misused it is still necessary for men to pray. All men pray whether they know it or not, not necessarily in any formal or tutored religious fashion. Without prayer and religion the emotional life of man will break into ways of life that call for greater police

supervision and control. Man is a praying creature. You may as well try to remove this natural urge from him as the urge to love and fear, but man must learn how to pray and what to pray for as what to love and what to fear.

Prayer love and fear can be raised to sublime heights; they can also be reduced to foolish superstition, and abject fear.

Fear is a necessary ingredient to prayer, fear that approaches a sense of awe, wonder and reverence, and not that physical and abject fear that the criminal feels before a judge or the guilty school boy before his stern master. We are surrounded on all sides with wonder and the person with sensitive perception feels but one emotion when he is faced with such a situation and that is a sense of deep reverence, whether it be in a church, on the top of a lonely mountain, by the vast sea, or at night under the stars or the moon. It is a spirit of reverence we experience—reverence for that which we cannot grasp, we then almost instinctively bow our heads and worship the Incomprehensible. I remember an occasion in my youth when I had climbed a lonely hill at Neboda, as the shadows of the night were creeping gently and I felt myself alone, it was not a sense of fear that I then felt, but a deep calm, a loneliness, a serenity. I remember distinctly at this long distance of time that I instinctively knelt and bowed my head. I may borrow Mrs. Browning's poetic lines to explain this inexplicable experience:—

*“Earth crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush afire with God:
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.”*

The experience is a fact but of course the interpretation may vary; Philosophers and the psychologists may interpret it differently, but to a simple Christian there is only one interpretation.

The rationalists would, I am sure, be all the better for a bit of religious conviction. They would sooner conform to the generally accepted forms of conduct at least in relation to sex. Promiscuity at least will not be considered with that spirit of laxity and levity with which rationalists now seem to look upon with such tolerance. Without religious influence man will be apt to condone that form of human conduct and behaviour which the average man and woman in every part of the civilised world think ugly, surreptitious wrong and unworthy. It is religion that inspires and gives a healthy tone to higher nobler ways of life. Religion guards the mind against the easy and natural tendencies that we are all heir to from birth. We are more prone to evil than to good. Remove religious influence from us and expect reason alone to guide us, the consequence to the race will be calamitous. How many Huxleys, Russells, Robertsons, Laskis, Joads, Wells, Shaws, and others of this class do we have of the entire human family? Whilst we admire the brilliance of their intellect, we yet almost instinctively admire the saintly and no less brilliant intellects of those who believe in some religion. Take a single example.

Ghandhi was not a Christian according to strict orthodox definition, nor, I venture to suppose was he a blind subscriber to all the orthodox teaching and doctrines of Hinduism, but religion and prayer played an important and predominant part in the shaping of his life. When any form of religion is built up it is bound to have in its set up the frailties common to men. It is buttressed with theological opinions which cannot but be imperfect as man is imperfect. That part which is claimed to be divinely revealed or instructed would appear in the light of scientific analysis as historically and psychologically and philosophically often untenable. The human speculation may even be right although it may be

outside the realm of reason. Many therefore take things on faith and find a certain spiritual satisfaction and consolation.

There is no man but has some regret sometime or another, a regret for some misdeed, some wrong done to someone, in such an hour of repentance the thought that a loving God will forgive is precious and most comforting. Religious people have gone through this most exquisite experience. Cowper puts into beautiful verse his own feeling:—

*What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still,
But now they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.*

Immediately his mind soars to realms beyond human understanding to God the Incomprehensible and yet real to the eyes of faith. A mysterious something, a Power, Cowper calls this a Dove, a Messenger of Peace and evokes this divine Spirit of peace.

*Return O Holy Dove return
Sweet messenger of peace,
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
That drove thee from my breast.*

To how many hundreds of thousands of men and women in their hours of contrition has not this thought brought peace that passeth all understanding. The case hardened rationalist will perhaps pooh-pooh this as mere weak sentimentality. But what this less-than-human or super-human intellectual snob misses in life he does not know. He cannot understand what is meant by tears of joy. He cannot understand those transient moments when we are lifted as it were beyond our natural self to realms of perfect benevolence and

charity. He is a cold stranger to the noblest emotions and impulses of the human heart, his reason has deadened them, he is now only a thinking, reasoning automaton and feels that he is none the worse for it. But remove sentiment and man returns closer to his primitive progenitors from whom he sprang. I always think of what T. H. Huxley said when he stood behind the coffin of his little son, "with his mind bent on anything but disputation" and heard Paul's words repeated by the minister, "if the dead rise not again, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." He is immediately stung to the quick and lashes the author of those words. "I cannot tell you how inexplicably they shocked me. Paul had neither wife nor child, or he must have known that his alternative involved a blasphemy against all that was best and noblest in human nature. I could have laughed with scorn. What? Because I am face to face with irreparable loss. . . . I am to renounce my manhood, and howling grovel in bestiality. Why, the very apes know better, and if you shoot their young, the poor brutes grieve their grief out and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge."

