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THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

TO NON-CHRISTIAN RACES

AN APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

BY

CHARLES H. ROBINSON, M.A.

HON. CANON OF RIPON; EDITORIAL SECRETARY OF THE S.P.G., AND EDITOR OF "THE EAST AND THE WEST"

"Whosoever is a good and a true Christian, let him understand that truth belongs to his Lord, wherever he may find it."—*Augustine.*

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, NEW YORK, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1910

PREFACE.

A JAPANESE Christian, speaking at a college in North India, referred to the benefits which Asia had conferred upon Europe. "We (Asiatics)," he said, "gave them (the Europeans) their religion, but in giving Christ, unfortunately, we have lost Him." In the following pages we have attempted to answer the question, How may those whose hopes have been transformed by the great gift which has come to them from the East hope to interpret to the peoples of the East the life and character of Christ, so as to beget within them the desire to reclaim their true heritage?

There are some who possess a superficial acquaintance with the chief non-Christian religions and whose attitude towards them is one of ignorant sympathy, to whom, moreover, all religions appear of equal value, because their life would not be different from what it now is if all were proved to be equally false. There are others to whom Jesus Christ is the one supreme reality

and whose loyalty to Him makes it difficult for them to discern, amidst the low ideals and lower achievements of non-Christian peoples, the measure of truth which is embodied in the great religions of the East. We have tried to show that our prospect of appealing to the adherents of these religions depends upon our ability to combine a loyal acceptance of the faith of Christ with an intelligent and sympathetic appreciation of what is best and highest in non-Christian religions.

The limits imposed by the size of the present volume have prevented any attempt to describe the ideals of more than the four chief religions of the East and no reference has been made either to Taoism or Shintoism. Neither of these, however, is a religion in the same sense as are the other four, and Taoism is now hardly more than an elaborate system of witchcraft and necromancy. The final chapter on Christian Missions and the interpretation of natural beauty, whilst it forms an integral part of the argument that we have tried to develop, suggests how far-reaching is the aim which inspires the Christian missionary, and how great will be our eventual gain, in the realm of art as well as in that of morals and religion, when Christian races in the Far East are in a position to re-interpret to us the knowledge which we are now trying to share with them.

The chapters on the ideals of the four chief non-Christian religions will suggest to some of their readers the criticism that the writer has failed to point out how greatly the adherents of these religions fall short of their own ideals. This failure is not the result of ignorance. He has seen fakirs and other "holy" men in India whom he would not dare to compare in holiness or in spiritual discernment with the cannibals whom he has met in Central Africa; he has stayed with Mohammedan slave raiders whose religion was unworthy to rank with that of their pagan slaves; lastly, he has met nominal Christians in West Africa and elsewhere whose ideals of life and conduct would compare unfavourably not only with those of the adherents of non-Christian religions but with those of many heathen. But although, even within the limits of his own experience, the profession and practice of religion, whether Christian or non-Christian, have proved to be widely separated, he feels that to attain a true conception of any religion we must judge it not by its unfaithful and inconsistent, but by its faithful and consistent followers.

Moreover, he feels that the work of the Christian missionary, if it is to follow the lines laid down by the founder of Christianity, must be constructive and not destructive. Christ is, we

believe, the Sun of Righteousness, but in order to prepare for His complete manifestation we have not got to extinguish the stars which have helped to illumine the darkness of the non-Christian world and to guide seekers after truth in their search for God.

One chief reason why the noble ideals of the great Eastern religions do not ennoble the lives of more of their adherents is that these ideals are themselves so high that they tend to create a spirit of despair or even of cynicism in those who accept them. These have found by bitter experience that they cannot live up to the ideals of their own religions and in too many cases they have ceased to aspire to do so. Our message to them is that freedom from sin and selfishness can be obtained through Jesus Christ whose life, reproduced and lived over again by the power of the Divine Spirit in their own experience, may render it possible for them to attain to the utmost heights to which their own great teachers aspired. The belief which lies behind this message forms the basis of our apology for Christian Missions.

CHARLES H. ROBINSON.

February, 1910.

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I.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST.

THE increasing recognition of the measure of truth which is common to Christianity and to all other great religions of the world accentuates the importance of the question, What is there in the teaching of the Christian faith which is of so distinctive and vital a character as to justify the professors of Christianity in their attempt to claim a hearing from the adherents of the great Eastern religions? After a visit to the principal centres of missionary work in India, the writer felt that those of the noble band of civilians who at present govern India, whose attitude towards Christian Missions is one of indifference if not hostility, have something to say in their defence; for, unless it can be shown that the distinctive truth which missionaries have to teach is of vital importance to the well-being of the non-Christian races, it is impossible to justify the action of those who are endeavouring to substitute another

faith for the great religions of the East, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or Confucianism. We shall appreciate better the message of the Christian Church to the non-Christian races if we try to answer the question, What in the case of the chief religions of the East is the goal, and what are the means adopted in order to reach the goal, which the adherents of these religions set before themselves? We may, then, compare these with the goal of the Christian faith and the means whereby Christians hope eventually to attain their goal. Let us try to suggest in the fewest words the goal and the means whereby the goal is sought to be attained by Hindus, Buddhists, Moslems and Confucianists.[1] We need not emphasise the fact that the characteristics to be suggested merely represent salient features of these religions and are not to be regarded as summaries of their teaching.

1. The goal which the orthodox *Hindu* sets before himself is absorption, or rather re-absorption, into impersonal divinity. The means whereby he strives to attain this goal is intellectual

[1] The goals of the non-Christian religions here given are not intended to represent the ideals of the founders of these religions or of their truest disciples. These are discussed in the four following chapters. They represent rather the goals of the majority of the uneducated and less spiritual adherents of these religions.

self-control, which, to be effective, must be combined with the performance of an elaborate series of caste regulations and with abstention from every act of ceremonial pollution. To the Hindu the visible world is the thought of an impersonal God veiled in illusory forms, and everything material is a hindrance to the acquisition of divine knowledge. To him the supreme soul of the universe is idealised intelligence, and it is by attaining self-knowledge that he hopes to become like his divine ideal. By abstracting himself from all the concerns and duties of life the fakir or sadhu hopes to attain that direct and intuitive knowledge of the divine being which he regards as unattainable by people engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life.

2. Turning from the Hindu to the *Buddhist*, we may say that the goal which the Buddhist sets before himself is perfect enlightenment. To him personality and divinity are terms which are even more incompatible than they are to the Hindu. To obtain divine enlightenment is to lose all desire for individual action or individual aspiration. Absence of desire is to him a characteristic sign of divinity. The means whereby he hopes to attain the extinction of desire, which is the necessary prelude to perfect enlightenment, is the recognition of the fact that all that

he sees around him is illusion. Dr. Copleston, in his book on "Buddhism in Ceylon," is inclined to regard Hinduism as more inspiring and as holding out higher ideals than Buddhism. "For," as he says, "with all its proud claims and assertions of attainment, Buddhism does in effect deny the high capacities of man. The Brahman ideal of absorption into the One Supreme Being was nobler and nearer truth. That Buddhism knows nothing of such absorption, if only because it admits no Supreme Being, is now at last beginning to be understood. The Buddhist theory makes the fatal mistake of supposing that it is grand to have nothing and no one to look up to. The monk, if he has attained the further stages of his course, can look down, it is pretended, on deities and all that is divine. But this does not exalt the monk, it takes away from him the opportunity of being great. . . . Buddhism degrades man by denying that there is any being above him." Later on he quotes from the "Buddhist Catechism," which has been written at the instigation of European Buddhists, and is being circulated by them in Ceylon: "a personal God Buddhists regard as only a gigantic shadow thrown upon the void of space by the imagination of ignorant men".[1]

[1] "Buddhism," pp. 152, 282 *sq.*

3. The goal of *Confucianism* may be described as a contented materialism. The means whereby this goal is sought to be attained is the cultivation of practical wisdom which consists to a large extent in the observance of the series of maxims which are ascribed to its founder. In reply to the statement, "Without Confucius China had been without a native religion," Dr. Gibson, in his book, "Mission Problems in South China," writes: "it would be truer to say, 'But for Confucius China had been a religious country'". He says that in the "Book of Documents" and the "Book of Odes," both of which are older than the time of Confucius, the one great spirit, "Shangti," is described as "Creator, Preserver, and Lord of all". "Confucius," he writes, "did much to undermine the realisation of the personality of God in the minds of his countrymen. With a keen interest in practical ethics . . . he had no anxiety to give his ethics any theological basis. The result has been to leave his countrymen without any spiritual atmosphere, and so to vitiate in practice his ethical theories."

4. Lastly, the goal of *Islam*, if by goal we mean the reward or prize which the average uneducated Musulman[1] strives to keep in view, and

[1] For a sketch of the higher ideals of Islam see chap. v.

the thought of which nerved and inspired his ancestors in their struggles to spread the knowledge of Islam, is in a single word, Heaven. Heaven is regarded by him as a place in which will be reproduced the material joys of earth, and the enjoyment of which will be enhanced by the knowledge, if not by the actual sight, of the torments which unbelievers will suffer.

The means whereby the Musulman hopes to attain to his goal is complete resignation to the will of God, who is regarded as an almighty and arbitrary Creator, and, secondly, the preservation of rigid orthodoxy, enshrined for him in the sacred book which he believes to have existed in Heaven before the creation of the world.

It would be possible to show how the respective ideals of the religions to which we have alluded are included in the higher, wider, and more inspiring ideal which is set before the follower of Christ, and which it is our object to set before the non-Christian world.

With the Hindu the Christian anticipates an absorption into God, in which his will will become indistinguishable from God's will, but in which his identity will be conserved in order that as a free agent he may bring the greater glory to God.

With the Buddhist the Christian anticipates a

condition of perfect enlightenment and the extinction of all tormenting, unsatisfied desires, but the means by which he seeks to attain this enlightenment is not by cultivating a belief in universal illusion, but by the appropriation of that eternal life which he regards, not as a state to be enjoyed in the distant future, but as a possession which the knowledge of God revealed in Christ secures to him here and now.

With the Musulman he anticipates compensation for all the sorrows and sacrifices of this present life, but the compensation to which he looks forward is not of a material but of a spiritual order.

The Christian can sympathise, too, at least to some extent, with the common-sense materialism of the Confucianist, inasmuch as the realisation of his own ideal includes an unlimited increase in the physical well-being of the community here on earth.

If we turn now to ask what, in briefest language, we may describe as the goal of Christians, and what the means whereby they hope to attain their goal, our answer is that *the goal of Christianity is the attainment of character.* Heaven, as a Christian writer has well said, is character.

Comparing the goal of Christianity as thus defined with the goals and ideals which we have

already mentioned, we realise how arduous is the task which confronts the Christian missionary. If Christian missionaries could be content with the profession of orthodox opinions, or with the performance of correct ceremonial, their task would be comparatively easy. Orthodoxy may be obtained in a day, the performance of rites and ceremonies may be taught in a week, but for the formation of character, decades of years, if not centuries, are required. We realise, too, how unreasonable it is to be in a hurry, and how impossible it is to gauge progress by statistics. There is no material or arithmetical test by which we can estimate the development of the Christ-like character in an individual, still less in a community.

If, then, it be admitted that the goal of Christianity is the formation of character, how may we describe the means whereby this goal is to be attained? We may say that the means whereby Christians hope to produce character is the manifestation or presentation of character. They believe that God's final and complete revelation to the world is not theological or metaphysical knowledge, such as Hindus and Buddhists eagerly desire, nor has it been a code of laws, or maxims such as the Mohammedans believe that they possess in their Koran, and the Confucianists believe

that they have received from their great teacher, but it has been a revelation of His own character which He has made to us in the incarnate life of His Son.

"It was reserved for Christianity," said Dr. Lecky,[1] "to present to the world *an ideal character* which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has indeed been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Among all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration."

When we go on to ask, How may this revelation be made effective, or, in other words, what is the message which those who have received

[1] "History of Morals," vol. ii., p. 9.

and understood it have to give to the non-Christian races? our answer is that we have to bring to bear upon their lives the influence of this character. To do this the Christian missionary must not only be able to describe it to them, he must be able to reflect it. There is a world of difference between the description of a face which we might read in a book and the direct reflection of the same on which we might gaze in a looking-glass. There is as real a difference between the influence which the character of Christ will exert upon non-Christians who may read of it in the Gospels and the influence which will be exerted by the same character when reflected in the Christ-like life of a Christian. St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, could venture to speak of himself as "reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord".[1]

It is hardly necessary to suggest that if the influence of Christ's character is to become effective, His followers must not be content with trying to present one or two aspects or features of that character. The features which appeal with special force to Englishmen are His courage, His sympathy, and His strenuous activity. They will not, however, succeed in commending to non-Christians a character which possessed these

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 18, R.V.

traits unless they can also reflect the meekness and the patience which were traits of the same character. It is the passive and non-resisting features of Christ's character, His meekness and gentleness, His patient endurance of insult and outrage, and the unruffled calm which characterised His whole life, which appeal to the Eastern mind, and our presentation of His character will remain ineffective unless we can convince those to whom we desire to appeal, that we ourselves are striving to imitate these special traits. This thought, *viz.*, that he who would reflect Christ's character to any purpose must reflect it as a whole, has been well expressed by Dr. J. P. Jones, who has spent the greater part of a lifetime in close touch with Indians. He writes: "I am inclined to believe that we of the West have few things of greater importance and of deeper religious significance to learn from the East than the appreciation of such graces of life as patience and endurance under evil. We stand always prepared to fight manfully for our convictions, and to obtrude them at all points upon friend and foe alike. It is not in the nature of the East to do this. We say that he has no stamina. We call him, in opprobrium, 'the mild Hindu'. But let us not forget that he will reveal tenfold more patience than we under very trying circum-

stances, and will turn the other cheek to the enemy when we rush into gross sin by our haste and ire. He is one of the hemispheres of a full-orbed character. Ours of the West is the other. Let us not flatter ourselves too positively that our assertive, aggressive part is the more beautiful or the more important. Yea, more, I question whether ours is the stronger and more masculine part of life and character; for is it not, to most of us, an easier thing to fling ourselves in vehemence against an evil in others than it is to sit calmly and patiently under a false accusation as our Lord Himself did? At least, it must be felt an open question as to whether the impulsive and domineering vigour of the West is preferable to the 'mildness' of the East. What I wish to emphasise is the dissimilarity between our Western type of life and the Eastern, and to warn the Christian worker from the West against the danger of assuming that Christian life must be adorned with only those Western traits and excellences of character which are foreign, if not unpalatable to the East —the very fault which characterises the Hindu on his side, and which makes him feel so superior at times and so inaccessible to Christian influence. For let it not be forgotten that the Hindu regards what we call our foibles of petulance,

arrogance, and intolerance with the same disapprobation and disgust as we do their more frequent violation of the seventh, eighth, and ninth commands of the Decalogue. And who is to decide as to which catalogue is the worse and the more heinous in the sight of God?"[1]

Mr. C. F. Andrews (of Delhi) writes: "I was teaching the Sermon on the Mount to a Hindu student and friend. When we came to the words 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth,' he said to me, 'Sir, the Englishman may inherit the earth, but if you call him "meek" he would be insulted'." Mr. Andrews adds: "There, in one singularly true criticism, in the form of an epigram, lies the difference between conventional Christianity and the Christianity of Christ!"

Again, Mr. Holland (of Allahabad) writes: "I speak to an Englishman of some acquaintance as a 'really good man, though he has a hot temper,' and the description suits a familiar type; but speak to an Indian of a good man who loses his temper, and a look of sheer bewilderment comes over his face. 'What is goodness,' he asks, 'but calm and patience and unruffled benign serenity?' After centuries of Christianity we have still not accomplished the most elementary of all tasks, that of mastering our temper."

[1] "The East and the West," vol. iii., p. 13.

A doctrine which must form part of the Church's message to the non-Christian world, the presentation of which to the Eastern mind, and especially to Hindus, is attended with exceptional difficulty, is that of human responsibility and its correlative human sinfulness. Orthodox Hinduism is so largely pantheistic that the missionary finds it hard to convince those to whom he appeals that moral responsibility can attach to them for anything that they can do. If, as they are ready to assert, God is in them and they are in God, and they have no identity apart from the being of God, their deduction seems not unnatural that whatever they do is done by God, to whom must belong all responsibility.

In dealing with peoples to whom this belief has come down as a heritage of faith from a prehistoric past, the wisest plan must obviously be to begin by laying emphasis upon the great truth which underlies Hinduism and pantheism, that is the truth of the divine immanence and of man's affinity with God, and to claim it as part of the Christian faith. We can then go on to urge that sin may be defined not as a breach of ceremonial law nor as the commission of any particular act, but as an inward rending of the unity of life. The tragedy of sin will be realised when it is understood that by acquiring a selfish and unloving

character a man renders nugatory the advantage which should accrue to him as a result of the divine immanence and separates himself from God. We can point out how in the early revelation given to the Jews the doctrine of human responsibility was directly based upon the doctrine of man's affinity with God. Thus we read in Genesis ix. : "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man . . . for in the image of God made He man". The Christian believes and, in a modified sense, the Hindu believes that God completes Himself through man, and that man completes himself in God. Sin is that which interferes with this completion and with man's self-realisation. Man sins when he asserts himself against the Divine order. One of the writers of the Book of Proverbs (viii. 36) said, "He that sinneth wrongeth his own soul". The true interpretation, therefore, of the great truth of the Divine immanence which underlies Hinduism and much of the thought of the East should act as a preparation for the appreciation of the Christian doctrine of human responsibility and human sinfulness.

It is hardly necessary to point out that until the consciousness of human responsibility and of sin has been created, the Christian doctrine of an atonement can have no meaning to the Eastern

mind. It is the contemplation of Christ's character which will most surely raise the ideals of non-Christians and, by revealing to them how far short they have fallen of these ideals, will create a consciousness of sin, and thus prepare the way for the preaching of the Christian doctrine of an atonement.

In endeavouring to commend to the Eastern mind the truth of the Christian revelation we need to remember that much of the evidence in its support which appeals to us does not appeal to the natives of the East at all. An Indian who was at Cambridge with the writer, and who took Paley's evidences for the truth of Christianity as one of the subjects for his first University examination, was asked by a friend what he thought of the argument which the book contained and on which he had passed a successful examination. He explained that though he had nothing to say against Paley's arguments, in which he could detect no flaw, they had quite failed to convince him or to modify in any way his own belief. Even when we turn from the arguments suggested by Paley to the argument which now appears to many as the strongest that can be alleged for the truth of our faith, and which is based upon the existence of the Gospel portrait of Christ, and the miracle which is implied by

the present existence of this portrait, the case is not altogether different. To the Eastern mind this argument does not appeal in at all the same way as it does to us. The Hindu who believes in the repeated incarnations of Vishnu, which have no moral purpose, and some of which are associated with acts of open immorality, is in no way impelled to believe in the Divine nature or heavenly origin of Christ, because of the moral excellence of the character which is attributed to Him. This inability to feel the force of the appeal which the moral excellence of Christ's character makes to us, and which for many of us constitutes the strongest argument for the truth of our religion, greatly enhances the difficulties of the Christian missionary who is in contact with non-Christian peoples.

Hence before the character of Christ can exert its proper influence in the East it will have to be interpreted. John Bunyan said that for the unbelieving world the Bible was written in an unknown tongue and that the lives of Christians were its only interpreters. As we come into contact with the peoples of the East we realise that the character of Christ as portrayed in the Gospels is written in a language which no mere translation of the Bible can render intelligible. If the love of God revealed in Christ

is to exert its potential influence, it must be interpreted, or rather reflected, in the lives and characters of Christians. An Indian, for example, who has never been accustomed to attribute love or sympathy to the Divinity may read of the loving sympathy of Christ and remain entirely unmoved. The orthodox Hindu finds it impossible to assign any meaning to the statement that "God is Love". He finds it equally impossible to understand the existence of an obligation to love God. A recent writer on the religions of India says: "The first great commandment of Christianity is 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' . . . Christ setting Himself before us the concrete object of this affection, says: 'If ye love Me ye will keep My commandments'. But from the Eastern point of view, there is little place for this love in the religious system. Knowledge, esoteric knowledge of the Infinite, excludes it, and excludes it logically; for if I am God and my apparent separateness is the snare that hinders me from realising my identity of substance with the Infinite, love to God, which presupposes my separate individuality, is but tightening the bands that keep me apart from God, retarding that release which can be hastened only by ignoring the personal distinctions involved in love, and plunging be-

neath them into the abysmal blessedness of undifferentiated knowledge."[1] There is no line of intellectual argument by which we can hope to convince the Indian of the falsity of this reasoning. When, however, the love and sympathy of Christ are presented to him in an incarnate form, the interpretation of His character which is thus afforded will prepare the way for the appreciation of His teaching and of His revelation of the character of God. We do not believe that missionaries who have not themselves a profound conviction of the Divinity of Jesus Christ will contribute much towards winning India to Christ, but this will not be the first truth that they will emphasise. For while the average Indian will readily admit the Divinity of Christ, the admission will mean little and will but serve to place Him on the same level as himself. It is only when India comes to realise that what it needs is not a sage but a Saviour, and when its peoples learn to know not so much the Christ of history as a Christ who appeals to their immediate consciousness that they will come at last to take their stand beneath the Cross of Calvary and be constrained to say "truly this man was the Son of God". A belief in the

[1] "Christian Belief Interpreted by Christian Experience," p. 111. C. Cuthbert Hall.

Divinity of Christ, in the sense in which Christians understand the words, will come not as a primary impression, nor as the result of dogmatic teaching, but as the final outcome of spiritual experience.

In venturing to suggest to non-Christian races that a distinguishing characteristic of Christianity is that it puts first the formation of character as a condition and a result of fuller knowledge of God, we must be careful to guard against a possible misapprehension. We need to make it quite clear to them Whose character it is that we desire to commend for their imitation and reverence. It is not infrequently assumed by Indians, and the thought is reflected in the Indian Press, that Christians believe that their own achievements and their own energy and forceful character may be considered as satisfactory illustrations of the effects which Christianity can produce in the case of a nation. Such a suggestion will be regarded as an insult rather than as an argument for the truth of Christianity by most of the peoples of the East.

The character of Christ should, and does appeal to the Eastern mind, but it appeals just because in some important respects it contains graces which are conspicuously lacking in the English people as a whole, and which are only occasion-

ally illustrated by the lives of individual Englishmen. Although we may claim that whatever good exists among us has been developed as a result of Christian teaching, that good is so mingled with evil that we cannot point to England or to any Western country as affording an illustration of what Christianity is, or teaches, or refer to it as an exponent of the Christian faith. There are many individuals among the Eastern races who lack the special virtues which we are accustomed to regard of primary importance, but who are living a life which is as Christ-like as our own. There is a story told of an Indian catechist attached to an English missionary society in North India whose accounts were never right and who was at last dismissed for dishonesty. He spent all the money which was entrusted to him in promoting missionary work, but not exactly in the way in which he was told to spend it. The English superintending missionary demanded monthly accounts and refused to continue the supply of funds until these were forthcoming. Accordingly the poor catechist, who had not kept any proper accounts, filled up the balance-sheet in the way which he thought would please the European missionary, and when he was questioned about some of the items, and they were found to be incorrect, he was dismissed as being

unfit for missionary work. Several years later a lady was visiting a distant village in the jungle. She tried to make the simple folk understand what manner of person Jesus of Nazareth was. She told them how He was the poor man's friend, how He used to eat with them and visit their homes, how He used to go about healing wherever there was sickness, how the children used to run after Him in the street and clamber about His knees. Her description seemed to meet with an unusually intelligent response; and as she finished, some one exclaimed, "Miss Sahib, we know him well; he has been living here for years!" Amazed, the lady discovered that this old catechist had settled there on his own account. It was he who fetched the old men and women their water and their fuel. Where any one was sick, it was he who used to sit outside the door till evening, and then come in; for no one ever got a chance of sitting up at night but he. When plague and cholera visited the village he was the intrepid nurse. In the old man unfit for missionary employ the people of that village had seen and recognised Jesus Christ.

In trying to commend the Christian faith to Eastern races, we need also to remember their lack of historical perspective and how little the history of the past or the records of events

which have happened in the past appeal to the Eastern mind. To a Western student of history we can offer few more convincing proofs of the truth of our religion than that which is based upon the consideration of what the story of Christ's life has effected during the last nineteen centuries. To such a one we can show that the story of this life has transformed the hopes, the aspirations, and the lives of a large proportion of the human race. We can show, too, that this inspiration has been continuously manifested throughout the whole period of Christian history, that it has inspired not only strong men but weak women and little children to suffer and die for the love of Christ. Browning represents St. John as saying when he lay dying in the desert:

> What little child,
> What tender woman that had seen no least
> Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
> Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
> Or wrapt the burning robe round, thanking God?

Lastly, we can show that it is not only the "noble army of martyrs" who have been inspired by the story of this life. Its inspiring power has been illustrated by the changes which it has effected in the lives and characters of men of every race and of every disposition to whom the story has come.

There are some who have made a study of non-Christian religions who would have us believe that Eastern religions are very good for Eastern peoples, and that the Church of Christ has no message of supreme importance which it is a duty to deliver, inasmuch as the truth which it has to declare differs only in degree from that embodied in the religions of the East. The professor of Christianity who thinks and speaks thus has failed to understand the distinctive nature of his own religion. The Christian religion came into existence as the result of the manifestation in the world of a Divine human character, and its chief claim to universal acceptance is that it alone holds the secret of the transformation of human character. To any one who doubts whether the Christian Church is justified in attempting to commend its faith to the adherents of other religions, or to any one who desires to ascertain for himself the measure of truth contained in the Christian faith, and to compare that faith with the faiths of Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, we would say: Endeavour, first of all, to rid your mind of all prepossession and prejudice, and then read, study, and meditate upon the life of Christ as told in the Gospels. Learn the story of that life by heart, try to breathe the moral atmosphere which Christ breathed, to look upon the world

around you from His standpoint, to sympathise with His aims and aspirations, to appreciate the purity of His motives, to forget yourself and your own future while contemplating the prospect on which His eyes were fixed. You may fail, you certainly will fail, to accomplish this task, but in proportion to the seriousness of your attempt you will become conscious of the fact that, though He whose life you are studying was really man, nevertheless His aspirations, His love, His spiritual power are as high above your own as the heaven is higher than the earth.

Would you go on to compare the Christian faith with the faiths of Islam and of Buddha, study the lives of Mohammed and of Gautama and of other religious teachers, in the most authentic records, and place their aims, their aspirations, and their conduct alongside those of Christ. It is hard to believe that any one has ever entered into the life of Christ in the way that we have attempted to suggest, and has then studied the earliest and most trustworthy records of the lives of Mohammed, Gautama and others, without feeling that the truth revealed in Christ's life so far exceeds that of all other revelations which have been made by God to man through the instrumentality of religious teachers as to justify and demand the most strenuous efforts which can

be made to render the knowledge of this truth effective throughout the whole world.

When we address ourselves, however, to Eastern peoples and endeavour to commend to them the Christian faith, we find that it is the character of Christ far more than any historical events connected with His life which afford us our ground of appeal. Eastern peoples have, as we have said, no historical perspective; they do not draw a hard or fast line between history and myth; an ancient tale and a well-authenticated historical narrative create much the same impression and convey similar teaching. In the case of the Hindus a religion the fundamental doctrines of which are based upon facts of history, stands self-condemned. To them facts are merely accidents of time, and as such are hardly worth recording. It is to them inconceivable that spiritual and eternal truth should need to be authenticated by that which belongs to the realm of the unreal and the illusory.

An appeal, however, which is based upon the ideal which the character of Christ—and in a lesser degree the character of His closest followers to-day—creates, avoids these initial and, sometimes, insuperable difficulties. When the Hindus and other Eastern peoples learn, as many of them are learning, to reverence the character of Christ,

they will be in a position to appreciate the significance of the historical facts which form an indispensable part of Christian doctrine.

To sum up in a single sentence what has been said, the duty which the Christian Church owes to the non-Christian world is to interpret to it the Divine revelation, which is the character of Jesus Christ. To prepare ourselves to deliver this message, to offer any adequate interpretation of Christ's character, no intellectual study, however prolonged, no single or repeated acts of self-sacrifice, and no display of Western energy, enthusiasm, or philanthropy will suffice. If we are to appeal to the Eastern races we must be able to show that we are not ourselves deficient in the Christ-like virtues which they themselves possess. In other words, we must learn to practise the Christ-like virtues of the East if we are to commend to the East the Christ-like virtues of the West.

Finally, our message to the non-Christian races will be delivered with a humility born of the conviction that, if we have a message to give to the Eastern and other non-Christian races, they will one day have a message, have a re-interpretation of the character of Christ, to give back to the West. Dr. Cuthbert Hall, in the course of lectures delivered by him in India

entitled "Christ and the Eastern Soul," says: "Shall the Oriental consciousness place its sublime qualities at the service of Jesus Christ and become unto the twentieth century what she was unto the first, a prophet of the Highest? The Oriental consciousness has the gifts that the world needs to offset its strenuous externalism and guide it back to the secret place of the Most High. The contemplative life, the presence of the unseen, the aspiration for ultimate being, reverence for the sanctions of the past, are the four Gospels with which a Christian East may re-evangelise the West, giving back to it the spirit of the first days, co-operating with it to lead the world out of its own confusion, grossness and sin into the peace and purity of Jesus Christ."

When this aspiration shall have been fulfilled the word "catholic" as applied to the Christian Church will acquire a new meaning.

We are coming more and more to understand that the Church of Christ is not an enclosure within which alone truth is to be found, and beyond the limits of which there is nothing but falsehood and error, but that it is rather a focus and centre of attraction toward which, drawn by its centripetal force, all that is good and true and helpful in other religions must sooner or later tend.

II.

THE IDEALS OF HINDUISM.

In the previous chapter we have tried to develop the suggestion that, whilst the initial task which appertains to the Christian Church in its attempt to appeal to all non-Christian races is the interpretation of the character of Jesus Christ, its ultimate aim is the transformation of human character so that it may tend to conform to the ideal which the Gospel portrait of His character has created.

The Christian missionary who desires to attain the sympathetic contact with a non-Christian religion which may enable him to interpret to its adherents the character of Christ, the character which at once creates and satisfies the ideals of Christians, must first learn to appreciate the ideals of the religion which he wishes to supplant or to develop.

An initial difficulty which confronts those who desire to get into sympathetic contact with the belief of Hindus is the impossibility of defining

what Hinduism is. The word covers a number of religions which are inconsistent with, and contradictory to, each other. Theists and atheists, pantheists and polytheists, claim to be orthodox Hindus, and are generally recognised as such. It would seem that caste is the only bond which binds all Hindus together. But even the observance of caste does not enable us to decide to whom the name Hindus ought properly to be given. For a large proportion of the population in South India who observe caste might almost as correctly be termed animists as Hindus. Their worship of goddesses and their blood sacrifices, performed in some cases outside a Hindu temple after its doors have been ceremonially closed, tend to show that South India was at the best only half converted by the tide of Brahmanism which came from the north. The writer of the article on Indian religions in the Imperial Gazetteer of India, says: "The fundamental religion of the majority of the people, Hindu, Buddhist or even Musulman, is mainly animistic. The peasant may nominally worship the greater gods; but when trouble comes in the shape of disease, drought or famine, it is from the older gods that he seeks relief."[1]

[1] Vol. i., p. 432.

The contrast between the Hinduism of the educated classes and the Hinduism of the country villages is only less marked in the North of India than it is in the South.

The question which we desire to answer is this: Where can we best hope to find in Hindu consciousness points of contact with Christian consciousness, such as may prepare the way for the appreciation and reception by Hindus of the revelation of God in Christ? In order to answer this question we need to study not the ancient Vedas which are unknown to the great mass of Hindus, but the chief religious poems which are the common property of all Hindus, and which exercise a constant influence upon their thoughts. The poem which, above all others, appeals to the devotional instincts of Hindus and which, for very many of them, occupies the place of our Bible is the *Bhagavad-gita*. This poem which dates from a period soon after the Christian era is familiar to educated and uneducated alike, and no one can hope to understand popular Hinduism who has not carefully studied its teaching. Quite recently twelve new editions of it were printed in India within a space of twelve months. In this poem the god Krishna is represented both as the absolute Divine Essence, Brahma, and as a personal Being to whom prayers and sacrifices are to be

offered.[1] Whilst its philosophy is pantheistic, the form of worship which it presents centres round a Divine-human helper. The poem teaches that every action of life should be done without attachment and that there should be no desire on the part of any one to see the fruit of his actions. It expresses the longing of the Hindu mind for one who should become incarnate for the good of man and in order to reveal to him the will of God.

We give a few extracts from the poem which illustrate its teaching in regard to (1) the nature of the Divine Being, (2) the Incarnation of the Divine upon earth, and (3) motives for human action, and for good works.

(1) The teaching in regard to the nature of the Divine Being is a combination of pantheism and monism. Krishna says to Arjuna, who is the hero of the song :—

"I am the Self inwardly dwelling in all born beings." [2]

"I am the father of this universe, the mother, the ordainer, the grandsire, the thing that is known, and the being that makes clean." [3]

"I am the origin of the All, from Me the All proceeds." [4]

[1] See appendix on "Modern Krishna Worship" in "North India," by C. F. Andrews, pp. 230-33.

[2] x., 20. [3] ix., 17. [4] x., 8.

"They that worship Me with devotion dwell in Me and I in them."[1]

"There is naught higher than I; all this universe is strung upon Me, as rows of gems upon a thread. I am the taste in water, I am the light in moon and sun."[2]

"If one sees Me in all things and all things in Me, I am not lost to him nor is he lost to Me."[3]

(2) Incarnation is referred to as a continually recurring event. Thus we read :—

"Whensoever the Law fails and lawlessness uprises, O thou of Bharata's race, then do I bring Myself to bodied birth. To guard the righteous, to destroy evil doers, to establish the Law, I come into birth age after age."[4]

(3) Although the poem lays stress upon the value of self-renunciation and knowledge and declares that "there is naught here that is like in power of cleansing to knowledge,"[5] it has much to say also of the need of strenuous action. Krishna says :—

"Your business is with action alone, not by any means with fruit. Let not the fruit of action be your motive to action."[6]

"Abiding under the Rule and casting off attachment, so do thy works, indifferent alike whether thou gain or gain not."[7]

[1] ix., 29. [2] vii., 7, 8. [3] vi., 30. [4] iv., 7, 8.
[5] iv., 38. [6] ii., 47. [7] ii., 48.

"Fulfil ever without attachment the work that thou hast to do, for the man that does his work without attachment wins to the Supreme."[1]

The poem teaches that action, if it is to be of value, must be performed without attachment and must be severed from all passion and expectation or even desire. It lays emphasis too upon the necessity of loving devotion; thus we read:—

"He who with love gives Me a leaf, a flower, fruit, water, this gift of love I accept. Whatever be thy work, thine eating, thy sacrifice, thy gift, thy mortification, make thou of it an offering to Me."[2]

The second poem, the *Ramayana*,[3] written in Hindi by Tulsi Das, about 1580 A.D. (and which was founded on the old Sanskrit poem of the same name which was written about five centuries B.C.), wields an influence only second to that of the Bhagavad-gita. It is in fact the Bible of North India. According to a statement appended to the Indian census, at least 90,000,000 of people are familiar with and deeply influenced by this poem. One of its most helpful characteristics is the high ideal of womanhood which it embodies. Its description of Sita has done much to raise and purify the ideal of

[1] iii., 18. [2] ix., 25, 26.
[3] Ram-ayana, = adventures of Ram.

womanhood which is found to-day amongst the best Hindus.

Tulsi Das's teaching in regard to the incarnation of God may be illustrated by the following quotations from the Balakanda, which is the first part of the Ramayana and deals with the advent and childhood of Ram :—

"There is one God, passionless, formless, uncreated, the universal Soul, the supreme Spirit, the all-pervading, whose shadow is the world, who has become incarnate, and does many things only for the love that He bears to His faithful people; all-gracious and compassionate to the humble; who in His mercy ever refrains from anger against those whom He loves, and knows to be His own."

"Voluntarily assuming human guise, I will manifest myself in your house, father, with every element of my divinity incarnate, and will do great deeds for the consolation of my people."

A little later we find a clear suggestion that the sufferings of God incarnate were of a vicarious nature :—

"For the love He bore His followers, Rama took the form of a man, and by Himself enduring misery secured their happiness."

Once more we have the words of Tulsi Das who addresses Rama and speaks of His holy feet as—

"Sorely pierced by thorns during Thy wanderings in the forest."

Both in the Bhagavad-gita and in the Ramayana a striking feature is the emphasis which is laid upon *bhakti*. The doctrine of *bhakti* first appeared in India in the Bhagavad-gita. Its later development in the poems of Tulsi Das is believed by many to have been in part the result of Christian influence. In any case there can be no doubt that the wide spread of this doctrine has been an indirect result of the preaching of Christianity. *Bhakti* has been defined by a Hindu writer as an "affection fixed upon the Lord". It emphasises the need of a loving devotional surrender to the Divine Essence which is most commonly personified as Rama or Krishna. The Christian word faith perhaps best expresses its meaning. The personal claim which Krishna makes upon those who would worship him is expressed in such passages as the following :—

"Have thy mind on Me, thy devotion toward Me, thy sacrifice to Me, do homage to Me. Thus guiding thyself, given over to Me, so to Me shalt thou come."[1]

"To the men everlastingly under the Rule, who in undivided service think and wait on Me, I bring power to win and to maintain."[2]

[1] ix., 34. [2] ix., 22.

The significance of these last words is left unexplained unless by the statement that—

"He who at his last hour, when he casts off the body, goes hence remembering Me, goes assuredly into My being." [1]

The need of faith is emphasised in such passages as the following :—

"Knowledge he wins who has faith, who is devoted : having won knowledge he speedily comes to supreme peace. He perishes who has not knowledge or faith, who is all unbelief." [2]

The doctrine of *bhakti* contained in the Bhagavad-gita received a further development in the writings of Ramanuja, the philosopher of the *bhakti* school who flourished during the first half of the twelfth century A.D. The doctrine after being developed for another two centuries in South India was introduced into North India by Ramananda, who was the teacher of Kabir.

In view of the suggestion that the origin and development of *bhakti* teaching were influenced by Christian doctrines, it is interesting to remember that Ramanuja was born and educated within a few miles of St. Thomas's Shrine, where a mixed worship, partly Christian and partly Hindu, was then carried on.

[1] viii., 5. [2] iv., 39, 40.

Bhakti is distinguished from knowledge, from intellectual belief and from meritorious action. It finds expression in many false forms and in ecstatic trances which tend to produce unsatisfactory results, but it nevertheless represents a real and successful attempt to supersede the ceremonialism and to break through the intellectualism which have done much to deaden the conscience of Hindus.

There are two schools of thought amongst those who practise *bhakti* in India called respectively the cat school and the monkey school. The adherents of the former hold the doctrine of "irresistible grace," and believe that God saves a man even as a cat takes up its kitten without any act of co-operation on the part of the man. The monkey school, on the other hand, holds the need of "co-operative grace," and teaches that man must reach out and embrace God as a young monkey reaches out and embraces its mother. The teaching of the Ramayana accords with that of the monkey school.

Although the doctrine of *bhakti* appears quite distinctly in the Bhagavad-gita it was not till Tulsi Das enlarged and enforced this teaching in the sixteenth century that it began to exercise a wide influence throughout India. His teaching suggests Christian influence far more clearly

than does that of the earlier poems. Thus he writes :—

"Although my body is diseased and full of sin, although my every word is foul and false, yet, O Lord, with thee do I hold the close kinship of a perfect love."

The following is a prayer by Tulsi Das :—

"Lord, look thou upon me—nought can I do of myself. Whither can I go? To whom but thee can I tell my sorrows? Oft have I turned my face from thee, and grasped the things of this world; but thou art the fount of mercy—turn not thou thy face from me. When I looked away from thee, I had no eyes of faith to see thee where thou art; but thou art all-seeing . . . I am but an offering cast before thee; what prayer can the reflection on the mirror make to him who lives and is reflected in it? First look upon thyself and remember thy mercy and thy might; then cast thine eyes upon me and claim me as thy slave, thy very own. For the name of the Lord is a sure refuge, and he who taketh it is saved. Lord, thy ways ever give joy unto my heart; Tulsi is thine alone, and, O God of mercy, do unto him as seemeth good unto thee."

Ram speaking in the Ramayana says :—

"Though a man endure endless tortures, without faith he is no friend of mine."

"If Brahma himself had no faith in me he would be no dearer to me than any other creature; while the

meanest creature that breathes, if possessed of faith, is as dear to me as my own soul. This is my doctrine."

With the doctrine of faith is closely associated by Tulsi Das the doctrine of love. Thus he writes :—

"The highest object of every living creature is the love of Rama."

"Abstraction, prayer, charity, penance, the different forms of fasting, sacrifice and vows—all move Rama's compassion less than simple love."

"It is only love that Rama loves, understand this, ye who are men of understanding."