I only quote this interesting episode to show the intense feeling of grief even Huxley must have gone through at the burial of his little boy.

27 The truly religious being is not greatly concerned as to the label of religion. The great world religions like any other human undertaking, like the military or governments tend in their separate developments, towards an exclusive and intolerant attitude against other similar institutions. When any form of religion is very highly organised it tends to develop fanaticism and intolerance which is absolutely alien to the spirit of true Religion. Religion is meek, gentle, tolerant and longsuffering, and any form of it must be nur-

tured in that spirit alone. Controversies as to the interpretations of theology or theological opinions or other debatable points in dogma or doctrine only create divisions, dissensions and disputes which tend to draw us away from the central truth in religion.

This is one aspect of the Christian religion that has often worried me. Could God's revealed religion contain in it so much hate, fear, intolerance, divisions and persecutions as had marked its course down the ages? It is said that there are today more than 265 different forms, sects, cults and divisions of Christianity.

On the great ocean there are on the surface waves and stirrings, but at the very depth of its bosom there is always calm. So it is in Religion, the superficial manifestations of religious fervour that one sees everywhere in organised religious communities is not religion, mere outpouring of partisan loyalties, or vainglorious individual idiosyncrasies. This aspect is also seen in persons fully ordained and instructed but whose hearts do not appear to be touched by deep convictions or manifest that joy or serenity that must accompany such convictions. Whilst pretending to propagate religion they are perhaps not aware that they are a stumbling block and a definite drawback to its propagation.

Canon Elliott has but given expression to a commonplace truth when he said that if ever Christianity spreads throughout the world it will be by the touch of life upon life, by the lighting of one torch from another. It is this fundamental truth that we today seem to forget. We have very clever preachers but who are they or what are they behind the preachers? The congregations instinctively seek to know the man behind the preacher. What manner of man is he?

Is he a true servant of God impelled by an irresistible love and conviction urged by an ineffable necessity to say the things he says, or does he simply say these beautiful things because it is his duty and profession to say them?

There is always a certain indefinable inexplicable something that emanates from the soul of the true servant of God that penetrates through the hardest hearts of those with whom he comes into contact. A spark of Divinity, something of Christ—God in Christ.

GOD—THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE

28 I sometimes dare to suppose that God is like the sun. The sun itself is absolutely indifferent to individual human interests, it is indiscriminating, it shines alike on the good and the bad, on the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak; the wise man however with his specialised knowledge draws from it certain benefits. He captures certain elements of it and puts them into a tube and with the gentle pressure of a button he lights the darkness of the night and puts the same into hundreds of other uses for his comfort and convenience. With it he can warm his water, cook his food, light his house and do many other things which his brother uncultured and ignorant in the wilds does not enjoy. So is God, in spite of men calling Him by familiar names as if He is only a superman with all the qualities of men, love, hatred, compassion, tribal, favouring some and ignoring others—a very personal and Almighty Being. The Christian conception to me is the most beautiful, though it be only an aspect of this power, Father God, if only Christians know how to draw that quality of a father to themselves in prayer and meditation, as the scientist, in his laboratory draws to himself the benefits from the sun.

The personal aspect is on the part of the human. I believe anyone can derive personal benefits from this Source if only he knows how to do it. God does not seem to go about the world of men, scattering personal favours on those who repeat prayers or count beads. On His own He stands alone apart, like the sun, and those who rightly seek Him shall find Him.

Man's mind boggles appalled at the mere contemplation of the immensity of space, the myriads of other worlds and he stands aghast at his own discoveries, how can he then know

Him who stands behind His great Creation. Huxley in a sense is not altogether wrong when he says that God is a product of man. Sometime or other men in many countries have created many gods. In the command in Exodus XXII—18—we find God saying, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". and this had been the direct cause for wicked religious murders till comparatively recent times. The following notice is said to have been placed in a Scottish Church "There will be nae preaching this Lord's Day as the parson has gone to burn a witch for the glory of God in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost."

The question here is not so much the burning of witches as the conscientious belief that such barbarous acts were the wish and will of God and were committed with His sanction and by His command, because the Bible," the Holy Word of God" "says" "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". God does not seem to have interfered to stop this most senseless carnage committed in His name and as men thought, done for His glory. Nor has history shown a single instance of God's interference during the most appalling and gruesome deeds of inhumanity during war, pestilence, floods fires and famines. An interference that leaves no room for doubt as to its authenticity.