In the Ayodbyakanda, which forms the second section of the poem, Valmiki prays to Rama thus :—

"They who never ask anything, but simply love you, in their heart abide for ever, for this is your very home."

With this teaching we may compare the words of a Christian poet, whose thought is in striking harmony with the loftiest teaching of Hinduism :—

"Live thou and love! so best and only so
Can thy one soul into the one Soul flow,—
Can thy small life to Life's great centre flee,
And thou be nothing, and the Lord in thee." [1]

Again, Tulsi Das writes :—

[1] F. W. H. Myers.

"Thus it is that Thy servants are so happy; the saint abandons for ever all confidence in mortification, and making simply a vow of perpetual love, serves Thy lotus feet with a pure heart."

Describing the character of saints or *gurus* (teachers) Tulsi Das says:—

"This is the virtue of the saints, Uma, that they return good for evil." They are "zealous for the good of others," "sorrowing in sorrows of others, and finding joy in their joy," "conquerors of greed and impatience . . . tender of heart, compassionate to the poor; with a guileless devotion to Me in thought, word and deed; giving honour to all, but claiming none for themselves"; "happy abodes of tranquillity, continence and humility"; "models of contentment, simplicity and benevolence"; "never disturbed in their quietude, their self-control, their religious observances, or their moral principles; they never utter a harsh word".

In speaking of the spread of the doctrine of *bhakti* in India some reference must be made to the two great teachers in North India during the fifteenth century, *Kabir* and *Nanak*. Kabir, who was described by Sir Wm. Hunter as the Indian Luther, was born 1440. His followers, according to the last census, number 843,171. They exercise an influence far greater than their number would suggest. Kabir taught that religion without *bhakti* was no religion at all, and that asceticism, fasting and almsgiving had no

value if unaccompanied by worship. He imparted religious instruction to Hindus and Mohammedans alike and had no preference for either religion.[1] The following are sayings attributed to Kabir :—

"Small is the door of *bhakti* as the tenth part of a mustard seed. The heart of man is swollen with pride to the size of an elephant, how can he pass within? Love grows not in the fields, nor is it on sale in the bazaar; the man devoid of love will be bound and cast into hell. A man may read many books before he dies and yet not be a Pandit; he is a Pandit who understands the two and a half letters which form the word Love."

Nanak, the prophet and founder of the Sikh religion, which, like the Kabir Panth, has recruited its followers alike from Hindus and Mohammedans, was born in 1469. His teaching in many respects resembled that of Kabir, to whom he was probably directly indebted. The following sayings attributed to Nanak illustrate the emphasis which he laid on the doctrine of *bhakti*:—

"True is the Lord, of a true Name, in language His love is infinite. . . .

Pilgrimage, austerities, mercy and almsgiving on general or special occasions,

[1] "Kabir and the Kabir Panth," by Canon G. H. Westcott, of Cawnpore.

Whoever performeth may obtain some little honour,
But he who feareth and obeyeth and loveth God in
in his heart
Shall wash off his impurity in the place of pilgrimage
within him.
All virtues are thine, O Lord, none are mine.
There is no devotion without virtue."

Another writer whose poems have exercised large influence in Western India and who lays special emphasis upon *bhakti* or "loving faith" as a necessary qualification for the worshipper who would draw near to God, is *Tukaram.*

Tukaram, who was a Sudra by caste, was born about the year 1600 A.D. He writes :—

"It is not hard to win salvation, for it may readily be found in the bundle on our back. If we will to have the delights of faith, our desire shall be fulfilled."

Comparing the love of God to the love of a mother, he says :—

"It is needless to lay the child in the mother's arms, she draweth it towards her by her own instinct. Wherefore should I take thought? He that hath the charge will bear the burden . . . take no thought for thy body; the mother will not suffer the child to be harmed."

Again, he writes :—

"We were not vigilant, therefore we lost the blessing; we forgot His Name, we cherished the world.

We were carried far from Him by the swollen flood of falsity. We have found a boat in the shape of faith." "As your faith, such is your fruit."

The ideal *guru* (teacher) is thus described by Tukaram :—

"He who calleth the stricken and heavily burdened his own, is the man of God ; truly the Lord must abide with him. He that taketh the unprotected to his heart and doeth to a servant the same kindness as to his own children," saith Tuka, "is assuredly the image of God."

It hardly needs to be pointed out that the doctrine of *bhakti* as suggested in the Bhagavad-gita and still more as developed by Tulsi Das furnishes a genuine point of contact between Hinduism and Christianity. If Christianity can be defined as a personal surrender and devotion to Jesus Christ, the passionate devotion to Rama or Krishna which is the essential characteristic of the *bhakti* worship of India, ought to prepare the minds of its worshippers to understand the meaning and basis of the Christian faith.

In view of the fact that for centuries past the highest aspirations and the holiest thoughts of the Indian peoples have been expressed in the familiar language of the Bhagavad-gita and the Ramayana, it should prove possible in drawing up an Indian Christian liturgy to incorporate some

of the language which is already dear to the hearts of millions. "What could be more beautiful"—we quote the words of an Indian Christian —"than the Hindu ascription of God as *Sat, Chit, Ananda* (Truth, Reality, Bliss)? How much more is such a phrase as this charged with Indian religious emotion than the perpetual ascription of omnipotence (*cf.* the use of the word Almighty), which makes Western prayers appear so cold? Or again, could not the wonderful Hindu word *bhakti*, which expresses devotion to a personal God, be Christianised? By it, I think, might be understood in Indian ways what S. Paul meant by that phrase, so difficult to Indians,—'justification by faith'."[1]

Another point of contact between Hinduism and Christianity may be found in the Hindu doctrine of *samadhi*, or oneness with God. Although, in the case of the majority, this represents nothing more than a metaphysical speculation, in the case of some it involves a real longing for fellowship with a personal God. These believe, as Christians also believe, that the realisation of oneness with God is attainable here on earth and need not be postponed to another life. As far as this aspiration and this belief prevail they exert an uplifting, one might almost say a

[1] Quoted by Rev. C. F. Andrews.

Christianising influence upon those who share them.

It seems not improbable that this the great positive belief of Hinduism, that man represents part of the Divine Being, originated as an unconscious protest against the pessimism which was itself the logical outcome of the fatalistic teachings embodied in the doctrine of *karma* and transmigration. The attainment of perfect union with the Divine Being provided the only hope of emancipation from the despair which was the inevitable result of an acceptance of these beliefs.

It might at first sight seem as though the Hindu belief in the repeated incarnations of Vishnu might predispose the Hindu mind towards an appreciation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ. When however we remember that the first three incarnations of Vishnu were in the forms of a fish, a tortoise, and a boar, and that the Krishna incarnation is of a grossly sensual character, we realise how limited is the resemblance between the Hindu *avatars* and the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. In a few cases the Hindu doctrine is found purged of its degrading associations and stated in a way which may be regarded as preparatory for the acceptance of the Christian

doctrine. Thus we read in the writings of Ramanuja:—

"As He (the supreme Spirit) is a great ocean of boundless grace, kindness, love and generosity, He assumed various similar forms without putting away His own essential God-like nature, and time after time incarnated Himself in the several worlds, granting to His worshippers rewards according to their desires, namely religion, riches, earthly love and salvation, and descending not only with the purpose of relieving the burden of earth but also to be accessible to men even such as we are, so revealing Himself in the world as to be visible to the sight of all, and doing such other marvellous deeds as to ravish the hearts and eyes of all beings high and low."

The Vishna and Bhagavata[1] Puranas contain a prediction of a spotless incarnation of Vishnu which is to take place at the end of the present Kali Yuga (age of wickedness) who is to bring in the age of Satya Yuga (age of righteousness). As however the "age of wickedness" has still 427,000 years to run, the anticipation of this spotless incarnation cannot exercise any great influence upon Hindus.

In considering the ideals of popular Hinduism, we have to ask the question, How far does the

[1] The Bhagavata was probably written about the eleventh century A.D.

average Hindu believe in a personal immortality? To this question it is most difficult to obtain a satisfactory reply. Dr. Grierson, who edited the religious census of India, asserts that whilst a certain number of educated Indians believe the philosophical pantheism of the Vedanta, the beliefs of the two hundred millions of uneducated Hindus are radically different. He writes: "Until the vernacular works are studied and popularised people will find it difficult to believe that the real Hinduism of the two hundred millions does teach the existence of God as a Person, and that the real Hindu of the present day has himself just as vivid a sense of a personal and continuous life beyond the grave as any Christian".[1] Comparatively few of the missionaries who live in closest contact with uneducated Hindus are prepared to endorse this statement, but many of them are prepared to admit that there exists in the background of their minds a vague but real sense of a Supreme Being Who is conscious of what they do and are. In Western India we meet with proverbs in common use which tend to prove that those who use them have, or once had, a belief in a personal God. We note, for example, such proverbs as

[1] "The East and the West," vol. iv., p. 475.

"Can God ever forget anything?" "To the helpless God is helper."

According to popular Hindu philosophy, from the original Essence, Brâhma, which is regarded as neuter, impersonal and unconscious, was evolved the personal Brâhma, which is masculine, who is the Ishwara or Lord. As everybody and everything is ultimately re-absorbed into the impersonal Brâhma, those who accept this philosophy cannot consistently accept the doctrine of a personal and conscious immortality. The teaching of the Bhagavad-gita in which God is represented as at once the impersonal Divine Essence and as a personal God, to whom prayers and sacrifices can be offered, represents the attempt which Hindus make to think, what is to us the unthinkable, an impersonal God. It may be said of them that they believe in a personal God, but He is it. "The Hindu," which is the leading paper in Madras, recently stated that "the Hindus have never sunk so low as to believe in a personal God". If, as was probably the case, the writer of this article meant by "personal," "subject to limitations," it is easy to sympathise with his disclaimer. The Hindus find it almost impossible to conceive of an unlimited personal Being. Amongst the more highly educated classes in Northern India,

however, increased acquaintance with Western literature and philosophy has done much to spread a belief in theism which should eventually facilitate a belief in Christianity.

The teaching of Ramanuja contrasts with that of the great Indian teacher Sankara.[1] Dr. Thibaut, who translated the Vedanta Sutras with the commentary of Sankara for the "Sacred Books of the East," contrasts the teaching of the two and maintains that Ramanuja taught a belief in a personal God and in personal immortality. He summarises thus the teaching of Ramanuja: "He who, assisted by the grace of the Lord, cognises and meditates on . . . him in the way prescribed by the Upanishads reaches at his death final emancipation, *i.e.* he passes through the different stages of the path of the gods up to the world of Brahman, and there enjoys an everlasting blissful existence from which there is no return into the sphere of transmigration. The characteristics of the released soul are similar to those of Brahman." Again, he writes: "The Brahman of Sankara is in itself impersonal, a homogeneous

[1] Sankara, who was born in Malabar in the eighth or ninth century A.D., wandered as an itinerant preacher over India as far as Kashmir, and died at Kedarnath in the Himalayas, aged thirty-two. He moulded the Vedanta philosophy of the Brahmans into its final form, and popularised it into a national religion.

mass of objectless thought, transcending all attributes; a personal God it becomes only through its association with the unreal principle of Maya, so that strictly speaking, Sankara's personal God, his Isvara, is himself something unreal. Ramanuja's Brahman, on the other hand, is essentially a personal God—the all-powerful and all-wise ruler of a real world permeated and animated by his Spirit. . . . The individual soul is really individual; it has indeed sprung from Brahman, and is never outside Brahman, but, nevertheless, it enjoys a separate personal existence, and will remain a personality for ever. The release from *samsara* . . . only means the soul's passing from the troubles of earthly life into a kind of heaven or paradise where it will remain for ever in undisturbed personal bliss."[1]

Our first feeling on rising from the study of the Hindu religious poems is that it is entirely wrong and misleading to apply the word "heathen," in the sense which it commonly bears, to the great mass of Hindus. To apply the word heathen to those who, albeit in many cases they are polytheists, accept the ideals of love and devotion set forth in poems such as the Bhagavad-

[1] "Sacred Books of the East," vol. xxxiv., pp. 29-31.

gita and the Ramayana and who have a real, if undefined, belief in a personal God and in personal immortality, is to suggest that there is no radical difference between their beliefs and those of the fetish worshippers of Central Africa or of the aboriginals of Australia.

Our second feeling is one of surprise and disappointment that in view of the countless numbers in India who are familiar with the teaching of the Bhagavad-gita and of the other poems to which we have referred, the moral influence which they have exerted has been so small. In the course of a recent lecture delivered by an Indian Christian graduate of Madras University in South India, the lecturer said: "What has the Gita done for our country? What is the influence exerted by this most popular work on the religion and character of the Hindus? In a dark and comparatively unenlightened age when polytheism prevailed everywhere and pantheism was poisoning the mind against piety and virtue, the author did well to summon his countrymen away from corrupt ritualism and carnal idolatry to a more spiritual worship of the Supreme Being. He did well indeed to perpetuate the comparative purity of society in his days by emphasising the sacred separation of caste. And he did well to harmonise the conflicting philosophies of his age, and make

thoughtful men view them all as if they were different sides of the same cube. But apart from all this, what is the sum total of the good influence the Gita has exerted upon the people during the last 1,700 years? That it is eagerly read and that its doctrines are more or less universally known there is not the slightest doubt. They have filtered down even to the illiterate masses. The man in the streets asks me: 'Where is the sin you speak of? It is He who is within me who does all my actions.' With an influence so stupendous what has the Gita achieved in the moral and social world? Has it abolished idolatry and all its attendant immoralities? Has it anywhere established the spiritual worship of the one Supreme Being? Have its doctrines dismissed all other gods from the Hindu pantheon? Has it elevated the character of the people, and spread more correct ideas of purity and morality? Has it placed a lofty ideal of divine holiness and love before the nation? Has it even supplied a motive for purity and benevolence?"[1]

The words of the lecturer warn us not to base our hopes for the moral uplift of India upon the noblest and best of the teachings of Hinduism, but at the same time the tendency which has been developed for several centuries, but which

[1] "From an Indian Garden," by J. Lazarus.

is more marked now than it has been at any previous period, to regard love and faith as the most important elements in religion, help us to look forward with increasing confidence to the time when the noblest ideals and aspirations of Hinduism shall attain their fruition, and when the power of the living Christ shall supply the motive force for the formation of character and for the attainment of the virtues set forth in India's great religious poems, which Hinduism has failed to provide.

Meanwhile our hope of appealing to Hindus and of recommending to them the Faith of Christ will depend upon how far we ourselves have attained to the best highest ideals of Hinduism which are Christian as truly as they are Hindu ideals. The following incident, for the accuracy of which the writer can vouch, suggests how unlimited would be the influence of English Christians in India if "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" were to become characteristics of their daily life. An Indian gentleman in Ferozepore was recently asked by a general in the British army what had led him to abandon his ancestral faith and to become a Christian. He replied: "Many years ago when quite a young man I was at the railway station in Lahore, and having plenty of time on my hands was wandering

about watching the various groups of passengers. While standing near the luggage godown my attention was drawn to an Englishman who was forlornly examining a nearly new bullock-trunk, the bottom of which had been destroyed by white ants. I fully expected to hear abuse and to see a cuff or two bestowed upon his Indian servant, through whose carelessness the trunk had been ruined, and to whom he was indicating the damage. But to my surprise the Englishman contented himself with pointing out the fault in the gentlest of tones. This was quite new in my experience of Englishmen, and I wondered to what this gentleness was to be attributed. So curious was I that I made inquiries as to the identity of the Englishman, and, finding that he was a Christian missionary, I became an inquirer after the truth and was eventually baptised." The story needs no comment.

III.

THE IDEALS OF BUDDHISM.

In our attempt to discover the true ideals of Hinduism we have already had occasion to notice how impossible it is to offer any satisfactory definition of Hinduism, or to suggest what sect or division of Hindus have the best right to the term orthodox. When we turn from Hinduism to Buddhism, we are confronted with a similar difficulty.

Where is true Buddhism to be found? The question does not really admit of an answer, for of the many millions of professed Buddhists there is hardly one who does not believe and practise some form of religion which is at variance with the teaching of Buddha. Those who possess a superficial acquaintance with *Burma* would probably urge that the Burmans should be regarded as typical Buddhists.[1] They will say, Can any

[1] Buddhism existed in Burma amongst Hindu colonists from about the Christian era, but was not generally accepted by the Burmese till the middle of the eleventh century. On the frontier between Burma and Bengal, Buddhism is now being pushed back by Brahmanism: see "Imperial Gazetteer of India," i., 413.

picture be more ideal than that of Burmese Buddhism depicted in the book entitled "The Soul of a People"? We are loth to admit the truth, which is that the Buddhism described by Mr. Fielding Hall exists only in the imagination of the writer, who did not even possess a sufficient knowledge of the language to enable him to get into closest touch with the Burmans. Over against the poetical, but wholly misleading descriptions of Mr. Hall, we have to set the matter-of-fact, but true description by Mr. C. Lowis in the last official Census Report for India and Burma. He speaks of "The fact—now largely recognised, that the Buddhism of the people is of the lips only, and that inwardly in their hearts the bulk of them are still swayed by the ingrained tendencies of their Shamanistic forefathers,—in a word, are, at bottom, animists pure and simple. . . . The Burman has added to his animism just so much of Buddhism as suits him, and with infantile inconsequence draws solace from each of them in turn. I know of no better definition of the religion of the great bulk of the people of the province than that given by Mr. Eales in his 1891 Census Report, 'a thin veneer of philosophy laid over the main structure of Shamanistic belief'. The facts are here exactly expressed. Animism supplies the solid con-

stituents that hold the faith together, Buddhism the superficial polish. Far be it from me to underrate the value of that philosophic veneer. It has done all that a polish can do to smooth, to beautify, and to brighten; but to the end of time it will never be more than a polish. In the hour of great heart-searching it is profitless. It is then that the Burman falls back upon his primæval beliefs. Let but the veneer be scratched, the Burman stands forth an animist confessed."

The Burman is by nature a happy, pleasure-loving child. He is specially fond of music and theatrical representations which Buddhism forbids. It is true that he may be heard repeating daily the mournful cry, "Amicca, dukka, anatta" (impermanence, trouble, unsubstantiality), but this, which correctly represents the teaching of Buddhism, is far from representing his working creed. Buddhism bids him care nothing for the world and its pleasures, but it is because this world and its pleasures are to him so real that the Burman is the happy and contented child whom visitors to Burma love to describe.

The existence in Burma of such popular expressions as "The Lord knoweth," "Lord, have mercy," may perhaps be taken to indicate a latent theism in the minds of the people generally. During the last 120 years two attempts have

been made to found theistic sects[1] in Burma, both of which were forcibly suppressed. The leader of one (Maung Po Mé) was impaled by the father of King Theebaw.

To pass from Burma to *Ceylon*, it would be sad indeed if we were compelled to deduce the ideals of Buddhism from the character of Singhalese Buddhism, for here, as in Burma, the Buddhism of a large proportion of the Buddhists is only skin deep. Dr. Copleston speaks of the popular belief of the Buddhists of Ceylon as one which "peoples every wood with demons, goes to Hinduism for the personal guardians of house and crop and the personal wielders of luck and pestilence, goes to the basest sorcery for the personal agents of malice and revenge".[2] Again, he writes of the inhabitants of some of the less frequented parts of Ceylon where Buddhism has not come into contact with Christianity: "If we can lead them to talk of their crops and houses and illnesses, and of the births and deaths that have occurred in their memory, we shall find that we are in a world of demons, who give trouble and must be driven away, who are sometimes

[1] The *Zodi*, *circ.* 1800, and the Paramats, founded in 1856. From adherents of the latter have come some of the best of the Burman Christians. *Cf.* "The East and the West," vol. v., p. 83. For a further account of the *Zodi* sect, see Appendix.

[2] P. 283, ed. 1908.

seen, with fatal consequences in the jungle—a world in which tribute must be paid to the goddess of disease, and to the far-away deity of Kataragama; in which scarcely anything happens by direct human or natural agency, but all by virtue of charms and omens. The whole home life is haunted by a sort of religion, but Buddhism is almost as completely outside it as the British Government."[1]

The charge which Dr. Copleston brings against the Buddhists of Ceylon is not that the ideals contained in early Buddhistic literature are low, but that during the long centuries in which it has been the nominal religion of the Singhalese, it has entirely failed to realise its own ideals. Speaking of the low standard of morality which Buddhism has failed to improve, he states that in many of the country districts in the interior where Buddhism has met with no rival, marriage is practically unknown. On the other hand, in the maritime provinces, where the people have, for three centuries, had intercourse with Christian nations, marriage is respected and the morality of the people is comparatively high.[2]

Buddha urged his followers in strong and oft-repeated language to abandon their home life and become monks. Thus we read:—

[1] "Buddhism," p. 275. [2] *Id.*, p. 286.