During a war if suddenly no gun fired, no bomb burst, and men stood still and gazed at each other in a friendly gesture, embraced each other and went back home each to his own wife and family, or when the thousands of women, young and old, were mass-raped in broad daylight on the streets of Sialkot some supermundane phenomenon occurred and these lust blinded men suddenly realised the heinousness of their deeds and sought forgiveness, we could then say that God had indeed interfered.

But does this sort of divine intervention happen except in legend or folklore? Many stories of manifestations of Saints and even of Mary, mother of Jesus, leading Catholic armies to victory have been told. Queyroz relates a scene in Ceylon when the Catholic Portuguese army was storming the stockade of Rajasinghe II at Kaduwela. He states that the Sinhalese saw how the Portuguese soldiers caught the bullets in the air and fought like lions, as there went before them a woman clad in blue and white who incited them.

There is another famous story recorded in history, also from Roman Catholic source. The story of Joan of Arc, a simple illiterate country maid who claimed to have heard the voice of God when she was only twelve years old and continued to hear and see visions of St. Margaret, St. Catherine and St. Michael and converse with them. Inspired by this strong conviction, Joan, the ignorant village girl of Domremy, performed feats of military prowess and freed France from foreign invaders and restored the Kingdom of France to Charles VII. What puzzles me is that part of the story when the poor girl was sold to the English and treated brutally before she was finally burnt in the market square of Rouen on May 30, 1431, the voices and visions of Saints had completely disappeared.

She was deserted and discarded and alone in her cell in prison undergoing appalling humiliation for one whole year. If indeed, she was an agent of God one could scarcely believe she would be deserted in her hour of agony. Her courage and supreme heroism, however, were superhuman, drawn from some spiritual source. Whatever the source of

inspiration may be, it must be remembered that the Church under a cunning Bishop Cauchon with forty theologians who formed the tribunal condemned this innocent young girl to be burnt as a heretic.

The consensus of intelligent world opinion on religious beliefs seems to be reaching a point of total denial of some of the fundamental claims made by the various organised religions. These great world thinkers are found not only among the great scientists and philosophers but also among great theological and biblical scholars. None will have the courage to doubt the absolute honesty and sincerity of their intellectual convictions.

The deep religious insights—not the foolish pretensions of religious sadists and fanatics—will baffle the great scientists. Sir Oliver Lodge was prepared to stake his great reputation on his conviction of the truth in spiritualism, but his sealed envelope entrusted to the Society for Psychical Research before his death in 1940 still remains unopened as no one has yet come up with a message from him as to the precise contents therein. This fact itself does not necessarily disprove the possibility of speaking with the spirits of dismembered bodies. In matters of deep spiritual significance it is always safe, I think, to keep one's mind open.

Albert Einstein does not believe that the individual will survive the death of the body, nor does he believe "that God rewards and punishes the objects of his Creation". "A God" he says, "in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty." These different views of individuals should not be allowed to discourage those engaged in the various religious systems, for they do not supply substitutes for this insistent religious urge in the human heart. Whether God is a personal God or

not according to the teaching of the Church, whether partheogenesis (virgin Birth) is based on fact or not, whether the resurrection of Jesus is true or not, or His Ascension, whether there is life after death or not, and Omar Khayyam thinks there is no life after death when he says:—

*“Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing at least is certain, that Life flies;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.”*

(We are almost constrained to whisper, does it really?) whether all these be true or not mankind will, I feel sure, not give up the chase to know God or lose the fear of God and the hope of a better future in the great Hereafter. For as Bettex says, “The truth is, man in every age is still man.” And as long as fear, love, desire and hope kindle within him, he will feel the need for something, some Power above him to Whom he could look up for support, and this looking up may take diverse ways, crude or cultured according to the circumstances, period, place and individual.

Gilbert Murray, D.C.L., L.L.D., Litt: D., formerly Professor of Greek, in the University of Oxford, says on page 117 of his book *Stoic, Christian and Humanist* “We are gregarious animals; our ancestors have been such for countless ages. We cannot help looking out on the world as gregarious animals do; we see it in terms of humanity and of fellowship. Students of animals under domestication have shown us how the habits of gregarious creature, taken away from his kind, are shaped in a thousand details by reference to the lost pack which is no longer there—the pack which a dog tries to smell his way back to all the time he is out walking, the pack he barks to for help when danger threatens. It is a strange and touching thing, this eternal

hunger of the gregarious animal for the herd of friends who are not there. And it may be, it may very possibly be, that, in the matter of this Friend behind phenomena, our own yearning and our own almost ineradicable instinctive conviction, since they are certainly not founded on either reason or observation, are in origin the groping of a lonely-souied gregarious animal to find its Herd-Leader in the great space between stars.' (capitals mine). At any rate it is a belief very difficult to get rid of."

This is an interesting thought and perhaps helps to explain, if partly, the natural desire to go back to the Father, the Source of life from whom we have broken away and whom we now seek in diverse ways through many forms of Religion, through prayer, meditation, belief, worship and faith. I hope some Christian philosopher will examine this thought more closely—the thought of this eternal restlessness of the soul, this irrepressible urge, this instinctive quest for God.

I firmly believe that behind this universal phenomenon of religion from the most primitive savagery to the present civilised systems of religious worship there lies an undeniable, irresistible, persistent, instinctive and universal urge to know, to reach Something which seems to be beyond human comprehension. This urge, this desire, must surely emanate from a benevolent Source, for all forms of organised religions have at the root the motive to make man a better being. The reasons which cause one to hold on to one form and another to another are merely historical and accidental—an unthinking absorption from the social environment in which one lives at the time, though few would dare to examine their thus acquired beliefs. I, as a humble Christian, implicitly believe that that SOURCE which inspires the race of men to better living is none other than the GOD I worship.

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIANS' CLAIMS

29 We are made after the image of God. And God said "Let us make man in our image after our likeness." Gen: 1, 26. "So God made man in His image." Gen: 1, 27. (But who saw or heard Him?) If we take this in its literal meaning—and I do not know why we should import into these simple words any other meaning, then I feel that we cannot but sympathise with God. If we are honest with ourselves we cannot but confess that this biped is not the best looking among the creatures God has created. The noble looking stag or the lion excels man in appearance. Take for instance one of our best known men, take G. B. Shaw and place him side by side with the giraffe, by no means the best looking animal. Now which do you think is the better looking and more imposing creature, the lanky naked biped or the long necked quadruped? The difference in types of men from giants to dwarfs and other varying specimens, of colour, bone, skin, and eyes may be subsequent variations which God had not intended. The Bible speaks of a giant called Og, king of Bashan, whose height can be guessed by the size of his bed which measures 16 feet 4 inches by seven feet four inches.

On the intellectual plane man has reached dazzling heights that no other creature could ever hope to reach. Here too the most brilliant brains do not agree as to the existence of God of the Bible, or to the fact of man's existence on this planet in the manner described in Genesis. They simply laugh at the idea, as most thinking people do, that God came down and made a heap of sand in the shape of man (or like Himself) and breathed into this lump of clay, and behold it

was made man after His own image. All the marvellous systems of nerves, glands, blood, that still puzzle the keenest intellects of the medical profession, then began to function. But one wonders why a little bit of the coccyx still clings on to his anatomy. The Christian view of the origin of man as a fiat, a ready made adult male who was put to sleep for God to operate on to make a woman for Adam is too fantastic for serious thought. All this would appear to the Christian Clergy as childish, but, I think, it is just exactly how it would strike the youth and the uninstructed person. They are not aware of the Spiritual significance the Church places for its explanation. Man, the Image of God. Honck, in his famous book, "Man's Triumph with God in Christ" says on page 119, "God created man in his image and likeness. This fact gives human life a significance of tremendous import. We are in this world because God created us; and we are responsible agents because we have a rational soul."

There is another claim that the world of man is a better place since the introduction of Christianity. God, we say, came down to earth and took upon Himself, in the person of Jesus, human shape and form in the fulness of time. We cannot of course aver that before this strange event the race was more barbarous and wicked. This event took place nearly 2000 years ago, but recorded history for thousands of years before it shows a remarkably high standard of culture and civilisation in certain countries. Fisher mentions quite a few instances of high culture that would compare favourably with any modern culture. He says, "In Crete," that long and beautiful island, surmounted by the snowy crest of Ida, which of all European islands lies nearest Egypt, there was nearly 2000 years, (3000 to 1400 B.C.) a flourishing civilisation which spread its influence far and wide through the land washed by the Aegean Seas or westward to the shores of Sicily." He

continues "The ruins of the palace at Minos, at Knossos afford astounding evidence of the comfort and luxury to be procured in that distant age. The systems of heating and draining and even some of the women's fashions, as depicted in the frescoes have a thorough modern air." It is significant that the cross appears to have been a religious symbol with those people, so many thousands of years before the cross of Christ. There are other instances in recorded history when the cross was a symbol or religion, long before the cross of Jesus.

There is in history much evidence to show that mankind was no better nor worse before the Christian era than after it. In fact if a precise comparison were possible, the past will not fare badly. I should like to mention just one more para from Fisher who says thus "While all Europe was yet rude and unlettered, Geometry, Astronomy, Engineering and Land Surveying were cultivated by the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, here, too, more than 3000 years before Christ, mankind had carried to a point of perfection, as the most recent investigation at Ur of the Chaldeans have shown the arts of the jeweller, the carver and the cabinet maker."