"Just as a large bamboo tree with its branches entangled in each other, such is the care one has with children and wife: but like the shoot of a bamboo not clinging to anything let one wander alone like a rhinoceros." [1]

The underlying principles of Buddha's teaching, which were based upon the assumption that birth into this world is a misfortune and an evil, necessarily warped his appreciation of the dignity of womanhood. Moreover, "that specific quality of the feminine character in virtue of which woman becomes the complement of man, was not, and could not, be taken into account, for in Buddhism the entire effort is, out of single separateness, whether of man or woman, to make a self-contained final whole, which no longer requires supplement or completion from any quarter whatsoever". [2]

According to Buddha's original plan women had no place in his Order. When he eventually decided to recognise women mendicants, he is said to have foretold that as a result of doing so the Law would be forgotten within 500 years. [3]

A generous Buddhist sentiment in regard to women is contained in one of the Jatakas :—

[1] Uravagga, iii., 4.
[2] "Buddhist Essays," by Paul Dahlke, p. 247.
[3] Culla-Vaggo, x., 1.

"A father's or a mother's pain, or sister's to relieve,
A man should never hesitate his very life to give."[1]

It is not, however, fair to regard the lax morality which prevails in Ceylon as a direct outcome of the teaching of Buddha,[2] though it furnishes a sad proof that Buddhism has failed to inspire the Singhalese to live up to a higher ideal.

It has sometimes been maintained that the majority of the *Chinese* may fairly be regarded as Buddhists, but this is by no means the opinion of those who know the Chinese best. The Buddhist priest in charge of the chief Buddhist temple in Nanking, one of the most important cities in China, recently remarked to an Englishman that in Nanking and throughout a large part of Central China only a few women and children were even nominally Buddhists. Dr. Legge, the late Professor of Chinese, after rebutting the suggestion that the majority of the Chinese were Buddhists, said, "Instead of being the most numerous of the religions (so-called) of

[1] Bk. xxii., No. 547.

[2] In the course of a reply given to a request that he would mention the best boons or blessings to which a layman might aspire, Buddha is reported to have enumerated, as one of the best boons, "attendance on mother and father, cherishing of child and wife": *cf.* Khuddaka-patho, chapter entitled Maha-mangala Sutta.

the world, it is only entitled to occupy the fifth place, ranking below Christianity, Confucianism, Brahmanism and Mohammedanism, and followed, some distance off, by Taoism".

The teaching of Buddha had been greatly developed and had apparently come to include a belief in a personal God before it reached China, and has since been profoundly modified by its environment.

Buddhism first began to spread in *Japan* at the beginning of the ninth century A.D., after the return from China of the two Japanese religious students or priests, Kobo and Dengyo. At the present time throughout a great part of Japan its teachings exercise a small and decreasing influence and very many of its temples are in ruins. The teaching, however, of some of the Buddhist sects, which is accepted by a considerable number of thoughtful Japanese, is so distinct from the dominant Buddhism of Japan and of other lands, and at the same time presents such high ideals of life and conduct, that it deserves special attention. The doctrine of faith in Amida[1] which is specially taught by the Shin (or Shinsu) sect, bears a considerable resemblance to the Indian doctrine of *bhakti*. Amida or Amitabha was, infinite ages ago, a monk who lived in the

[1] Chinese Omito Fo.

Western Paradise beyond India. Having accumulated merit during a long series of successive lives on earth, he had earned admission into Nirvana. The thought, however, of the suffering of his fellow-creatures caused him to make a vow that he would not enter Nirvana till he had found some easier way of salvation by which others might attain Nirvana also. By renewed austerities and penances he was at length able to found a Paradise into which all might enter, without effort or toil, who should exercise faith in him and call upon his name. The deliverance sought through the intervention of Amida is rather from the sorrows and sufferings of life than from sin, but nevertheless faith in Amida does in some cases result in an effort to live a better and more moral life as an act of gratitude towards him. Amida has a spiritual son, Avalokitesvara, who becomes incarnate again and again for the benefit and salvation of men. He has also an attendant (Seisha) in whom resides his wisdom, and the three form a trinity to whom the Shinshu sect address their worship.[1]

It is almost certain that this doctrine is of Christian origin or has been influenced by Christian, *i.e.* by Gnostic, teaching. The Amida legend would seem in fact to be an Oriental

[1] For account of the origin and doctrine of Amida, see "Wheat among the Tares," by A. Lloyd.

adaptation of the life of Christ. This doctrine reached China in 147 A.D., which is the earliest date that can be assigned to any of the writings in which it is contained. It came to China, not from India but from Central Asia.

It cannot reasonably be maintained that the thoughts contained in the following quotation can have had other than a Christian origin. The quotation is from "Fushi Sogo," a book which exists only in a Chinese version :—

"Hojo (the name of Amida before he attained to perfection), having meditated for five *kalpas* (ages), conceived the desire for the turning of the heart of the children to their Father and of the Father to the children, and when as Amida, ten *kalpas* later, he manifested his enlightenment, he created the power whereby the Father and his children receive one another. Ever since then in accordance with his gracious forty-eight-fold vow, he has been calling for his lost children ; but throughout the whole twenty-five forms of existence there was no answer to his call. We may imagine how grieved must have been his Heart which thus yearned with affection over his children. But now we have recollected the home from whence we came and have begun to call upon the name of our Father. Surely it must be a great joy to him when he hears the cry of Namu Amida Butsu." [1]

[1] "The Praises of Amida," translated from the Japanese of Tada Kanai by A. Lloyd.

In speaking of the development of the Amida doctrine in Japan, mention must be made of the great Buddhist reformer Nichiren (born 1222), who sought to purify the dominant Buddhism of his time, and protested earnestly against the doctrine of faith in Amida on the ground that it laid stress upon faith rather than upon good works, and went so far as to declare that each invocation of the name Amida would procure for the worshipper a re-birth in the lowest and hottest of the hells.

The question to which we desire to find an answer is not what is the general effect produced by the nominal acceptance of Buddhism, but what are the highest ideals of those who call themselves Buddhists, whether in Burma, Ceylon, China or Japan.[1]

There are a number of persons who profess to sympathise with the doctrines of Buddhism,[2] but whose sole acquaintance with these doctrines is derived from Sir Edwin Arnold's beautiful poem, "The Light of Asia". The author of this poem never claimed that it was anything more

[1] The Buddhism of Thibet is of so degraded a character that it is hardly deserving of mention in this connection.

[2] An English lady, a would-be Buddhist, who recently remarked, "I do admire Buddhism, and I know so little about it," is a representative of a large number.

than a poetical romance, and, in the interests of historic truth, it is a great pity that it should ever have been supposed to be anything else. The poem is founded upon a late Sanskrit romance entitled "The Chapter of the Great Renunciation" (Mahabhinishkramana Sutra), which is not accepted as a canonical work by either of the great Divisions of the Buddhist world.

We are probably right in saying that the highest and most important ideals which the modern Buddhist sets before himself are self-conquest and benevolence. Even if, as we shall see presently, these ideals fall short of the corresponding Christian ideals of self-sacrifice and love, they are nevertheless true and noble ideals, and we have cause to thank God for the influence upon the hearts of men which they have exerted in the past and still exert.

In the Dhammapada, which contains many verses from various early books of the Pali Canon, we read:—

"If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors." [1]

The self-conquest here inculcated involves the control not only of action but of thought; thus we read:—

[1] Dhammapada, 103.

"Man should hasten towards the good and should keep his thought away from evil." [1]

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him like a thought that never leaves him." [2]

It cannot be attained moreover by retirement from the world, for—

"Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, not if we enter into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where a man might be freed from an evil deed." [3]

To attain the Buddhist ideal self-conquest must be carried so far as to eliminate all personal affection for friends or relations. Thus in the Vessantara, the last of the Jataka stories of the re-births of Buddha, we are told that the final act of self-conquest by which Buddha qualified himself to be born as Buddha, was the giving up to a Brahman who wanted them as his slaves, first his two children and then his wife. When asked to surrender his wife, "he did not reply, 'Yesterday I gave my children to the Brahman;

[1] Dhammapada, 116. [2] *Id.*, 1, 2. [3] *Id.*, 127.

how can I give Maddi to you to be left alone in the forest?' No! he was as though receiving a purse of gold, of a thousand pieces of gold; indifferent, unattached, with no clinging of mind he gave her up."

If we turn from Buddhist literature to practice, we can find examples of the strenuous efforts which some of the followers of Buddha are prepared to make in order to attain to their ideal of self-conquest. Twenty-five years ago a Chinese woman entered a Buddhist temple. She was an earnest Buddhist and had long proved her devotion by fasts and pilgrimages. Her request was that she might know in what way she could further prove her devotion to her god. The answer of the priest was that the god required her to cut off her right hand. For a moment she hesitated, but again the summons came to make this sacrifice, and the poor woman, seizing the fatal knife, severed her right hand from the arm. She is an aged woman now, and lives as a nun in a nunnery near Han-kow, and round her neck she still carries the hand, suspended by a silken cord.

As we read this story we cannot but recall Christ's words, "If thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee". Of such an one we are constrained to say in the

words of our Master that she is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

The second Buddhist ideal to which we have referred is benevolence. By benevolence we mean the laudable but passive attitude of mind which should prevent its possessor from wishing or doing harm to any, but which must be distinguished from the active and passionate virtue to which Christians give the name of love (*ἀγάπη*). Concerning love (used in this latter sense) we read :—

"Let no man love anything: loss of the beloved is evil. Those who love nothing and hate nothing have no fetters.[1] From love comes grief, from love comes fear; he who is free from love knows neither grief nor fear."[2]

Gautama is represented as saying :—

"Those who cause me pain and those who cause me joy, to all I am alike; affection and hatred I know not."

Of love used in the sense of benevolence, we read that the true follower of Buddha—

"Lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of love, and so the second and so the third and so the fourth . . . of all things that have shape or life there is not one that he passes by or

[1] Dhammapada, 211. [2] *Id.*, 215.

leaves aside, but regards them all with mind set free, and deep-felt love." [1]

Again, we read :—

"As a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child, so also let every one cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings. And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred and without enmity." [2]

Once more we read :—

"All the means that can be used as bases for doing right are not worth the sixteenth part of the emancipation of heart through love. That takes all those up into itself, outshining them in radiance and glory." [3]

The distinction between the Buddhist doctrine of passive benevolence and the Christian doctrine of active love may be illustrated by one of the popular stories concerning the re-birth of Buddha. The king who was mourning the death of his wife is comforted by being assured that she has been turned into a dung worm in his park. On obtaining proof of this occurrence "he saluted the Bodhisatta and went back into

[1] Terigga Sutta, iii., 1; *cf.* "Sacred Books of the East," vol. xvi., p. 201.

[2] Metasutta, 7, 8, translated by F. Fausböll.

[3] Itivuttaka, p. 19, translation by T. Rhys Davids.

the city where he married another queen ".[1] The comfort arose from the extinction of his love which was caused by the repulsion which ensued on his actually seeing the dung worm.

Although we must interpret the words love and life in somewhat different ways in Buddhistic and Christian teaching, it is nevertheless true to say that Buddhism and Christianity both teach that he who would save his life must lose it, that pride[2] is a deadly sin and that love is the supreme virtue.

The disappointing feature of Buddhism is not that its ideals of life and character are low, but that these have failed to make a successful appeal to the vast majority of Buddhists. In Ceylon, for example, where the great majority of the people are professed Buddhists, the Buddhist teaching as to the duty of benevolence does not prevent its people from committing more murders than any other people in the world (of whom

[1] Assaka Jataka, bk. ii., 207. The literature which is most widely read and exercises the greatest influence upon Buddhists in Burma and Ceylon is the Jatakas or birth stories of Buddha, which consist of a long series of experiences that are supposed to have occurred to a succession of people in each of whom Buddha was at one time incarnate.

[2] "Whosoever exalts himself and despises others, being mean by his pride, let one know him as an outcast" (Sutta Nipata, vii., 17).

trustworthy records exist) in proportion to their numbers.

The ten commandments which are recognised by a large number of Buddhists are: Do not kill. Do not steal. Do not commit adultery. Do not flatter. Do not slander.[1] Do not lie. Be not double-tongued. Be not angry.[2] Do not covet. Be not devoid of pity, or, Be not evil.

If we could obtain assurance from the past history or the present condition of Buddhism in any country in the world, that its teaching could supply the motive power which might enable an appreciable number of those who now call themselves Buddhists to approximate to the ideals contained in their literature, we might feel justified in refusing to support Christian Missions to Buddhists, at any rate until all the less favoured peoples of the world had heard the Christian evangel.

It is because we believe that the only power which can enable a Buddhist to attain to perfect self-conquest is the power of God's Spirit which,

[1] "Beware of the anger of the tongue, and control thy tongue. Leave the sins of the tongue and practise virtue with thy tongue" (Dhammapada, 232).

[2] "Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth" (*Id.*, 223).

becoming a living Presence[1] within him, will inspire him with the desire to sacrifice himself for the good of others,[2] and because we believe that he can only learn to display perfect benevolence as he feels himself wrapped round in the all-embracing love of Christ, that we desire with all humility, but with all confidence, as constrained by the love of Christ, to help him to secure his own ideals by revealing to him ideals which are

[1] A Japanese who had been a Buddhist and who admitted that when first attracted to Christianity he had no sense of sin at all, in reply to the question, "Can you distinguish in your experience between Christ and the Holy Spirit?" said, "I was taught to distinguish between them, and in my theology I have done so. Now I am coming to distinguish between them in my experience. I am coming, when I sin, to feel that there is a Presence within me that is grieved" (Reported by Rev. W. Imbrie of Tokyo).

[2] Bishop Copleston, referring to the lack of a sense of duty amongst Buddhists, writes: "The motive which Buddhist morality recognises, if it can be said to recognise any, is wholly selfish and individual. It is not for the love of truth or goodness, nor for the benefit of others,—to instance the two principal motives recognised by other merely human systems,—it is solely for the individual's own advantage that he is incited to cultivate virtue. Nor is it a very brave or noble selfishness. It seeks, not to make the best of self, like the Greek selfishness, but to escape from pain and from the burdens of life. It is not ennobling.

"And the idea of duty is utterly absent. From first to last, the sacred books are terribly consistent in failing to recognise any sort of 'obligation'. . . . [The Buddhist] has no aim in life except to escape from it" ("Buddhism," p. 150 *sq.*).

yet higher than his own, but which have been completely attained by One Who lived a human life upon this earth, and is able and willing to live His life over again in the lives of His followers.

Buddha taught that—

> "Bliss of all bliss, joy of all joy, it is,
> To leave behind the lie that says, 'I am'."

The sentiment contained in these words is awe-inspiring and pathetic, but it is altogether devoid of motive power. No intelligent man who has understood the meaning of life has ever prayed to become extinct. The ideal which the words express is at once lower and more selfish than that to which the Christian apostle gave expression when he wrote, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me".

Buddha has already been canonised as a saint,[1] albeit by mistake, in the Roman and Greek Churches. We trust that the day may come when, in view of the realisation of the noblest ideals of Buddhism by the help of God's Spirit, we may be able to look upon Buddha if not as a Christian saint, nevertheless as one who helped to prepare

[1] Johannes Damascenus who lived in the eighth century wrote a Christian manual called "The Story of Barlaam and Josaphat". Josaphat is a corruption of the word Bodhisattva, a title given to each reincarnation of Buddha. S. Josaphat's day is Aug. 26 in the Greek and Nov. 27 in the Roman calendar.

the way for the final establishment of Christ's Kingdom.

Meanwhile we would make our own the words of Bishop Copleston: "As promoters in the long run of Christianity, I reckon all who are diffusing knowledge of the true tenets and history of Buddhism: all who are letting light, by whatever channel, into the dark places—and some very dark places exist, and cruel habitations;—all who are insisting on what is excellent in Buddhism, when they do so not merely to praise Buddhism, but to get virtue practised".[1]

[1] "Buddhism," p. 286 *sq.*

IV.

THE IDEALS OF CONFUCIANISM.

THE claims which have been made on behalf of Confucius to be regarded as a religious teacher have been rejected by many on the ground that he maintained a purely agnostic position both in regard to the existence of a future life and of a supreme God.

In attempting, however, to suggest what are the highest and most inspiring ideals of Confucianism it is only fair to take into account the fact that, whatever their great teacher believed or taught, the majority of his followers to-day hold these beliefs. Dr. T. Richards, who has lived for over half a century in China and knows the Chinese as well as any living European, writes: "A Chinaman would consider it the greatest insult imaginable to speak of his countrymen as having no idea of the supreme God. Every one I have ever met believes in the Supreme God far more than does the average man in Christendom."

The agnostic position adopted by Confucius was in part the result of his keen desire to set free the minds of his countrymen from prevailing superstitions. He urged them to "respect the spirits, but to act as though they were distant". The greatest part of his teaching was concerned with the five relations, those of parent and child, brother and sister, husband and wife, monarch and subject, friend and friend. The respect which was to be shown to the dead was the only point of connection between his teaching and the unseen or spiritual world. The more definite belief which his countrymen have acquired in a personal God and a future life has come to them very largely from the Northern Buddhism which at one time exercised a dominant influence in China.

The two highest ideals which Confucius set before his followers were contained in his teaching concerning the solidarity of the human race and the dignity and potential worth of human nature. To Confucianists the family not the individual is the unit of society. The respect shown to ancestors which Confucius encouraged and developed and the belief that by his good conduct a man can ennoble his ancestors, bear emphatic witness to the solidarity and continuity of the human race. The well-known saying of Con-

fucius, "All within the four seas are brethren,"[1] which was spoken in reply to one of his disciples who had said to him with sorrow, "All men have brothers, I alone have none," sums up in a single sentence a large part of his teaching. He insisted upon the duty of every man to love his fellow-man. Thus he said :—

"A heart set on love will do no wrong."[2]

When asked to explain the meaning of love, he replied :—

"Without the door to behave as though a great guest were come; to treat the people as though we tendered the high sacrifice; not to do unto others what we would not they should do unto us; to breed no wrongs in the state and breed no wrongs in the home."[3]

Again, he said :—

"Love is to conquer self and turn to courtesy."[4]

"To rank the effort above the prize may be called love."[5]

"The superior man is not affectionate to others with his countenance [merely], as if, while cold in feeling, he could assume the appearance of affection."[6]

"Good is no hermit: it has ever neighbours."[7]

He taught that the sight of others better than

[1] "Analects," xii., 5. [2] *Id.*, iv., 4. [3] *Id.*, xii., 2.
[4] *Id.*, xii., 1. [5] *Id.*, vi., 20. [6] Piaoki, 50.
[7] "Analects," iv., 25.

himself ought to inspire a man with the desire to grow like them, while the sight of evil should beget within him mistrust of his own goodness. Thus we read :—

"At sight of worth, think to grow like it. When evil meets thee, search thine own heart." [1]

A second characteristic of his teaching was his profound belief in the latent possibilities of human nature. He believed that Heaven had bestowed upon man a moral nature, and that, in virtue of this endowment, the rule of life in all its relations was to be found by men within themselves.[2] Man's highest duty is self-cultivation. By learning to become what Heaven intends him to be he raises himself as it were from earth to Heaven. Thus in the classic entitled "Kung Yung," which has been rendered as "The Doctrine of the Mean," or "The State of Equilibrium and Harmony," written by Tsze-su, a grandson of Confucius, we read :—

"What Heaven has conferred is called the Nature." [3]

"The understanding of what is good, springing from moral perfection, is to be ascribed to the nature moral perfection springing from the understanding of

[1] "Analects," iv., 17.

[2] *Cf.* Shakespeare, "To thine own self be true".

[3] "Kung Yung," i., 1. See "Sacred Books of the East," vol. xxviii., p. 300, ed. 1885, translated by James Legge.

what is good is to be ascribed to instruction. It is only he of all under heaven who is entirely perfect[1] that can give its full development to his nature, he can also give the same to the nature of other men, he can also give the same to the nature of animals and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing operations of heaven and earth. Capable of assisting those transforming and nourishing operations, he can form a ternion[2] with heaven and earth."[3]

Again, we read :—

"Perfection of nature is characteristic of Heaven. To attain to that perfection belongs to man."[4]

"He who is entirely perfect is like a spirit."[5]

"Perfection is seen in its possessor's self-completion."[6]

"The superior man is watchful over himself when he is alone."[7]

"The superior man internally examines his heart

[1] The words "who is entirely perfect" are rendered by some translators "who is possessed of the most complete sincerity".