The claim that preachers too often make "We gave the world schools and hospitals" can scarcely be maintained. At the temple of Aesculapius free medical service was rendered. In the second century before the influence of the Christian Church began to be felt, there were many charitable and philanthropic institutions all over Italy, free houses for widows and orphans and soup kitchens. Even in Ceylon we had a system of schooling and the Ayurveda. The citation of the above facts are not meant to detract or deny the great influence of Christian thought on the ways of living of men, but it is only an argument against the claim that it was Christianity that first gave the world these things.

Prof: F. Bettex in his *Modern Science and Christianity* (translated from the German by E. K. Simpson, M.A. Oxon: says on page 13, "For centuries before the Helveti housed themselves in those lake dwellings which survived in Europe till 750 or 1000 A.D., mighty civilisations were at their zenith in the palaces of Thebes, Memphis, Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre and Carthage, such as would find no cause to be abashed in presence of our own, and indeed far excelled ours in point of sumptuous munificence." He further argues that man has not changed throughout the ages. Man is still man and that "From the first the most dissimilar stages of refinement were not successive, but synchronous," "We may see," he says again, "in the bodily structure, a mirror and copy of the life of the soul, that the human family had never really changed."

Now as regards behaviour, the most gruesome, sadistic and appalling acts were committed during the Christian era as at any other period of man's history. The great hero of the last war, Mr. Winston Churchill, wrote, "It was not until the dawn of the twentieth century of the Christian era that war began to enter into its kingdom as the potential destroyer of the human race." The atrocities of the past pale into insignificance before the most blood-curdling, bestial and diabolical cruelties perpetrated on hundred of thousands of men women and children in the last decade in the concentration camps of Beisen, Buchanwald, in Malaya and in other centres of the war. What period of history of the past can be compared to our own when man boasting of his culture and civilisation, in the midnight storm of his depravity and blind fury of his foul heart committed deeds that no pen can describe or imagination conceive. When Mussolini bombed and mustard-gassed the innocent civilians of Abyssinia by their thousands, it is said that the church bells pealed Te-Deums, and Pope blessed the perpetrators' weapons in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

This frightful debacle took place in Christian lands among Christian people, who for generations had been taught the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. But unfortunately all the preaching seems to have fallen on barren and rocky ground.

CHAPTER XI.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

30 When I am in the attitude of worship, in the church, the Sanctuary of the Lord, God's House and my mind detached from all mundane thoughts, I find perfect satisfaction in all the sacraments of the Church, the prayers, hymns, Lord's Supper etc. These do really help me in my spiritual effort to come as near as I humanly can to the presence of God in conscious communion. My mind is then far away from disputation of the theological interpretations of the abstruse and abstract things that the human mind can with reason scarcely comprehend. I rest satisfied and uplifted and ennobled and purified in heart. But, now let me leave the Church and forget the Sabbath blessings and look awhile on the other side of the picture. And bring my mind completely bereft of the religious fervour that enthralled it awhile ago to look upon the exercises I had gone through, with the clear cold light of reason. What do I see then, a farrago of mysterious ecclesiastical jargon wrapped up in language which when we calmly decipher sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase, word by word, contains little that reason could justify or hold as sensible. But these dry bones jump to life and inspire the moment a devout worshipper utters them with reverence and awe.

What is this mystery? Is it altogether a mere creation of one's mind, an illusion? Or has the ritual certain power to create a religious feeling in a devout worshipper? Or is the mind of the devotee so tuned that it catches the spiritual significance for the moment. The merely rational person may look upon the religious person as but a fanatic or a rank hypocrite. But is he either? I really do not think so. There are certain emotions and sentiments in the human

breast implanted, as it were, by God Himself, that far transcend mere reason. This may seem irrational, but since it is true it cannot be deemed as unreasonable. "Faith" says Baily Festus, "is a higher faculty than reason." No religion is merely reasonable.

In the very elements of any religion there are phases of spiritual transcendence beyond the easy comprehension of reason. Is it not therefore unreasonable to condemn what reason fails to understand.?

Religion in whatever shape or form will always be found necessary so long as the peoples of the nations remain in that intellectual plane out of which only a very few emerge into heights far beyond the reach of the many. In our own highly cultured age men like Wells, Shaw, Einstein, Freud, Laski, Huxley, Russel, Joad, Robertson and a few others shine like beacon lights. To them the light that religion gives to show weak men the way in a dark and dangerous world full of pitfalls and alluring vices is not perhaps necessary. They perhaps think they are able to avoid these dangers by a calm and deliberate philosophical and psychological analysis. They overcome the weakness of the flesh and temptation which we are prone to not by an appeal to a Superhuman Power but by the exercise of their own will and thought. But to a humble Christian that will and that thought the giant intellects depend upon is also a gift of the Giver of all good and perfect gifts—God.

Religion therefore to the mass of mankind and yea, indeed to all, is as necessary as good government, economic, material and social security. Perfection in any of these diverse forms of human enterprise is the goal towards which the race is ever striving, and in this pursuit religion has a very definite place, therefore let those to whom churches and

temples seem irrelevant and unnecessary remember that it is even wicked to decry and disparage this media of the masses which serve them as a definite source of spiritual and moral upliftment and comfort.

The entire purpose with which I have undertaken this task is well concentrated in Arthur Weigall's book entitled *The Paganism in Our Christianity*. Mark the thoughtful words of the title *The Paganism in Our Christianity*. Weigall is a research scholar and has written many books of very great importance regarding early Egyptian times. The first chapter in his book I am referring to is "The Need for a Re-statement of Christian Theology". That in a nutshell is my plea also.

Every honest student of Christianity will not fail to find Weigall's book absorbingly interesting and most revealingly helpful. He clearly distinguishes the Jesus of History from the Jesus of Theology and shows us how much pagan influence of Judaism and Mithraism and other foolish and superstitious Jewish practices and customs have crept into *our* Christianity nor need we wonder at all this when we consider the age in which the writers of the Gospels lived, even Paul cannot be said to have wholly escaped the myth and the legend-influence of his time, for Tarsus, the home of Paul, was one of the great centres of Mithraism being the chief city of the Cilicians. There appears to be a decided tinge of Mithraism in the Epistles and Gospels says Weigall and he further states "Thus the Designations of Our Lord as the Dayspring from on High, the Light, the Sun of Righteousness, and other similar expressions, are borrowed from or related to the Mithraic phraseology. (page 126). Mithraism, the worship of Mithra, the solar god, had been introduced into Rome, somewhere about 68 B.C. by Cilician seamen. I

remember a few years ago listening to Dr. C. Jinandrasa, at the King Georges' Hall, Colombo, when he greatly regretted the suppression of Mithraism, because it contained a great many virtues, he said.

Religion in its essence need no convincing much less God. It is an integral element inherent in the very nature and composition of man, whether he recognises it or not. I have been seeking and striving to understand God, and Jesus in relation to God in terms of human relationships, in ways beyond what the traditional teaching of the Church portends and in the process of which, if I appear to discard or doubt some of the views that the Orthodox Church holds as inviolable, unchangeable and inflexible, I may be pardoned for my honest convictions, if these convictions are expressed in pungent language it is because I feel that religious complacency can best be disturbed by such means. And if my attitude appears to be "uniformly hostile" to the hierarchy, as one kind reviewer says, I can assure my readers that there is no one in this land who respects and admires more sincerely and deeply the devoted service of men and women who under many silent hardships, sacrifices and privations are carrying on the message of Our Lord to the ends of the earth, Missionaries, Ministers, Doctors, Teachers, Evangelists, Nurses, Pastors etc: than I do. God bless these true and faithful servants of Jesus. I have explained this attitude of mine in the Preface and I repeat it here lest I be misunderstood as being in some way or other miffed or piqued. God knows I am not an ungrateful apostate.

*Father, I will not ask for wealth or fame,
Tho once they would have joyed my carnal sense,
I shudder not to bear a hated name,
Wanting all wealth, myself my own defence.*

*But give me, Lord, eyes to behold the truth;
A seeing sense that knows the eternal right;
A heart of pity filled and gentlest ruth;
A manly faith that makes all darkness light.*

—Theodore Parker.

EPILOGUE

I have in this book attempted by diverse routes to reach my goal which is to rouse Protestant consciousness to an inevitable disaster that awaits the present form of church-life. If I succeed in kindling a spirit of inquiry as to the truth or otherwise of my assertions I shall be satisfied. I honestly feel that much of what we now possess in our Orthodoxy can with advantage be dropped without causing any loss to our steadfast faith in Jesus as our Saviour and God as our Creator.

Certain of our religious customs, practices, beliefs, rites, ritual and theological views which men of a past age with definitely primitive and pagan bias and fear have woven into our religion can now be replaced in the light of modern scholarship, and the message made more acceptable and reasonable to the present age.

Prof. Gilbert Murray states in his *Stoic, Christian and Humanist* (Page 78) that "the idea of an 'only begotten Son' of God was regular in Orphic systems, and that of a Son of God by a mortal woman conceived in some spiritual way, and born for the saving of mankind, was at least as old as the fifth century B.C.," The admission of an historical fact in connection with our organised religious set-up should not seriously perturb the christian mind. For a true christian

nothing could shake his firm belief in Jesus as our Lord and his deep reverence for, and fear of God. Murray further states that most of the articles of Christian faith and practice were latent in ancient religions.