[2] For a discussion as to the meaning of this expression see article by P. J. Maclagan in "The East and the West," Oct., 1909, p. 456.

[3] "Kung Yung," ii., 21, 22. [4] *Id.*, ii., 19.

[5] *Id.*, ii., 24. [6] *Id.*, ii., 25.

[7] *Id.*, 4. Dr. Legge writes: "'He is watchful over himself when alone' is literally, 'He is watchful over his solitariness —his aloneness,' that solitariness being, I conceive, the ideal of his own nature to which every man in his best and highest moments is capable of attaining".

that there may be nothing wrong there, and no occasion for dissatisfaction with himself." [1]

"The superior man, even when he is not acting, has the feeling of reverence, and when he does not speak, he has the feeling of truthfulness." [2]

In the three character classic which forms the first reading book in Chinese day schools the opening sentence states that man has originally a good moral nature. The actual statement is by Mencius, who lived a century later than Confucius, but it expresses the teaching of Confucius.

The ideal life, or the life of the ideal man, to which the teachings of Confucius frequently refer, differs entirely from the life of the Indian fakir or sadhu. In India some of those who bear the highest reputation for holiness live openly immoral lives, but Confucianists know nothing of an immoral saint. Righteousness, or right conduct, is the one thing of supreme concern. Thus Confucius said :—

"I like life and I like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go and choose righteousness."

He believed that man had only himself to blame if he failed to attain to righteousness. He said :—

[1] "Kung Yung," ii., 62. [2] *Id.*, ii., 64.

"If a man were really to exert himself for a single day to live a life of goodness, I do not believe he would find that he had not the strength to do so."[1]

His disciple San Chi'u is reported to have said:—

"It is not that I do not delight in your doctrines but my strength is inadequate."[2]

The confession of weakness on the part of San Chi'u expresses the general feeling of the Chinese, as may be illustrated by their proverbs:—

"There are two good people, one is dead, and the other is not yet born."[3]

"To learn to do good a thousand days is insufficient; to learn to do evil an hour is more than ample."

Confucius regarded pride as the greatest of all obstacles to self-realisation. Thus he said:—

"The great man is he who does not lose his child's heart."[4]

On another occasion when asked to name what he would most desire, he replied: "To make the old folk happy, to be true to friends, to have

[1] "Analects," iv., 6.

[2] *Id.*, vi., 10; *cf.* "video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor," Ovid, "Met.," vii., 18. "The good which I would I do not," S. Paul.

[3] *Cf.* "there is none righteous, no not one," Rom. iii. 10.

[4] *Cf.* "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child he shall in no wise enter therein," S. Luke xviii. 17.

a heart for the young".[1] He regarded suffering as a means whereby character might be strengthened or developed. Thus we read :—

"When Heaven is about to confer a great office on a man, it first exercises his mind with suffering."

Of the peace which belongs to the possessor of a good conscience, he said :—

"If you have not wounded your conscience in any way, there may come a knock at dead of night and you will not be startled."[2]

Of the means whereby sin might be forgiven he had little or nothing to say, for "he who has sinned against Heaven has none to whom he may pray".[3]

Speaking of the supreme value of truth, he said :—

"To learn the truth at daybreak and die at eve were enough."[4]

On several different occasions he summed up man's duty towards his neighbour in the statement: "What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others". In the Chinese

[1] "Analects," v., 25.

[2] *Cf.* "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," Ps. cxii. 7.

[3] "Analects," iii., 13. *Cf.* "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father," 1 John ii. 1.

[4] *Id.*, iv., 8.

language this can be expressed by a single character. When asked by Tze-kung[1] if there were any simple word which would serve as a rule of life, he replied by naming this character, of which the nearest equivalent in English would be "reciprocity" or "fellow-feeling," and then gave the well-known explanation of it already quoted.

The word *li* which occurs constantly in the teaching of Confucius was rendered by Dr. Legge by the English word propriety. This rendering has tended to misrepresent the character of Confucius himself and to obscure some of the best features of his teaching. A recent translator of the sayings of Confucius writes with reference to this rendering of the Chinese *li*: "The whole tenour of the Master's teaching cries aloud against such wilful and outrageous distortion. Any one who reads the sayings carefully will soon discover that this accusation (that Confucius lacked a loving heart) is not only libellous but grotesque in its remoteness from the truth. If there is one thing more than another which distinguishes Confucius from the men of his day, it is the supreme importance which he attached to *jên*, the feeling in the heart, as the source of all right conduct, the stress which he laid on the internal as opposed to the

[1] "Analects," xv., 23.

external, and even on motives rather than outward acts, except in so far as these might be taken as an index of character."[1]

Any attempt to suggest the highest religious ideals of Confucianism must include a reference to the significant act of worship which has been performed twice a year from time immemorial by the Chinese Emperor in the Temple of Heaven before a tablet which bears the inscription: "Supreme God of the sovereign Heavens". The following are extracts from the ancient forms of prayers used by the Emperors on these occasions:—

"To Thee, O mysteriously working Maker, I look up in thought. I thy servant am but a reed or a willow; my heart is but as that of an ant. I deeply cherish a sense of my ignorance and blindness, and am afraid lest I prove unworthy of thy great favours. Thy servant I bow my head to the earth, reverently expecting

[1] "The Sayings of Confucius," by Lionel Giles, p. 21. Later on in the same book (p. 52) the writer adds: "*Jên* is perhaps the most important single word in the 'Analects,' and the real corner-stone of Confucian ethics. Its primary meaning, in accordance with the etymology, is 'humanity' in the larger sense, *i.e.* natural goodness of heart as shown in intercourse with one's fellow-men. Hence it is sometimes best translated 'loving kindness' or 'charity' in the biblical sense, though in many cases a more convenient, if vaguer rendering is 'virtue,' 'moral virtue,' or even, as in Legge, 'perfect virtue'."

thine abundant grace. Thy servant I prostrate myself to meet Thee and reverently look up for thy coming, O God. O that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to accept our offerings, and regard us while thus we worship Thee, whose goodness is inexhaustible."

To the earlier forms[1] were added others in 1539 A.D., which are so instinct with Christian thought and devotion that it is almost impossible to suppose that their composition was not due in part to Christian influence. When the time comes for an independent Chinese Christian Church to determine its own forms of liturgical service, it may well be that they will be modelled upon these prayers, the most modern of which have been in use for nearly 400 years.

The teaching of Confucius in regard to the ideal man, though we may not perhaps dare to interpret it as an actual prophecy of Christ, found its only explanation in His life and character. On one occasion he said :—

"How great is the path proper to the sage!" "It waits for the proper man and then it is trodden." "Only by perfect virtue can the perfect path be made a fact."

He never claimed to have attained the ideal life, or to be in any way superior to his disciples. Thus he said :—

[1] See Appendix II.

"How dare I lay claim to holiness or love? A man of endless craving I might be called an unflagging teacher, but nothing more." [1]

On one occasion the reply which he gave to Tze-kung seems an unconscious prophecy of the One who, as we believe, could have satisfied his "endless craving". Tze-kung said to him :—

"What would you say of the man who conferred benefits far and wide on the people and was able to be the salvation of all? Would you pronounce him a man of moral virtue?—Of moral virtue? said the Master. Nay rather of divine virtue. Even Yao and Shun (mythical Emperors of China) were still striving to attain this height." [2]

The result which we may look for, when Christian Missions have accomplished their task in China, may be illustrated by the experience of a convert to the Christian faith who had previously been a Confucianist. Dr. Hale, a missionary at Wakayama in Japan, writes of him : "At my suggestion he bought a copy of the Bible and began to study it. He said to me when afterwards he applied for Baptism, 'When

[1] "Analects," viii., 33.

[2] *Id.*, vi., 28. The above rendering of this passage is by Lionel Giles.

I first read the New Testament I thought "This Jesus is a sage. Of course He is not the equal of Confucius, but He is worthy to rank as a sage." Then I read again and again the life and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and compared these with the life and teaching of Confucius. *Confucius did not fall in my estimation.* On the contrary the more I studied him, the more I admired him. But Jesus constantly rose. His teaching and character took hold of me. He increased until I was forced to the belief that Confucius was a sage, but Jesus Christ is God, and I want to dedicate my life to His service.'"

We anticipate that when China becomes a Christian country, as it some day will, Confucius will be honoured with as true an honour as that which he now receives. We can well believe that at many a Christian church throughout the land congregations will assemble, on a day or days set apart for the purpose, to render thanks to God for the life and teaching of Confucius, and to thank Him that the ideal of humanity which Confucius endeavoured to depict, has been manifested in the life and character of the perfect man, whose way he unconsciously prepared.[1] Of

[1] Confucius was born 550 or 551 B.C. and died 478 B.C., *i.e.*, twenty years before Ezra's arrival at Jerusalem. He was a contemporary of Haggai and Zachariah.

Confucius himself, as we think of him seeking for the Truth which was in part revealed to him, we may say in the words attributed by Browning to S. John :—

"God's gift was that man should conceive of truth,
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
As midway help till he reach fact indeed."[1]

[1] "A Death in the Desert."

V.

THE IDEALS OF ISLAM.

In attempting to estimate the ideals which Mohammed set before his followers, we must constantly bear in mind the fact that though chronologically Islam is later than Christianity, it was in reality a development not of Christianity but of Judaism. In order to appreciate aright the character and teaching of Mohammed we must compare him with Abraham, Moses[1] and other Jewish leaders and not with Jesus Christ, of whom and of whose teaching he knew hardly anything.[2]

[1] Mohammed frequently compared himself to the great lawgiver Moses: see Koran, Suras, 7, 18, 27, 28, 55. According to tradition he drove the camels of Khadijah to the very place where Moses had tended the flocks of Jethro. The special permission which Mohammed claimed for himself to marry Zeinab was probably regarded by him as parallel to the permission given to Moses to marry an Ethiopian woman.

[2] In the whole of the Koran there are only three passages which imply direct knowledge of the Gospels, and one of these might be cited to prove how completely Mohammed misunderstood their contents: *cf.* Sura, 61, 6. His knowledge of Christ appears to have been derived chiefly from the Apocryphal Gospels.

The caution that we have suggested will be specially needful when we come to consider the serious criticisms which have been passed upon Mohammed's teaching in regard to (1) slavery, (2) polygamy, and (3) the paradise into which his followers hope to gain admission hereafter.

Before we attempt to consider the ideals of Islam we must briefly allude to Mohammed's teaching on these three points, in the light of the introductory statement which we have ventured to make.

(1) *Slavery.* When we compare the laws relating to the treatment of slaves in the Pentateuch with those contained in the Koran, we are compelled to admit that the teaching of Mohammed shows a distinct advance on that of Moses. Mohammed taught that a master who punished his slave without just cause was bound to set him free. He taught, again and again, that slaves who believed were to be regarded and treated as brothers. To one who asked him, "How many times ought I to forgive a slave who displeases me?" he replied, "Seventy times a day". In his final address to his followers at Mina the year before his death, he said: "See that ye feed them (your slaves) with such food as ye eat yourselves and clothe them with

the stuff ye yourselves wear; for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be tormented". On the other hand Moses taught that if a master should smite his slave so that he died immediately, he should be punished, apparently by a fine, but the infliction of punishment is qualified by the words that follow: "If a man smite his servant or his maid . . . and he die under his hand . . . if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, *for he is his money*".[1]

It would be hard to find anything in the writings or sayings of Mohammed which could be set side by side with this statement that one human being may be treated by another as though he were mere inanimate coin.

An objection will at once arise that the teaching of Mohammed which we have quoted differs *toto coelo* from the practice of the Mohammedan slave raiders who have long been the curse of Central Africa. There are few, if any, Englishmen who are now living who have seen more of the results of such slave raiding than has the writer of this book. He has stayed with slave raiders and seen and suffered from the results of their work, and shares to the full the horror which their actions have produced in Europe. He cannot, however, feel that in an attempt to

[1] Exod. xxi. 20-29.

answer the question, What are the highest ideals of Islam? we have any right to allow the conduct of those who strive to cloak their crimes under a profession of Islam to modify our judgment in regard to the teaching of Mohammed and of the best of his followers. If we did so, we could not honestly object to the Mohammedan who interpreted the ideals of Christianity in the light of the fact that English Christians have carried over 2,000,000 slaves from West Africa to America and the West Indies, and that Belgian and Portuguese Christians have, within the last decade, treated their slaves worse than almost any Mohammedan has ever treated his.

(2) Let us now compare Mohammed's treatment of *polygamy* and *divorce* with the Mosaic regulations and with the customs which characterised later Judaism. Napoleon once remarked that Mohammed was the only Eastern legislator who ever attempted to place any restraint upon the practice of polygamy. Before his time there were apparently no laws or customs which laid any restraint upon it, or upon unlimited freedom of divorce in Arabia. By the limitation which he introduced, and by the stringent law which he enacted insuring to a woman the retention of her own property, he did much to make both

polygamy and divorce difficult. In the "Traditions" Mohammed is said to have declared, "God created nothing which He likes better than the emancipation of slaves and nothing which He hates more than divorce".

The Mosaic law on the other hand placed no restraints upon polygamy and put no limitations upon divorce which can be compared with those imposed by Mohammed. Patriarchs, judges, kings, Moses himself, practised polygamy and were not rebuked by the prophets for doing so. Even when we come down to later Judaism of about the time of Christ, the position of women was almost as bad as it is now in Mohammedan lands and was far worse than Mohammed tried to make it. One of the thanksgivings which were repeated in the regular service of the Synagogue was, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hast not made me a woman". "The Jewish law," says Edersheim, "unquestionably allowed divorce on almost any ground, the difference between the two schools being, not as to what was lawful, but on what grounds a man should set the law in motion and make use of the absolute liberty which is accorded him. . . . A troublesome or quarrelsome wife might certainly be sent away, and ill-repute or childlessness during

ten years was regarded as a valid ground of divorce." [1]

It may be true to say that the Mohammedan treatment of women is a blight and calamity in every land where Islam prevails, but how much worse would it have been for these lands if the Judaic interpretation of the Mosaic law such as prevailed in the time of Christ were to be substituted for the laws of the Koran. Even if this were not so, the modern interpretation by Mohammedans of their prophet's teaching in regard to polygamy and divorce has no direct bearing upon our appreciation of the higher ideals of Islam.

We may fairly quote as an illustration of the potential purity and dignity of womanhood the words of the Koran :—

"And the angels said, O Mary, verily God hath chosen thee, and hath purified thee, and hath chosen thee above all the women of the world." [2]

(3) *The Mohammedan paradise.* Though we must admit that life in a future state of existence was conceived of by Mohammed, and still more by his followers, under gross and material forms, we cannot deny to the Mohammedans the liberty

[1] "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," i., pp. 333, 899.

[2] Sura, 3, 42.

which we claim for ourselves, of giving a spiritual interpretation to these forms. None of Mohammed's descriptions of the torments of hell are more ghastly than are those of the Christian poet Dante. Mohammed's description of the trees and fountains and of the glorious apparel of the inhabitants of heaven may not unfairly be compared with the gates of pearl, the streets and harps of gold, and the river of life, contained in the Apocalypse. Even the suggestion that a life of unfettered polygamy awaits the true believer must be interpreted in the light of the fact that a monogamous life was practically unknown to the earliest Moslems.

What we have most reason to deplore is not the low or contracted view of the future life which Mohammed himself accepted, but the much lower and more debased interpretation which Mohammedans generally have been content to place upon his teaching. Our anticipation of what the future has in store would be poor and meagre indeed if we held ourselves bound to accept and to interpret literally all the descriptions contained in the Apocalypse and still more, in the writings of Dante and other Christian poets.

Whilst, however, we must concede to Mohammed the right to have his descriptions of

Heaven interpreted in a spiritual sense, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the literal interpretations of these descriptions, which very many of his ignorant followers have accepted, have lowered the actual ideals of a large proportion of Moslems throughout the Mohammedan world. The prospect of a sensuous paradise, moreover, has had a direct influence upon their present lives. They have been ready to say, in the words of a Persian poet :—

> "In paradise are houris, as you know,
> And fountains that with wine and honey flow,
> If these be lawful in the world above,
> What harm to love the like down here below."

We have tried so far to consider from a sympathetic standpoint the three fundamental objections which are commonly brought against Mohammed's teaching in regard to slavery, polygamy and a sensuous paradise in order that we may prepare the way for a consideration of the highest ideals which he conceived and handed down to his followers. We need to put far from us the thoughts suggested by the words of Charles Wesley's hymn :—

> "The smoke of the infernal cave
> Which half the Christian world o'erspread,
> Disperse, thou heavenly light, and save
> The souls by that impostor led—

That Arab thief, as Satan bold
Who quite destroyed Thy Asian fold.

"Stretch out Thine arm, Thou Triune God!
The Unitarian fiend expel,
And chase his doctrine back to hell."

The fact that this hymn could have been written by a saint like Charles Wesley shows how profound was the ignorance concerning Mohammed's teaching in England a century ago.[1]

In considering the change of conduct which the teaching of Mohammed produced amongst his fellow-countrymen, it is interesting to read one of the first formal apologies for Islam that has been preserved.

At an early stage in his preaching fifteen of his first converts fled for protection from the persecution of their fellow-countrymen and took refuge in Abyssinia. When a demand was made by the Kuraish at Mecca that they should be given up, one of their number named Djafar came forward and, in the presence of the Christian bishops who had been specially summoned, offered the following apology for Islam. Addressing the

[1] For opinions in regard to Mohammed current in England at an earlier period, see Shakespeare, "King Lear," iii. 4:—

"The prince of darkness is a gentleman;
Modo he's called, and Mahu."

Modo and Mahu are corruptions of the name Mohammed.

king of Abyssinia, he said: "O King, we were in ignorance and barbarism, we prayed to idols, we ate animals that had died of themselves, we committed hateful things, we wounded the love of our own relations, and violated the laws of hospitality; the strong consumed the weak, till God sent a messenger among us, of whose birth, faithfulness and purity we were aware; he exhorted us to worship God alone and to turn ourselves from stones and other gods, which we and our fathers had associated with Him. He commanded us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to love our relations, and to protect our guests; not to consume the property of the orphan, or to slander virtuous women; he bade us pray, give alms and keep the fast. We have obeyed Mohammed and have believed in his message."[1]

In order to understand the ideals of Islam we need to rid ourselves of the thought that the power which it has exerted in the world has been due to the emphasis which Mohammed laid upon the unity of God. Although the first half of the Moslem creed—there is one God—may seem to support this supposition, there can

[1] "Sirat er rasul," by Ibu Hisham (the earliest and most authentic history of the Prophet), p. 219 *sq.*, quoted by R. B. Smith, "Mohammed and Mohammedanism," p. 103.

be little doubt that the marvellous success of Islam has been due to the emphasis which has been laid upon the second rather than upon the third word in this creed. It was the reality of God's existence more than the unity of His nature which Mohammed succeeded in bringing home to his fellow-countrymen, and which inspired them with the living and victorious faith that triumphed over the idolatry of Arabia and the hazy pantheism of other eastern lands.

The reality of God's existence was the keynote of Mohammed's message to a world which had forgotten God. What the Mohammedan creed lost in comprehension it gained in intensity. Mohammed lacked the belief of Confucius in the potential divinity of human nature, he lacked the sense of mystic communion with God to which the devout Hindu aspires, he lacked too the benevolent toleration of all forms of religion which Gautama inculcated, but he possessed a conviction of the objectivity and personality of the Supreme Being such as none of the founders or adherents of these other religions ever gained, and which begat in him the burning enthusiasm that he succeeded in bequeathing to his followers and which made Islam the second greatest missionary religion in the world. The ideals which Mohammed conceived and which

he placed before his followers were based upon a belief in (1) the reality and objectivity of the existence of God. (2) The majesty of the Supreme Being, with its correlative the obligation on the part of man to do Him reverence. (3) The existence of a divine revelation. (4) The efficacy of prayer. (5) The brotherhood of all believers.

(1) Of Mohammed's teaching concerning the reality and objectivity of God's existence we have already spoken.

(2) As an illustration of his teaching in regard to the nature of God, we may take a well-known passage which occurs towards the close of the second Sura of the Koran :—

"God, there is no God but He, the living, the eternal ; slumber doth not overtake Him, neither sleep ; to Him belongeth all that is in heaven and in earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him but by His own permission? He knoweth that which is past and that which is to come unto them, and they shall not comprehend anything of His knowledge but so far as He pleaseth. His throne is extended over heaven and earth, and the upholding of both is no burden unto Him. He is the lofty and the great."

In the same Sura we have what is practically a summary of Moslem morality :—

"There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Scriptures, and the Prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer and payeth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have engaged in them, and patient under ills and hardships and in time of trouble; these are they who are just, and those who fear the Lord."

These two extracts may help us to appreciate the noble conceptions of the majesty of God and of the need of sincerity on the part of His worshippers which Mohammed set before his followers. It is easy to point out, even in these passages, and still more in others which we might quote from the Koran, what we conceive to be the limitations and deficiencies in Mohammed's conception of God and of man's relation to Him, but to do so would not help us in our search for the truest ideals of Islam.

It would be equally easy to show how sadly the great mass of Mohammed's followers have failed to attain, or even to aspire to attain, the ideals which he set before them, but this too

would not advance the object that we have in view.

(3) The Moslems' belief that God has made known to man His will in a written form has been stronger and more fruitful than that possessed by the adherents of any other religion. This belief has been to them the source alike of their greatest strength and of their greatest weakness. It has made God intensely real, but it has at the same time prevented them from ever learning anything about Him which was not revealed in the Koran. The contrast between the Christian and the Mohammedan outlook has been well expressed in the words of Lord Houghton :—

"Mohammed's truth lay in a holy book,
Christ's in a sacred life.

"So while the world rolls on from change to change,
And realms of thought expand,
The letter stands without expanse or range
Stiff as a dead man's hand.

"While, as the life-blood fills the glowing form,
The Spirit Christ has shed
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,
More felt than heard or read."

About the year 850 the doctrine was officially proclaimed that the Koran was uncreated and

had existed from all eternity in heaven. In view of this belief, which surpasses anything that the Jews ever held concerning their Scriptures, it is easy to understand the intense reverence with which it is regarded.

(4) However limited the scope of his petitions may be, prayer is to the Moslem a great reality, and a belief in its efficacy exerts a large influence upon his life.

Almost every European who has travelled in the East, has been impressed by the sight of individual Mohammedans, or still more, by that of serried ranks of men gathered within a mosque, prostrating themselves in prayer. We can well believe that if the average Englishman had been as little ashamed as is the average Moslem of testifying in public to his belief in prayer, the world would have become Christian long ago. There is much formalism connected with the repetition of the prescribed prayers of Islam, but they nevertheless testify to a living and fruitful belief that God is a God who hears and answers prayer, a belief which has kept Islam alive for nearly thirteen centuries and will long continue to do so.

(5) Mohammed's teaching that all believers are brothers, has been fruitful in results and has helped to unite men of different races, languages,

and temperaments. It was delivered to those who were decimated by blood feuds and separated from each other by pride of birth,[1] and whom no religious or political bond had ever before united. Though the limits of the Moslem brotherhood are narrower than those of the universal brotherhood which Christ taught and which was based upon the belief that God is the great Father of all, it nevertheless embodies a true ideal and has done much to uplift and ennoble a large section of mankind.

In considering the later history of Islam in search for yet nobler ideals than those which Mohammed himself conceived, it is specially instructive to note the results which ensued when Islam was first accepted and developed on original lines by an Aryan race. Sufiism, as taught in Persia towards the close of the eleventh century, was an attempt to combine Mohammedan deism with the pantheism and mysticism which were more akin to the Aryan mind. The Sufis endeavoured to draw men towards spiritual things by appealing to their emotions. They taught that the human soul is an emanation from God and that its instinctive

[1] Addressing the proud Kuraish at Mecca, Mohammed said: "No more pride in ancestry, ye Musulmans are all brothers, are all equal".

yearning is to rejoin the source from which it came. They maintained the truth of all religions, spiritualised, and so practically abrogated, the Koranic law, and asserted the divine indwelling in the prophets, the Imams and the later religious teachers.

They taught that ecstasy was the means by which a nearer intercourse with God might be secured, and regarded absorption in the Divinity as the ultimate goal to be attained.[1]

The doctrine of absorption into God is thus defined by Jalalu'-d-din, a Persian Sufi (born 1207 A.D.):—

"Eternal life is gained by utter abandonment of one's own life. When God appears to His ardent lover, the lover is absorbed in Him, and not so much as a hair of the lover remains. True lovers are as shadows, and when the sun shines in glory the shadows flee away. He is a true lover to God to whom God says, I am thine and thou art Mine."[2]

The doctrine of the love of God for man, the absence of which is a marked feature of the Koran, is one of the keynotes of the teaching of the Sufis. Thus Shamsi Tabriz, a Persian poet

[1] See "Imperial Gazetteer of India," art. by Prof. Palmer, i., 437.

[2] "The Persian Mystics," by F. H. Davis, vol. i., p. 82.

of the thirteenth century, writes of divine and human love:—

"O soul, if thou too, wouldst be free,
Then love the Love that shuts thee in.
'Tis Love that twisteth every snare;
'Tis Love that snaps the bond of sin;
Love sounds the music of the spheres;
Love echoes through Earth's harshest din.
The world is God's pure mirror clear
To eyes when free from clouds within.
With Love's own eyes the mirror view,
And there see God to self akin."[1]

We take one further illustration of Sufi teaching from the Confessions of Muhammed al Ghazzali (born 1058 A.D.) who was a professor of theology at Baghdad, and one of the chief teachers and exponents of Sufiism. His Confessions end with this prayer:—

"I pray God the Omnipotent to place us in the ranks of His chosen, among the number of those whom He directs in the path of safety, in whom He inspires fervour lest they forget Him; whom He cleanses from all defilement, that nothing may remain in them except Himself; yea, of those whom He indwells completely, that they may adore none beside Him."

The Sufi doctrines, of which these brief extracts afford some indication, prevail to-day to a

[1] "The Persian Mystics," by F. H. Davis, vol. i., p. 65.

considerable extent in Persia and are accepted by many devout Moslems in India. It is difficult to imagine that they will ever gain general acceptance, but here and there in every Mohammedan country are to be found some who aspire to a closer union with God than their Prophet thought possible upon earth, and who have sought and attained it through this interpretation and development of Islam.

We can only refer in passing to another strange development of Islam which has arisen in comparatively recent times in Persia. The belief entertained by the Babis that God has become incarnate in their leader Behah Ullah, witnesses to an instinctive yearning for a doctrine of the incarnation of God in the world which the stern monotheism of Islam has failed to suppress.

Before we answer the question for ourselves, Have we any right to regret the appearance of Islam as one of the great religions of the world? we are bound to ask what would have happened to those nations which now profess Islam if Mohammed had been killed by his enemies at Mecca when he first began his preaching. Is there any reason to suppose that the inhabitants of Arabia, Morocco, Persia or Afghanistan, or the sixty million Mohammedans in India would

now be Christians, or that if they were Christians, their Christianity would be of a purer kind than the pagan-Judaic Christianity now found in Abyssinia?[1] If we cannot answer, Yes, to this question, and there are few students of Christian Missions who would dare to do so, we cannot honestly regard the spread of Islam during the last 1,300 years as a calamity. Mohammed forbad, and his teaching eventually abolished, in Arabia and some of the surrounding districts, human sacrifices and the murder of female infants, unrestrained blood feuds, unlimited polygamy, wanton cruelty to slaves, and drunkenness. It is impossible to say for how many centuries these practices would have remained unchecked had it not been for Islam. Although we cannot look upon Islam as a preparation for Christianity and are forced to regard the religious progress to which it has conduced as progress up an *impasse*,

[1] Compare the conditions relating to marriage and divorce in Abyssinia which has been nominally Christian for 1,500 years and any Moslem country. In Bruce's "Abyssinia" (iv., p. 487) we read: "There is no such thing as marriage in Abyssinia, unless that is to be called so which is contracted by mutual consent without other form and subsists only till dissolved by the dissent of one or other, to be renewed, however, or repeated as often as it is agreeable to both parties; for when they please, they live together again as man and wife, after having been divorced, had children by others, or whether they have had children by others or not". *Cf.* also Stanley's "Eastern Church," pp. 10-12.

nevertheless the failure on the part of the Christians of Europe to preach their faith to the heathen who were not Moslems, prevents us from being otherwise than grateful that the hundreds of millions who have died in the faith of Islam during the last thirteen centuries have not lived and died as pagans.

As we look on into the future, we find it impossible to forecast the coming developments of Islam, but of this at least we are certain : its rigid unitarianism will never be overthrown by logic, and will only be undermined if its followers can be brought to accept S. John's definition of the Supreme Being, contained in the words "God is love". It may be that the spread of Sufiism will help to bring about this result in Mohammedan Asia. The acceptance of this belief will sooner or later be followed by a sympathetic appreciation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. For though an omnipotent ruler, existing from all eternity in isolation and loneliness, has met the aspirations of Moslems in the past, if love be not only an attribute of God's character, but be a synonym for His Name and the expression of His very Nature, we must needs attribute to Him, even from all eternity, the necessity of self-realisation and of self-expression as love. If this necessity be admitted, the

negative part of the Mohammedan creed becomes altogether unsatisfying and the Christian doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ as the object of God's love becomes an obvious truth.

It has not been our object to discuss the prospects of Christian Missions to Moslems, but we may note incidentally the great influence which the presentation of Christian ideals has had in all parts of the Moslem world to which they have penetrated. There is an unnumbered band of men and women in Moslem countries who have not ceased to believe in their Prophet, or, if they have done so, have lacked the courage which might enable them to endure the loss of husband, wife or family or to face a cruel death, on declaring themselves Christians, but who have been helped by the Christ-like life of a missionary, not only to approximate to the loftiest ideals of their own faith, transformed as these have often been by a Christian interpretation, but to follow, albeit as secret disciples, in the steps of our Master. When the establishment of Christ's kingdom is complete, there will come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, full many a Moslem who has never appeared in any record of converts to the Christian faith, but whose name has none the less certainly been entered in the Book of Life.

VI.

ARE CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO MOHAMMEDANS JUSTIFIABLE?

In the last chapter we have tried to show how noble and inspiring were some of the ideals which Mohammed sought to set before his followers, and what an enormous advance they were upon those which had previously been accepted by his fellow-countrymen. It may seem to some of our readers that if these ideals were as high as we have seen them to have been, no sufficient justification can be alleged for sending Christian missionaries to Moslem lands. It may therefore be well to consider at some length what answer can be given to the question which stands at the head of this chapter.

"If you will only organise Missions to the heathen in my province, instead of attempting to convert Mohammedans, I will do everything in my power to further and support them, but I cannot approve or allow, at any rate at present, the opening of a Mission to the Mohammedans."

These words, which were addressed to the writer by an earnest Christian Englishman, governor of a province in the British Empire, represent the attitude of a large number of intelligent Christians, who are most anxious to support Missions to the heathen, but who object on principle to spending time, labour, and money upon a Christian Mission to Mohammedans while there are still millions of degraded heathen in the world who have never been evangelised. The argument most commonly used is this: Mohammedanism has done a great deal in the past to raise native races, in various parts of Asia and Africa, from the lowest stages of ignorance and degradation, and has taught them many important truths in regard to the unity and majesty of God. Islam is, as Dante long ago recognised, a Christian heresy rather than a denial of the Christian Faith. If we feel that it would be wrong to divert efforts which might otherwise be made to convert the heathen in order to teach what we believe to be the true faith to other Christian heretics, is it not equally wrong to attempt to convert Mohammedans as long as there are countless numbers of heathen as yet untouched?

This reasoning is often employed by those whose self-denying lives and whose genuine

anxiety to assist in spreading a knowledge of God's love amongst the heathen forbid us for a moment to doubt their sincerity. Many of the opponents of Missions to Mohammedans are quite as vigorous supporters of foreign Missions as are those who believe most strongly in the duty of the Christian Church to send Missions to Mohammedans, and much unchristian bitterness has been engendered by a failure to recognise this fact.

The answer to this argument is not to be found in the command of our Lord to make disciples of all nations, for the question under discussion is not whether we should refuse to preach the Gospel at all to Mohammedans, but whether we are justified in neglecting the heathen, as we must do to some extent, in order to send Missions to the Mohammedans.

Perhaps the most helpful way in which to approach the question is by a consideration of the historic parallel to the present relation of Islam to Christianity which is afforded by the early history of Christianity. At the time when Missions for the spread of the Christian Faith were first attempted the vast majority of the inhabitants of the world were sunk in ignorance and superstition, and without any teachers capable of enlightening them. There were,

however, at least two countries to which this description could not be applied, *viz.*, Greece and Italy. In both these countries there had been, and still were, teachers whose knowledge of God would compare with the knowledge possessed by the teachers of Islam in the present day. To take a single example, there was in the city of Rome at the time when S. Paul was living there a man named Epictetus, four books of whose discourses have come down to us. From them we gather that he was a stern preacher of righteousness, whose one aim was to teach men not how to think correctly, but how to live well. His creed bore a striking resemblance to that of the best type of the Mohammedans of to-day. He believed in the unity and majesty of God, that apart from the will of God there is nothing either good or bad, and that in darkness and solitude man is never alone, because God is with him and within him. He believed, even as most Mohammedans of to-day believe, that all things were governed by unalterable fate, which it behoved man to accept without murmuring, and against which it was in any case vain to contend. In some respects his teaching was in advance of that of Islam, for he taught that all men are the sons of God and of kindred nature to that of the Divinity.

The following extracts from the teachings of Epictetus challenge comparison with the teaching of Mohammed. In some instances they approach more nearly to the teaching of Christ than any extracts relating to the same truths which can be produced from the Koran. "Do not plume yourself," says Epictetus, "on an intelligent knowledge of philosophy which is quite valueless, but on a consistent nobleness of action. Never relax your efforts, but aim at perfection." We may contrast with this the importance which Islam attributes to right opinion compared with which right action is of small account.

In the next saying of Epictetus we have a true though indistinct recognition of the reality of sin: "If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad". By Mohammed sin was regarded as an infraction of the arbitrary decree of God, and there was for him no absolute or unalterable distinction between right and wrong.

Again, Epictetus said, "What ought not to be done do not even think of doing". It would be hard to find in the teaching of Mohammed any statement which so nearly approached the teaching of Christ when He declared that the thoughts of a man's heart were more to be feared as a source of defilement than the failure to observe any outward or ceremonial law.

When Epictetus was asked how a man could grieve his enemy, he replied, "By preparing himself to act in the noblest way". We may contrast with this the licence to seek revenge upon his enemies which Mohammed claimed to have been allowed him by God.

As we listen to yet another quotation from Epictetus it is hard to persuade ourselves that we are not listening to the words of a Christian teacher, or even to the Apostle Paul himself. They will compare with the most inspiring of those attributed to Mohammed. Epictetus says: "If you always remember that in all you do in soul or body God stands by as a witness in all your prayers and your actions, you will not err, and you shall have God dwelling with you". Again, "When you have closed your doors and made darkness within, remember never to say that you are alone. For you are not alone; God too is present there."

Epictetus was only one of several philosophers who believed and taught thus in Rome in the days when Christian Missions were first introduced there. Another Stoic philosopher who was living in Rome at the time of S. Paul's visit was Seneca. He was the younger brother of the Roman judge Gallio, before whom S. Paul had been brought at Corinth. So closely do

some parts of his teaching resemble the teaching of S. Paul that a forged correspondence between himself and the Apostle had come into existence as early as the time of Jerome. It would be easy to institute a comparison between much of his teaching and the teaching of Islam which would be favourable to Seneca.

Let us endeavour to imagine an intelligent Roman citizen, who had been instructed in the teachings of Epictetus or Seneca, meeting S. Paul or one of the early missionaries to Rome. On learning the object for which he had come —*viz.*, to impart to the citizens of Rome a truer and more complete knowledge of God than they already possessed—how natural would it have been for him to use the identical arguments which are often used against the prosecution of Missions to Mohammedans to-day! Might he not have urged that whereas the greater part of the then known world was lying in heathen darkness, in Rome and in one or two of the cities of Greece (which S. Paul had visited before he came to Rome) God had granted to philosophers, and through them to their disciples and readers, a knowledge of Himself which he, S. Paul, would have been the first to recognise as divinely given? Surely, he would have urged, the right course to adopt, in the interest

of Christian Missions, is to leave those whose knowledge of God is so much greater than that of all others, and to preach the Gospel in the first instance to those whose need is most urgent.

We may safely assume that S. Paul was confronted with an argument of this kind, and probably on more than one occasion.

If we can judge at all what reply he gave from his speech to the Epicureans at Athens, he pointed out that it was those who had already learnt to feel after God, if haply they might find Him, and whose knowledge of God was altogether superior to that of the less developed races around them, who had the first claim to have the Gospel preached to them. The mere fact that they were unconscious of their needs did not in any degree abate the Apostle's eagerness, or alter the conviction which he had expressed: "I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel . . . in Rome."

Whatever may have been the argument by which he justified his action, his action itself was clear and resolute. With very few exceptions he followed the course of Greek or Roman civilisation, using the Roman roads and preaching as

a rule to those who had already come under Greek or Roman influence. The final result has been that the light of the Christian Faith has radiated from Rome and Greece, more especially from the former, and has influenced not only what were then the barbarous nations of Central and Northern Europe, but many other countries of which S. Paul had never heard.

The first answer then which we should be disposed to make to the man who objects to sending Missions to Mohammedans to-day is that in undertaking Missions to Mohammedans we are acting in accordance with the principles which governed the action of S. Paul.

Some of those who deprecate Missions to Mohammedans to-day would be prepared to say that S. Paul was mistaken, and that he would have made a better use of his time if he had spent it in preaching the Gospel to the savage tribes who then inhabited Central and Northern Europe.

But those who believe that S. Paul was indeed guided, as he professed to have been, by the Spirit of God to follow the course which he actually pursued, and which resulted in the eventual evangelisation of our own islands, have no ground for objecting to missionary work which is conducted on the same lines and with

the same object in view—*viz.*, to reach the less developed races through the instrumentality of those races which have already received a larger measure of divine revelation.

The position in which the modern missionary is placed who has to decide between work amongst Mohammedans and amongst the heathen, is strictly analogous to that in which S. Paul was placed in the later years of his life, when he had to decide between spending his energies upon the cultured peoples of Greece, Italy and the coast towns of Asia Minor, or undertaking work amongst the races which resemble the heathen races of to-day. The intelligent missionary who has made any careful study of Mohammedanism is prepared to thank God for the large measure of truth which He has revealed to Mohammedans, and to admit that they possess a knowledge of God to which no other non-Christian people has attained; but the recognition of this fact, instead of rendering him content to leave his Mohammedan brother to himself, will make him the more eager to help him to a fuller and completer knowledge. He will recall the words of his divine Master: "He that hath, to him shall be given," and will realise that the appropriation of the measure of divine truth of which the Mohammedan has shown himself capable implies

his capacity for receiving more, and at the same time constitutes his claim to have a further measure of truth presented to him.

There are, however, some of those who are opposed to Missions to Mohammedans who would be prepared to endorse all that has been said, and to admit that if S. Paul were with us to-day he would recognise the paramount obligation to preach the Gospel to the followers of Islam. Nevertheless, they feel that they cannot conscientiously help to support any existing Missions to Mohammedans. The difficulty which they feel may be expressed thus. They would say to us: We are quite prepared to grant that there is no theoretical objection to preaching the Christian Faith to Mohammedans, and, if there was a reasonable prospect of their listening to or accepting it, we would have nothing more to say; but after all it is a practical age in which we live, and we cannot ignore the fact that the Missions to Mohammedans which have been carried on for many years past have produced but the smallest visible results. Our real objection to such Missions is based not so much upon the undesirability, as upon the impossibility, of converting Mohammedans to Christianity. Did not Christ Himself authorise the abandonment of effort to preach to those who deliberately

rejected the message when He said "When they persecute you in this city flee into the next"? Is there any Mohammedan city in the world where the Gospel has been preached in which the persecution of Christians which has resulted has not justified the cessation of further effort and the transference of the work to some more receptive people? In considering the bearing and application of this argument, it is impossible to deny that Missions to Mohammedans have been lacking in visible results as compared with those which have been carried on amongst the heathen. But before we draw the suggested inference, we need to inquire under what conditions have these Missions to Mohammedans been carried on? Have they been carried on under similar external conditions to those which prevail in the countries where Missions to the heathen have been most successful?

The answer to the question is that until quite recently they have been carried on, with but one exception, in the presence of a continuous and relentless persecution, compared with which the persecutions of the early Christians in the second and third centuries were spasmodic and trivial. To abandon the faith of Islam for that of Christianity in any Mohammedan country outside India has been to court not only persecution,

but death at the hands either of the government or the people. When travelling in Asia Minor, the writer was told by one who had witnessed the baptism of some thirty Mohammedans that on each occasion the man baptised had to flee for his life. On one occasion within recent years a Turkish sheikh at Constantinople was induced, as the result of studying the New Testament, to embrace the Christian Faith. He and more than a dozen of his followers, who were prepared to do the same, were put in prison, and the whole number were poisoned.