All forms of organised religion cannot reasonably be expected not to contain in their several orthodoxies elements of doubtful and even questionable nature. We simply adopt beliefs common to the people with whom we happen to live, our parents and priests and teachers, and feel an imaginary obligation even to violently defend the faith of our fathers. Few of us feel inclined to examine the beliefs we so sternly defend. These beliefs get grafted into our thinking. Our mental mechanism seems to be so adaptable to believe rather than to doubt or question any religious doctrine or dogma. Thus our thoughts and living become *conditioned*, a fact which Krishnamuthi so vehemently condemns. This unthinking absorption of beliefs should not be encouraged for it tends to create a sort of religious slave mentality. If we break this bondage and liberate our creative mind from all bias and that feeling of a "Primary Certitude." we shall discover much we now associate with religion, as mere superstition, fear, ignorance, foolish assumptions, primitive and pagan practices, we shall then get nearer to the heart of true religion—to God.

However, I would rather continue in all these silly and false beliefs in the pursuit of the truth in religion than have no religion at all. If we break away from religion completely, we are likely to degenerate into a state of grisly, gruesome and beastly barbarity, for animal man is still grossly ignorant and brutish.

Our Lord did not deliver a dissertation upon the composition of the Holy Trinity or upon the vicarious sacrifice necessary to redemption. He was more concerned about the happiness and well-being of the people. He taught them simple truths of moral, social and ethical value and that the forgiving Heavenly Father cares for them. The Church has built upon this beautiful life and teaching a frightful pagan faith of belief in eternal torment in Hell and other devices to frighten men to obey and believe Church Doctrine on pain of eternal gnashing of teeth in Hell. No intelligent youth of today could be persuaded to believe in the doctrine of Eschatology, certain features of which have unmistakably traces of the sixth century B.C. Orphism, according to which, after the death the pure go to eternal bliss, the very bad to eternal suffering, the in-betweens to purgatory. The Roman Dutch Law or the British Penal Code seems to be more reasonable and fits the punishment to suit the offence.

For a man's short space of life here he is not altogether hundred percent good or bad. Of his entire three score years and ten or a little more, he spends a fair portion of it in innocent childhood, about a third in sleep, some time in eating and dressing and toilet, therefore the balance of intelligent adult active conscious living is barely a score of years or less, now for this short space of life in which he is held responsible for his actions no one can be held to be entirely a saint or sinner, but the reward or punishment is either eternal bliss or eternal suffering. Is this reasonable? From pagan mythology we have almost entirely taken over many a wonderful story and incorporated it into the Life Story of Jesus; from Mithraism the story of the birth in the cave and adoration of the shepherds; (changing the cave into a lowly cattle shed), the story of the star in the East from Adonis' worship; the miracle of water turned into wine from Diony-

sos' worship. But through all and behind its pomp and vanities and false beliefs and preposterous complexities we still can get to the Jesus of history His teaching and example right to the heart of Jesus where rests the Salvation of the world. Perhaps the time will come when thoughtful men of all forms of organised Religion will begin to think outside and beyond their own narrow limits and ideologies and want to find out more about each others' beliefs. Intellectual men from the great world universities, philosophers scientists, Historians, Theists, Monotheists, Atheists, no matter who, so long as one is truly interested and capable of understanding the meaning and purpose of religion. The origin and history; who built the various forms and why, the purpose underlying each from. Then I feel sure that **all religious intolerance, bigotry, fanaticism, hostility and stupid practice and false beliefs will vanish.** And mankind will realise that Religion is one as God is one. I already see that something approaching this idea is taking shape. Dr. A. L. Bashan of the London University had recently held a symposium of world religions at the City Literary Institute of London. Its aim, it is said was to study the application and relevance of Asia's world religions to modern conditions, life and culture, and therefore only Asian representatives were selected. I think it is a pity that it was restricted to Asia only, Religion is universal—it defies any geographical boundaries, or racial linguistic limitations. If such international religious seminars are held in a proper atmosphere and with the right motive and spirit we shall remove the bane of bitter differences that retard our mutual advancement today and will also usher in an era of goodwill, forbearance and peace. It may so turn out that after an honest intelligent research into the origin of the great religions of today, their historical facts, scientific data, beliefs, dogma, doctrines, ritual, ceremonies and conventions, honest men may have cause to discard many things

which they now practise without much thought. Every honest man whose mind is not biased and who is now prepared to study the generally accepted tenets of his own form of religion will discover much that is not necessary, even undesirable. The removal of such elements will not make him irreligious but rather more reasonably religious. The breaking asunder of religious hostility and the expulsion of doubtful and false principles and dogmas will tend to broaden one's mind to the truths of religion. If world's greatest thinkers get together with one common object of finding out the purpose of religion a new page in the history of man's endeavour to know the mind of his Creator will be written. At least much of what is now causing such bitterness, ill-will, misunderstanding and hatred will disappear.