Mohammedan rulers have always regarded the conversion to Christianity of a Mohammedan as an act of treason. It is this close connection between Islam and the exercise of political sovereignty which accounts for the dread which Mohammedans have always entertained lest their political power should be taken from them. On one occasion, whilst travelling across Mesopotamia, the writer had lost his way at night, and found himself eventually in a hamlet of Kurdish brigands, where he spent the night in the hut of the headman. One of the first questions which the Kurdish headman had to ask, as soon as he discovered the nationality of his guest, was: When are the English going to leave Egypt, and by what right had a Christian country inter-

fered with a Mohammedan Government? The interference seemed to him, in his far away obscure hamlet, not a political act, but a religious crime.

As long as Mohammedan Powers exist we cannot expect that Christian Missions to Mohammedans will have a reasonable chance of obtaining an impartial hearing, still less that they can be carried on under external conditions as favourable as those which exist in the Missions to the heathen.

There is, however, one country in the world where within quite recent years it has been possible for Mohammedans to embrace Christianity without incurring anything worse than the loss of all their friends and of their livelihood. After centuries of contest on unequal terms elsewhere Christianity and Islam have at last met on a field where, thanks to the strong arm of an impartial Government, the balance between their opposing claims can no longer be turned, as has so often been the case in the past, by the addition of the sword of Islam. Of the Christian missionaries now working in India only a minute proportion are working amongst Mohammedans. Nevertheless it is already possible to point to several results of their labours, such as must appeal to every student of Missions. In the Punjaub and

Sindh at the present moment there are nineteen native clergy who have received Anglican Orders. Of these ten are converts from Islam. Out of 555 native converts to Christianity who were baptised in the town of Amritsar between 1852 and 1883, 253 were converts from Islam. In a paper written by Dr. Imad-ud-din (who himself belonged to one of the most illustrious Mohammedan families in the world), which was sent to be read at the conference on religions held at Chicago at the time of the Exhibition, the writer asserts that converts from Islam to Christianity "have come, and are coming, in their thousands". It may be suggested that these are the words of a man who would naturally be prejudiced against the religion he had abandoned. This objection cannot weaken the force of the evidence contained in a list which he supplied of a hundred converts from Islam to Christianity who are now occupying influential positions both in the State and in the Church in India. One of the hundred names is that of a direct descendant of Mohammed himself.

We have not space to give any further illustrations of the effect which the preaching of Christianity is producing upon Mohammedanism in India at the present time; but evidence is available to establish the fact that in view of the very

short time which has elapsed since Christianity and Islam met on an equal field, it is far from being true that Missions to Mohammedans are, or are likely to be, a failure.

There is one country where the question whether Christian Missions to Mohammedans should be encouraged or discouraged has a practical interest at the present time. We refer to the African Soudan. The name is applied to the whole of Central Africa north of the equator and south of the Great Desert, reaching from the Red Sea on the east to the Atlantic on the west. The greater part of this vast district —itself larger than the continent of Europe— has long been closed to Europeans, and therefore to European missionaries. Within the last few years a large part of the Eastern Soudan and half a million square miles in the Western Soudan have come under English political influence. Several English missionary Societies have made preliminary attempts to establish work both in the Eastern and Western Soudan.

The question which presents itself to missionary Societies and to those who are responsible for the political government of the Western Soudan is different from that which is presented in most of the other countries where Mohammedanism is represented.

There are not a few who are interested in the well-being of the peoples of West Africa who argue that Islam is the form of religion best suited to the native of that country, and the religion which, if we take into consideration his past history, will most certainly raise him in the scale of civilisation and of morality. If we were concerned only with the immediate future of the West African native, it would be difficult to see how such an argument as this could be met; but if, in the light of past history, we have regard to the well-being not merely of the present but of the next and all succeeding generations, we shall view with increasing dissatisfaction the further spread of Islam in West Africa. Our reason for doing so will be this. Mohammedan progress is progress up an *impasse*. Heathen races which accept Islam are thereby enabled to advance a little way in the upward path of civilisation only to find their further progress checked by an impassable wall of conservatism and prejudice. It is sometimes assumed that Mohammedanism is capable of introducing to heathen races the degree of civilisation which prevails to-day amongst the Mohammedans of North Africa, Turkey, or Western Asia. But a study of past history affords no warrant for such a conclusion. Prior to the advent of Islam

the greater part of the inhabitants of these countries were Christians. Moreover, these countries have been so long in contact with European civilisation that it is impossible to say what benefits, if any, they have gained from Islam which would not otherwise have come to them.

The one country where it is possible to estimate the abiding effect of Islam upon a people upon whom no other strong influence has been exerted is the fountain source of Islam—the country of Arabia. Here Islam has for nearly 1,300 years exerted its influence undisturbed by the preaching of any other religion. What Arabia is to-day we may therefore fairly expect West Africa to become in a thousand years or more from the present time. What, then, is the present condition of Arabia and of Mecca in particular? Palgrave, who spent the greater part of his life amongst Mohammedans, and who was so far in sympathy with them that on more than one occasion he conducted service in their mosques, gives it as his opinion that the Arabs of Mecca and Medina—the two cities visited by pilgrims—are notorious above all other Arabs for their evil living. "The torch burns dark at its foot" is the Eastern proverb used to account for this acknowledged fact. After referring to the decreasing hold which Islam has upon Arabia,

Palgrave says: "When the Koran and Mecca shall have disappeared from Arabia, then and then only can we expect to see the Arab assume that place in the ranks of civilisation from which Mohammed and his book have more than any other cause long held him back".[1]

Unless, therefore, we are prepared to contemplate with equanimity the prospect of African civilisation being a thousand years hence on a level with the Arabian civilisation of to-day, we cannot look with other than grave apprehension on the progress, whether great or small, which Islam is making in West Africa at the present time; nor can we refuse to lend our active support to the only enterprise which can check the spread of Islam and which is represented by the Christian Missions.

To sum up in a few sentences what has been said, we believe—

(*a*) That the sending of Missions to Mohammedan countries to-day is justified by the close analogy which has been shown to exist between such action and that of the first and greatest of Christian missionaries, the Apostle S. Paul.

(*b*) That in view of the results which Christian Missions have achieved in the course of the

[1] "Journey through Central and Eastern Arabia," by W. G. Palgrave, vol. i., p. 175.

few years during which Christianity and Islam have met on equal terms in India, it is impossible any longer to maintain that Missions to Mohammedans are impracticable.

(*c*) That in the case of the lowest races in Africa or elsewhere the acceptance of Islam tends eventually to retard the progress of the people by whom it is accepted.

Our brief study of Islam must not, however, end with words suggestive of pessimism. Let us rather end by thanking God that the preaching of Islam has not been an unmitigated misfortune to Christendom. Professor Maurice, in a letter to Charles Kingsley, wrote: "The Middle Ages turn more upon him (Mohammed) and were more saved from perdition through him than I had at all imagined till I came to think more of them. There would have been no belief in Christ if there had not been that broad fierce assertion of an absolute God. What N—— calls the Anti-Christ was the divine means of saving the Catholic Church from atheism."[1] The limits of our space forbid us to discuss these words, but they should give pause to any one who is tempted to underrate the providential purpose fulfilled in Islam.

[1] "Life of F. D. Maurice," ii., 239.

VII.

SEVEN OBJECTIONS TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

THE editor of one of the most widely-circulated society papers in London wrote, not long ago, in his editorial notes: "I now always quit a church when I find that the sermon is in aid of foreign missions, and I heartily wish others would do the same".

This is an honest expression of opinion on the part of an intelligent man who reflects the feelings of not a few of the readers of his paper. It is an opinion too which is more widespread than many supporters of foreign missionary work allow themselves to believe. Nothing is to be gained by ignoring the fact that there are a large number of earnest and intelligent persons to whom the subject of foreign Missions is altogether distasteful. Let us try to answer the question how far the difficulties involved in the prosecution of missionary work are the outcome of special circumstances, or how far they are a repetition of objections which have presented

themselves to thoughtful people in all stages of Christian history. There are many objections which are from time to time urged by persons whom nature has endowed with but a slender allowance of brains, or who are too idle to think deeply on any subject, and to whom no argument derived, whether from history or experience, would be likely to appeal. But, apart from the trivial excuses which are the outcome of ignorance and prejudice, there are certain difficulties which suggest themselves to many thoughtful men who fully recognise their obligation to help the more backward races of the world, but who find it impossible to support the work carried on by any existing missionary society.

It will help to make the subject clearer if we put into words a few of these difficulties. We shall then be in a position to see whether they are the outcome of modern circumstances, or whether they have come down to us from a venerable antiquity.

1. The first objection, and one which specially presents itself to philanthropic people who are striving to ameliorate the condition of their poorer neighbours, is this : How can it be right to send men and money abroad, in the hope of converting the heathen to Christianity, when thousands are dying day by day, in our large

towns, who are in a worse moral and religious condition than the heathen? Surely these have a greater claim upon our sympathy than those whom we have never even seen. Ought we not to wait till the heathen at home have been evangelised before going forth to distant lands in search of those who have no claim upon us other than that which is based upon the possession of a common humanity?

2. The second objection is one which the comparative study of religions, which has been developed within recent years, has done much to accentuate.

There are several distinct faiths in the far East, older than our own Christian faith, which exert, and for decades of centuries have exerted, a moral and beneficial influence upon their adherents. This question then presents itself to many thoughtful people: Have we any right to interfere with the influence which these old faiths are exerting upon the highly civilised races of the far East—faiths, moreover, which have much in common with our own faith—in the hope of supplanting their belief by ours? Is it not practically certain that the attempt will result, in many instances, in the destruction of these ancient religions and of the whole system of morality which obtains its support from them,

without any opportunity being afforded of substituting another system of morality in its place? Even if it be granted that it is incumbent upon us to send missionaries to the degraded heathen, whose religion is antagonistic to the teaching of morality, such as are to be found in Central Africa and Melanesia, have we any right to force our faith upon Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists? Ought we not, at any rate, to evangelise all the heathen in the world before we attempt to interfere with these other faiths?

3. The next objection specially appeals to the man in the street, and is one which strikes at the root of all missionary enterprise, whether amongst civilised or uncivilised peoples. It is based upon reports furnished by travellers, or by European residents, in countries in which missionary work is now going on. Many of those by whom the reports are furnished are anxious to see missionary work succeed, but are constrained to admit that their desires and expectations have been disappointed. The objection itself is expressed in such words as these: Is it not the fact that the native converts to Christianity are in many cases less trustworthy and less moral than those who have never come under the influence of the missionaries? Is there not good reason to fear that the attempt to introduce the exalted

morality inculcated by Christ will end in the destruction of the genuine moral sanctions which are to be found even amongst the lowest heathen to-day, without the substitution of any other sanctions which can appeal to the great majority? Does not the inconsistency of the lives of the professed converts to Christianity throughout the world prove that the work of evangelising the heathen has been a failure, even in those countries in which it has been carried on by most earnest missionaries?

4. The next objection is little more than an expansion of the last. It may be expressed in question form as follows: Is the conversion even of the best and most promising converts from heathenism a permanent factor in their experience? Are not relapses into old superstitions a constantly recurring feature of all missionary work? Do not these constant relapses prove that a real conversion of character is impossible, and that the impressions which have been produced on the heathen will in course of time tend to disappear? Does not the history of Christianity in some parts of the Southern States of America, and in Liberia and other parts of West Africa prove that when the Christian negro is left to himself he will sooner or later relapse into practical heathenism?

5. The fifth objection is the most plausible of all. The ordinary man, who understands little about the theological dogmas which differentiate professing Christians into innumerable sects and parties at home, nevertheless feels that the existence of these divisions renders it impossible to present Christianity in a satisfactory form to the heathen. He is inclined to say to those who would interest him in the work of foreign missions: When you at home have arrived at any kind of agreement as to what it is that you wish missionaries to teach, it will be time to invite me to co-operate with you. What can be the use of sending out missionaries who will flatly contradict each other's interpretation of the Christian faith? Surely it is bad enough to have this unchristian state of things at home without reproducing it abroad?

6. Yet another objection which is closely connected with this last. There are not a few religious and thoughtful men who think that, if ever Christianity is to become the universal religion, it must be prepared to discard a large proportion of its dogmas, and perhaps to abandon its claim to be regarded as a unique revelation from God. They argue that under no circumstances is a missionary justified in presenting the Christian faith in such a way as to create an

impression in the minds of his hearers that the particular truths on which he himself lays emphasis are in any way essential to salvation. What is wanted, is to induce all professing Christians to agree upon some form of Christianity which should include the truths common to them all, but from which should be eliminated all dogmas and controversial statements concerning which there exists any disagreement. Christianity, if thus remodelled on a broad and liberal basis, might hope within a measurable time to become the universal religion of the human race.

7. The last objection to which we shall refer is one which specially appeals to Government officials, and to those who are responsible for the preservation of order in countries where missionary work is being carried on. This question presents itself to them: Have we any right to introduce a religion into a comparatively civilised land, if the religion be one which teaches men to disregard the customs and traditions that form part of the political creed of the inhabitants, and thereby weaken the hands of the existing Government?

We make no attempt to deal with these objections in detail, or to adduce arguments in support of the missionary work which is being carried on by any particular society. We believe

that the answer to all of these objections is to be found, not in the history of the present, but in the story of the past. In order to make this statement clear let us try to picture a scene which we may conceive to have occurred in Jerusalem five or ten years before its destruction, that is about 60 or 65 A.D. Some half-dozen travellers, all of whom have been more or less influenced by the teaching of Christianity, and who have come from different parts of the Roman Empire, have met by chance in Jerusalem. They are engaged in discussing the methods which some of the more ardent supporters of Christianity are proposing to adopt in order to spread the knowledge of their faith. The travellers referred to are all agreed that an extension of missionary effort on the lines proposed is to be deprecated, but the reasons which present themselves to their minds are of different kinds.

(1) The first speaker is a resident at Jerusalem. He has been led to accept the Christian faith for himself and is fully convinced of its truth and of its adaptability to the needs of all men. It is, as he says, his very desire to spread the knowledge of his faith that makes him object to the means which his fellow Christians are proposing to adopt. He points out that the city of Jerusalem must be the strategic point if, as he

anticipates, Christianity is one day to become the universal religion. For it is not only the birthplace of the Christian faith, but it is the geographical centre which Jews are constantly going out from, and returning to from all parts of the world. The majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem are, however, still unconvinced of the truth of Christianity. In the interests, therefore, of the faith itself he feels that the wisest course to adopt will be to refrain for the present from sending missionaries abroad, and to concentrate thought and energy upon those at home who have the first and greatest claim, and who may eventually be induced to co-operate in the evangelisation of the world.

(2) The second speaker is one who claims no particular country as his own, but who has visited nearly all lands in the course of his travels. He has studied in the schools of Greece and of Italy, and is learned in the history of Egypt and of the East. His objections to the methods which are being adopted to spread the new religion are based not upon any regard for the needs of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but upon a consideration of the claims of the old and highly developed religions of Greece and of Rome, of Egypt and of Persia. If the new religion will try to influence some of the savage races in Northern

Europe or in the interior of Africa, he for one will rejoice to contemplate its success, but until the more backward races who inhabit these and similar districts are evangelised he cannot admit that it would be right to interfere with the old and, on the whole, beneficent forms of religion.

He points out that under the systems of religion existing in these countries their inhabitants have attained to a far higher degree of culture and civilisation than have the Jews, and that it would be unjustifiable presumption on the part of this new religion to interfere with these long-established faiths.

He admits that in the course of his travels he has come across Christian missionaries in such centres of civilisation as Rome, Athens, Corinth and Ephesus, and has heard of missionary work carried on in Alexandria and in Persia, but in all these cases he cannot himself approve or support the work which has been attempted, nor can he admit that the missionaries have adopted the methods best calculated to promote the work which they have at heart.

(3) The third speaker is a Greek who has been living for the last few years at Corinth, where, as he explains, he has had the opportunity of watching the growth of a Christian community and of comparing the conduct of its professors

with that of the other citizens. His experience has been most unsatisfactory and discouraging. He tells how on one occasion, when he happened to be present in a Christian assembly at Corinth, he heard a letter read out, which had been written by the missionary who first preached the Christian faith in that city. In this letter the writer, who was a Jew, admitted that the Christian converts had fallen into degrading and unnatural sin such as was not even named among their heathen neighbours. In another part of the same letter the writer upbraided them for engaging in lawsuits with their fellow Christians and for indulging in a narrow party spirit which was incompatible with the spirit of Christian love. The speaker feels that he is justified in regarding what has taken place at Corinth as typical of what is likely to occur elsewhere, inasmuch as Paul the missionary, who first introduced Christianity to that place, had spent a long time there and had had every opportunity of exerting a personal influence upon these early converts.

(4) The fourth speaker is a man who has recently arrived from a visit to Galatia and the north-western parts of Asia Minor. In the course of his travels he came across several small communities of Christians scattered throughout the province. He learned that they had embraced

the Christian faith as a result of the preaching of the same missionary to whom the previous speaker had referred. His experience of the unsatisfactory results of this missionary work agrees to a large extent with that just described. In the case of the Galatians, however, it was not the existence of serious crime or immorality which he had observed, but a tendency to lapse into the old superstitions from which they had been temporarily freed by their adoption of Christianity. It seems as though the Christian faith was incapable of accomplishing any real or permanent change in the characters of these peoples, and if it fails thus with them how can its claim to be a universal religion, adapted to all people alike, be supported?

(5) The next speaker, a native of Antioch, is one who has seen a good deal not only of converts to Christianity but of the missionaries themselves. During a stay which he had made at Antioch he had met two of the most prominent missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, and was present on one occasion when a sharp dispute had taken place between them in reference to the employment of a certain missionary helper named Mark. As a result of this dispute these two missionaries had found it impossible to go on working together. On an earlier occasion,

in the same city of Antioch, the same missionary Paul had withstood to the face another of his brother missionaries, the dispute in this case having reference to a ceremonial law concerning eating. The speaker's own opinion is that until the chief apostles of Christianity cease disputing among themselves as to the exact nature of the faith they desire to teach, the outside public cannot reasonably be expected to afford a patient hearing to what they may have to say.

(6) The next speaker expresses his great desire to see missionary work attempted far and wide beyond the limits of Palestine, but is convinced that it is useless to make the attempt so long as the Christian faith is characterised by a spirit of harsh intolerance. Can anything, he asks, be more intolerant than this declaration which he has read in a letter sent by one of the Christian missionaries to his converts, whom he was upbraiding for having abandoned his particular representation of the faith: "Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed"? Surely the right thing to do is formally to disown such language and then to appoint a conference of the Christians who can be found in Jerusalem, whose duty it shall be to discover the truths which are common

to the Galatian and all other Christians, or rather to Christianity, Judaism and other cognate religions. Dogmatism was no doubt the very life of Judaism, but then Judaism never aimed at becoming a missionary religion. If Christianity is ever to become—as he hopes it may become —the universal religion, it must adopt a far broader basis than that which Paul or Peter desires to give it.

Can anything, he says, be more dogmatic or egotistical than this statement: "If any man thinketh himself to be spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write . . . that they are the commandment of the Lord"? Nor is this narrow dogmatism peculiar to one particular missionary, for, as the speaker says, he has himself heard another of the apostles within the city of Jerusalem assert with reference to the founder of Christianity: "In none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved".

(7) The last speaker is a native of Thessalonica, a large and prosperous seaport, which under the settled order introduced by the Roman Government has long enjoyed tranquillity. He describes a scene which he once witnessed when two Christian missionaries were brought before

the rulers of the city, the charge against them being that they had turned the world upside down by their preaching, and that they and their converts all did contrary to the decrees of Cæsar. He tells, moreover, how certain friends of his had witnessed similar tumults, the direct outcome of the preaching of Christianity, at Ephesus and several other places. It seems clear to him that Christian missionaries ought not to be allowed to go to places where their preaching is likely to result in a breach of the peace or to cause political complications.

The scene which we have been describing is not an imaginary one. Even if these objections were never expressed in so many words or on any single occasion, it is certain that they are the objections which appealed with greatest force to intelligent students of Christianity in the earliest stages of its existence.

It is of no great interest to discover what answers the first Christian missionaries had to give to these objections, or how far the answers given were logically correct. We may take it for granted that many of the most earnest missionaries of the first century were incapable of supplying any satisfactory answers.

The two facts of importance which are suggested by this retrospect are—

(1) That these objections were not allowed to hinder the missionary activity of the early Christians.

(2) That the disregard of them rendered it possible for Christianity to spread throughout the then known world.