I believe that the time has now arrived when the best men in our organised Christianity should get together and face the many criticisms made both by hostile critics and our own most devoted and enlightened scholars to see how much of truth there is in what they say, how much of pagan influence and practice have subtly got entrenched in our Religion through the passage of years: and whether we cannot now eliminate the unnecessary and un-Christian element out of our Orthodoxy. If a few men like Canon Charles E. Raven, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, Dr. Donald Soper, and a few of like temperament, intelligence, courage and scholarship meet and discuss the present position of the Church in relation to her doctrines and other matters which the present age of thinking men consider irrelevant and obstructive to a better understanding of the mind of Jesus, His Message, His Life, His Religion and Purpose, there will be a better chance of making man a better being—an image of a benign God.

I close my appeal with the considered views of four great minds.

Dr. E. W. Barnes states "It, (Christianity) has endured to be the nominal creed of clever people who are ceasing to give even lip-service to its ideals. As to the future who can prophesy?"

Arthur Weigall "The old gods have come to church; and their presence beginning at long last to be detected, the day will soon arrive when either they or the congregation must leave."

Arnold Toynbee: "Can we reharvest the wheat in Christianity without reharvesting the tares? Can we re-enter into Communion with the God who is Love without relapsing into the worship of the jealous God whose fanatical devotees have worked much havoc in the past? This it seems to me is the question our future hangs on."

Dr. Albert Schweitzer: To make up to itself for the fact that it does so little to prove the reality of its spiritual and ethical nature, the Christianity of today cheats itself with the delusion that it is making its position as a Church stronger year by year. It is accommodating itself to the spirit of the age by adopting a kind of worldliness. Like other worldly bodies it is at work to make good, by even stronger and uniform organisation its claim to be a body justified by history and practical success. But just as in proportion as it gains in external power, it loses in spiritual " (Out of my life and Thought—page 184).

Again in the next page, Dr. Schweitzer says:—If Christianity for the sake of any tradition or for any considerations whatever, refuse to have itself interpreted in terms of ethics—religious thinking, it will be a misfortune for itself and mankind. What Christianity needs is that it shall be filled to

overflowing with the Spirit of Jesus and in the strength of that shall spiritualize itself into a living religion of inwardness and love, such as its destined purpose should make it. Only as such can it become the leaven in the spiritual life of mankind. What has been passing for Christianity during these nineteen centuries is merely a beginning, not a full grown Christianity springing from the Spirit of Jesus." And here, Dr. Schweitzer, I feel, speaks for me when he continues, "Because I am devoted to Christianity in deep affection, I am trying to serve it with loyalty and sincerity. In no wise do I undertake to enter the lists on its behalf with the crooked and fragile thinking of Christian apologetics, but I call on it to set itself right in the spirit of sincerity with its past and with thought in order that it may thereby become conscious of its true nature."

I have quoted copiously from various authors whose opinions must count, most of whom are faithful followers of Lord Jesus. But if the present leaders of the Church, both the clergy and the Laity, who hold the future of Christianity in their hands refuse to take cognizance of the trends of organised Christianity of the present day it will be a sad day for all of us. Those able and responsible men who now direct its destiny must not rest satisfied and leave everything to God trusting Him to do what precisely is their duty. Men long in service, kindly in disposition, saintly and gentle in character, and downright honest in purpose do not, alas, seem to feel the need for a restatement. We can understand their attitude, for by reason of long practice and loving service in the cause of the *Church*, their thoughts are set, stabilised and rendered immutable, therefore independent thinking does not seem to seep through their fossilised convictions and beliefs. This is generally true, but occasion-

ally there arises a Weatherhead, a Barnes, a Raven from among the Clergy itself, who shine like beacons in a dark and dismal sky, pointing out a warning finger to the danger ahead of a static Church.

* * *

In conclusion, I feel I ought to make a personal explanation lest any person or a group of organised religious people may feel hurt at some remark or observation I have made in good faith. I truly respect every form of organised endeavour towards the betterment of the race through the channel of religion—for at the root of every form of religion there lies the indisputable fact of a noble motive to make man a better being morally, socially and spiritually. But however much I respect every form of endeavour I am not blind to the defects in each system. Gibbon's pithy observation that *all religions are to the uneducated equally true, to the philosopher equally false, and to the statesman equally useful*, is generally true. Though we wish if Gibbon also said that religion in whatever form is *equally necessary to all*.



WESLEY PRESS J. 1254 8/57.

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