Had these objections, many of which seem to us to-day entirely reasonable, prevailed in the first century, the Christian faith might conceivably have become known to students of ancient documents; but it would never have reached our shores, and the blessings which we now enjoy, together with the boundless hope of the future, would never have become ours.

Every blessing which we enjoy to-day and which has come to us as inhabitants of a Christian country and as a result of the Christian atmosphere in which our lives have been passed, is itself an argument for the support of foreign missions.

With reference to the objection which is grounded on the dogmatic claims of the Christianity of the present day, we cannot forget that the Christianity which conquered the ancient world was that taught by S. Paul and that it was a Christianity in which dogma figured more largely than it does to-day in the teaching of the average missionary. It is open to any one

to say that S. Paul misunderstood the teaching of Christ and gave to it a narrow and bigoted interpretation which Christ Himself would never have sanctioned; but this explanation does not lessen the significance of the fact that it was the Christian faith as interpreted by S. Paul which proved, from the missionary point of view, a triumphant success. We would ourselves endorse the opinion of a leading Nonconformist writer, J. Baldwin Brown, who said, "the world has nothing to expect from a religion which reduces to a clammy colourless pulp the great facts and truths of the Catholic faith". It is interesting in this connection to observe what an unprejudiced critic of the various forms of Christianity now represented in London has to say in regard to the social and general influence for good exerted by dogmatic and undogmatic Christianity respectively. Mr. Charles Booth, in his "Life and Labour of the People of London," writes: "We must add that a liberalised form of Christianity, as preached by some, makes no better headway; the fact, indeed, remains that in those chapels and missions in which the greatest proportion of really attached working men are found the teaching is strictly and even narrowly orthodox".[1] Again, speaking of the influence of the Unitarians, who stand for

[1] Third series, vol. vii., p. 425.

undogmatic Christianity, he says: "However regarded, it does seem as though the Unitarian view of the spiritual world in its relation to man awoke little response in the human soul, comparing in this respect unfavourably with even the most extravagant assertions of any African medicine man".[1]

Bishop Lightfoot's statement that the best cordial for drooping spirits is the study of history admits of a negative as well as a positive application. Many objections to modern missions which seem to be, and indeed are, entirely reasonable from the point of view of the modern journalist, tend to dwindle, or disappear altogether, when examined in the light of past history.

The true answer, however, to these and all other objections to missionary work is of a positive, not a negative, character. He who has understood, in however faint degree, what the first great Christian missionary called "the eternal purpose," or, as it should perhaps be rendered, "the purpose of the ages," namely, that through the Church of God should be made known, not to men alone, but to the whole universe, the manifold wisdom of God, will feel that all argument for postponing missionary enter-

[1] Third series, vol. vii., p. 145 *et seq.*

prise, which is based upon a criticism of apparent results, is irrelevant. What is most needed at the present time is not a juster estimate of the failure or success of modern missions so much as a truer appreciation of their final aims.

VIII.

"HEATHEN LONDON."

THOUGH the subject of foreign Missions is hardly once alluded to in the volumes which Mr. Booth has published on the religious influences at work in London, the questions of which they treat and the conclusions which they suggest have a direct bearing upon many of the problems with which every student of foreign Missions is confronted. It is often said that if only we could send out missionaries endued with the pentecostal zeal and spiritual force of the first disciples, the results would be seen in the uplifting and salvation of whole communities, if not of whole races. A perusal, however, of these volumes renders it difficult to believe that more earnest, more self-denying, or more Christ-like men and women than those now at work in London will ever be available as missionaries to the heathen. If, then, Mr. Booth is justified in saying that heathen London is heathen London still, the inference seems obvious that the sanguine hopes entertained

by many advocates of foreign Missions are unsupported by any conclusions which can reasonably be obtained from the experience of the past.

In any case the study of these volumes may well be undertaken as a preparation for the study of the problems raised by the attempt to evangelise the non-Christian races abroad.

The scene portrayed by Mr. Booth in the seven volumes which treat of the religious influences now at work in London is one of surpassing interest. Never before in the history of the human race has so gigantic a problem been presented for solution within a circumscribed area; never before have devotion and self-sacrifice been exhibited on such a heroic scale; and yet, if we are to accept the writer's conclusions, never before have those who are interested in the spread of the Christian faith and of Christian influence more completely failed to produce results which, to the impartial observer, seem at all commensurate with the efforts made.

We can imagine the case of a man, who is in doubt concerning the benefits which Christianity is capable of conferring upon non-Christian races, turning to these volumes in order to find an answer to the question: How far does this Faith, which is the nominal faith of the greatest city on earth, influence for good the lives of its

inhabitants, and, if its influence be but small, is it worth while to attempt to extend this influence to cities which are neither nominally nor actually Christian? Or, to put the question in a more concrete form, is there any ground for supposing that the great cities of the East, such as Peking and Calcutta, will in a thousand years' time be more Christian than London now is? And if there is no ground for assuming that this will be the case, is it worth while to make the great efforts that are now being made to send out missionaries to the non-Christian races when the prospective results of their labours, even in the distant future, are so limited?

There are four questions which need to be answered before we can draw deductions from the present condition of London which may help us to forecast the future of missionary work in other great cities. To each of these questions Mr. Booth's volumes contribute materials for an answer.

The questions are :—

1. What is the attitude of the people of London as a whole towards the Christian faith?

2. How far is an elementary knowledge of the Christian faith diffused amongst its inhabitants?

3. To what extent does Christianity influence the individual as distinguished from the mass?

4. How far can attendance at church or chapel be regarded in London as a satisfactory religious test?

We will quote a few of the replies selected from Mr. Booth's volumes which are given by many different persons to these questions.

1. As an answer to our first question we may quote his own words :—

"It may be said of the inhabitants of London, as of the people of England, that they are distinctly Christian in the sense that they would all (except the Jews) repudiate the imputation of belonging to any other of the great religions of the world. . . . But something more is demanded than a mere acquiescence which is often felt to amount to little more than 'not being prepared not to believe,' and such sentences as 'It is heathen London still,' 'it is heathen London with which we have to deal,' are familiar in the mouths of the ministers of religion."

He quotes others as saying :—

"The Churches are as missions preaching to the heathen and shouting the tidings of salvation in the open air for all to hear."

"Only a fringe of the population is reached at all."

"In this dark spot (a district in Woolwich) religion exerts no power ; all attempts fail . . . in this witches' cauldron of vice."

The people (says a worker in Wandsworth) "have ceased to reckon with the non-material side of life".

"'Not one in a thousand cares about God,' is the cry of one who has given her life to missionary work here" (Lisson Grove).

"All you will ever get to church (says a City missionary in Greenwich) have been got there long ago."

"Many of the churches (in Hackney) have organised large clubs for working men, but they have been constrained, as a necessary condition of success, to banish from them all overt ideas of religion. The men will not have it."

2. His answer to the second question—How far is an elementary knowledge of the Christian faith diffused amongst the people?—is hardly that which his answer to the first would have led us to expect. He quotes, and apparently endorses, statements such as these: "The outcast who have never heard of Christ . . . these do not exist in London". "An evangelical deaconess, in charge of a nurses' institute, who sees the people through a nurse's eyes, says: 'They have had too much of religion: there are none who have not heard of the Gospel, but at the same time they do not accept the way of salvation'." Again, he says: "In regard to the young . . . the facts are very remarkable: the children of the respectable working classes, even of professed atheists, come regularly to Sunday school". Speaking of the work done amongst

the inmates of the common lodging-houses, he says: "So complete is the organisation of this system that there are, it is said, only three common lodging-houses in East London where no religious meetings are held, and in these, it is curious to note, the Mission service was discontinued because theological wrangling of too animated a character followed the introduction of some debatable doctrine. . . . And this among the people who are often referred to as having never heard of Christ." Referring to the religious competition among different sects, Mr. Booth describes one woman in Deptford busy at her wash-tub and calling out to a would-be religious visitor: "You are the fifth who has been here this morning".

3. His reply to the third question—To what extent does Christianity influence the individual as distinguished from the mass?—is summed up in sentences such as these: "It is also said that if they fail to raise the mass, the Missions do continually lift individuals out of it, and so justify their existence". Again, "the work of the deaconesses is thorough, but they don't get the people to church more than one here and there. Church-going, it is explained, 'entails incessant persecution'; 'to walk with God means something'. The case is mentioned of a woman who

used to veil her purpose by carrying a beer-jug with her and leaving it at a friend's house on the way to church."

Speaking of Deptford, the author says: "The express object is intensive, to get a firm hold of those who are already attached, rather than to bring in others: 'I grieve,' said the vicar, 'more over those I lose than rejoice over new adherents'".

Again, in another place, he says: "A certain degree of success is almost universal, and is found with small as well as with large Missions. Most have for their core a body of earnest Christian workers, not only those from outside 'sent' to do this work, but those who have been won over, those who, having found salvation for themselves, devote their lives to the winning of other souls. . . . So far as it goes, the success is real. It consists in the finding and binding together of kindred spirits in the service of God, and in maintaining a never-ending fight against the ungodliness and indifference around them. . . . Individuals are caught more or less completely." "As always with religious work of this kind, when people come in at all they do so completely. It is all or nothing, and many are splendidly devoted."

4. The fourth question suggested was: How

far can attendance at church or chapel be regarded as a satisfactory religious test? Mr. Booth quotes several interesting statements given by representative Christian workers which throw light upon this point. "Indifference to church . . . is not a sign of unbelief. The people do believe in the Christian faith . . . they lead hard lives." A City missionary is quoted as saying, "You must credit them for a great deal more religion than they confess". Another witness says: "Among non-churchgoers are found many more strong and independent and, on the whole, satisfactory characters than among churchgoers".

Speaking of certain parishes in which all are poor, Mr. Booth says: "In such parishes the High Church section is more successful than any other. They bring to their work a greater force of religious enthusiasm . . . the poor are genuinely interested. The charities of the church are sweetened, and hypocrisy is perhaps left behind. . . . A similar success may be won by the solitary self-denying man living for and with his people. . . . In these cases the church, indeed, may remain empty, but still the people are touched by a wholesome religious influence."

Testimonies of a similar nature to these occur again and again throughout the volumes.

The very brief answers given to these four questions which we have extracted from Mr. Booth's volumes may help our readers to appreciate the bearing which his volumes have upon the missionary problems that confront us in foreign parts. If it be true to say, as Bishop Harold Browne once said to the Church Congress, that "England is now a vast Mission field, half full of home-heathen," what justification is there for sending men to preach to heathen abroad who might be employed in preaching to heathen at home? There are, in fact, many earnest people who are convinced that there is no real justification for sending workers abroad when so much work remains undone at home.

This belief, reasonable though it appears, is the result of a misapprehension of the scope and design of the preaching of Christianity. The teaching of Christ and the interpretation of His teaching by His apostles lend no support to the theory that the preaching of the Gospel will one day result in the conversion into saints of all the people on earth. Christ anticipated that His followers would act as a light in the world both singly as individuals and collectively as a Church, and that the light which they would reflect upon the world around would guide others in their

search after God, and help them to realise His presence in their midst.

The fulfilment of this anticipation will not necessarily involve the visible redemption or regeneration of the mass of the population in any district or country. If this be a true explanation of Christ's teaching, it may be shown that the preaching of Christianity has not been a failure, nay more, that it has been a definite success in London. For, if we accept the evidence accumulated in Mr. Booth's volumes, we are justified in believing that there are many thousands of Christ's disciples now in London who are living lives of Christ-like devotion, and whose good works so shine before men that those among whom they live are constrained to "glorify" their "Father in heaven". The evidence contained in the volumes further shows that countless numbers of single individuals are enabled by their Christian faith to attain to ideals higher and nobler than those which they would otherwise reach or to which those around them aspire. Lastly, the testimonies adduced show that very many who never enter a church or chapel are nevertheless profoundly influenced by the faith the outward confession of which they reject.

It is true that the measure of success which has been attained falls far short of what the

supporters of Mission work, whether at home or abroad, have desired and expected. Moreover, the admission that a chief result from the preaching of the Gospel is to be seen in the salvation of individuals may seem to be equivalent to an admission that Christianity has no message for nations or for the human race as a whole. The answer to the last objection is this: When Christ was a man upon earth He spent the greater part of His public life in teaching and training not masses of men, but a few selected individuals. His desire was that these individuals, united to each other by their common love to Himself, should be the channel through which the blessings which God intended for all men might at length reach them. As far as we can judge from His recorded teaching, He did not expect that His Church, of which the individuals selected by Himself were the nucleus, would become co-extensive with the human race. The words of His prayer, as recorded by S. John, "I pray not for the world," whilst they do not imply any limitation of the final scope of His love, indicate the impossibility of its immediate accomplishment.

We believe that what Christ did when He was visibly present upon earth He is still doing both in London and elsewhere. He is calling

out individuals, not because these individuals are better than their fellows, but because the blessings which God intends for all humanity can best be secured to all by the selection in the first instance of the few. In answer to the objection that thousands are dying while these few are being trained and educated, the only reply is that as it is now so it was in the time of Christ. The vast majority of the Jewish race were dying whilst He was giving His attention to a few individuals. If our spiritual insight were as great as was that of Christ, or if our outlook were as wide as His was, the difficulty which is now insoluble would probably disappear.

There are several passages in the New Testament which indicate the belief of Christ's Apostles that the scope of the activity of His Church is not limited to this present life. It is true that Christ's own recorded teaching affords no clear answer to the question how far its work, which seems so limited and imperfect here, will one day be completely accomplished. Nevertheless, in view of the work which we cannot but believe awaits the Church in the future, it was a true instinct which inspired the writers of our prayer "for the Church militant here on earth" not only to "make prayers and supplica-

tions," but also, in accordance with S. Paul's injunction, to "give thanks *for all men*".

A further answer to the objection that Christianity as seen in London affects the individual, but leaves the mass of men untouched, is this: The Christ-like men and women now in London, though few in number when compared with the whole population, furnish it with an opportunity of understanding the meaning of the Christian faith not by their words or exhortations, but by the lives which they live. The following incident was described to the writer by the principal actor.

A deaconess was visiting in one of the poorest and most degraded courts in South London, when her attention was attracted to a group of women, one of whom was pouring forth a torrent of filthy blasphemy which made her shudder to hear. The deaconess went up to her and said, "Stop, for God hates to hear you speak like that". Her words but elicited passionate abuse, whereupon the deaconess added: "God sent me to tell you that He loves you and that He hates to hear language such as you have been using". The woman replied in angry tones, "Don't say that again". "No," answered the deaconess, "I am not likely to come to speak to you again; it is not likely that God will send me a second

time." Then followed a sullen silence, and the deaconess passed on to her work. Four or five years elapsed, and the deaconess was visiting some industrial buildings. In response to a knock at one of the doors, she was invited to come in, and immediately recognised the woman whom she had previously encountered. Her surroundings suggested that a great change had come over her character and her life. "Oh, Mrs. M——," said the deaconess, "do you still think as you used to think?" "No," said the woman in a subdued voice, and as she spoke she came and rested her head upon her shoulder. "Will you tell me," asked the deaconess, "what has caused you to change? Was it what I said to you five years ago?" "No," the other replied, "it was not anything you said; but day after day from the time when you spoke to me I watched you, and it was what I saw which has changed my thoughts about God." It appeared, on further inquiry, that the woman had not begun to go to any church or chapel, but her whole life had none the less been transformed by the sight of a Christian life lived beside her.

One chief object of the missionary work which is now being attempted abroad is to afford, by means of a limited number of native converts, to

those who as yet know nothing of the Christian faith, an object lesson of the results which this faith can produce. Even if there be no grounds for expecting that Peking or Calcutta will be more Christian in a thousand years' time than London is to-day, we should still feel that every effort made to enlist support and sympathy on behalf of missionary work was amply justified if during this time, or the greater part of this time, those who were desirous of rising to a clearer knowledge of God than that which their own religions could afford them were thereby enabled to study the Christian life exemplified in the lives of some of their own countrymen.

Mr. Booth believes that some men inherit religious natures, whilst others are naturally incapable of rising to any spiritual height. There is an element of truth in this theory, as there was in the theory of the early Gnostics who distinguished "psychical" or earthly from "pneumatical" or spiritual souls. But, even if this theory were true, the duty of undertaking foreign Missions would remain. It would still be the duty of the Christian Church to seek out and place before these spiritual souls the high ideal to which it is possible for them to rise.

S. Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians that the purpose of the ages is that through the

Church should be made known to the universe the manifold wisdom of God. His words help us to understand the true object of foreign Missions. Scattered far and wide throughout the world amongst the adherents of all forms of religion are countless numbers of individual souls who have the capacity of reflecting the glory of God, and thereby of helping to accomplish the purpose of the ages, which is a purpose of love not only to the human race, or to the peoples who are now nominally Christian, but to all intelligent beings throughout the universe to whom the life of the Church will eventually appeal.

To those who accept the teaching of Christ contained in the Gospels an unanswerable argument in support of foreign missionary work is afforded by His direct command to go and make disciples of all nations; but apart from the consideration of the obligation which these words create, the condition of London as described by Mr. Booth is not such as to discourage those who accept the faith of Christ, and whose gaze is fixed upon the ultimate goal of the Christian Church.

Our own belief is that if missionary work be carried on in the same spirit as it is at present, the Christian faith will be a far greater power in India and China when a thousand years have passed than it is in England to-day; but even if

this expectation should not be fulfilled, if in a thousand years' time the experience of Peking or Calcutta, as far as the influence of Christianity is concerned, should prove to have been but a repetition of the experience of London, an opportunity will have been afforded to a large proportion of the peoples resident in these cities to see for themselves a real, if incomplete reproduction of the life of Christ. Not by outward and visible results, but by the measure and degree in which such an opportunity is offered to the world, must the success of missionary work to-day, whether at home or abroad, be judged.

We are disposed to agree with Mr. Booth when he says, "if the millennium is to await the acceptance of the Gospel by all mankind, it grows, humanly speaking, more and more manifestly remote". Nevertheless a careful perusal of his volumes leaves us with the assurance that, as a result of the work which he describes, the ideals alike of the workers and of those amongst whom they work have been perceptibly rising within this present generation, and with the conviction that there is nothing in the present state of London which can justify us in admitting a feeling of despair in view of the efforts which are being made to spread the knowledge of the Christian faith abroad.

IX.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF NATURAL BEAUTY.

"WHEN a man begins to appreciate scenery it shows that our efforts to teach are beginning to take effect." These words which occur in a letter addressed to the writer of this book by a missionary bishop in Central Africa, raise a question which is of interest not only to professed students of missions, but to all who are concerned with the development of an appreciation of nature, whether in the past or in the present.

Before attempting any consideration of this question it would be well to enunciate what is the ultimate object of missionary work.

The ultimate object which the interpreter of the Christian faith to non-Christian races has in view is to enlarge the area and deepen the consciousness of man's communion with God, with man and with nature. If this definition be accepted it is clear that the Christian missionary cannot afford to neglect any indication that those

whom he is trying to influence are beginning to appreciate the beautiful in nature, or any teaching which may tend to develop such appreciation.

Let us begin by asking, How far is it true to say that the preaching of the Christian faith has tended in the past to develop in its converts an appreciation of natural beauty, and in particular of the beauty of landscapes and of flowers? In order to prepare the way for the consideration of this question it will be necessary to inquire, How far has an appreciation of natural beauty been developed before, or independently of, the preaching of Christianity? By appreciation of natural beauty we mean the appreciation of beauty apart from association or utility, the mystic consciousness which a poet of the eighteenth century was one of the first to express, who wrote :—

> "There lives and works
> A soul in all things, and that soul is God.
> . . . . . not a flower
> But shows some touch, in freckle, streak or stain,
> Of His unrivall'd pencil." [1]

In Greek and Latin literature are to be found proofs of careful observation of natural scenes, but little or no trace of an appreciation of the beauty of landscapes and none of a sympathetic contemplation of flowers. This latter point will

[1] J. Thomson, 1700-48.

be more fully considered later on. Some of the similes in Homer,[1] the well-known chorus in Sophocles' "Oedipus Colonaeus,"[2] and certain passages in Lucretius, Horace, and Virgil afford evidence that the writers were careful observers of nature, and were able to admire a beautiful scene, but the difference between their appreciation of nature and that with which the readers of Wordsworth are familiar is one not of degree, but of kind.

The highest appreciation of natural scenery is only possible where a sense of the beautiful and of the sublime co-exist in the mind and consciousness of the observer. The distinction between the beautiful and the sublime is described by Kant, who says :—

"Both touch us pleasantly but in different ways. The sight of a mountain with a snowy peak reaching above the clouds, the account of a storm . . . these

[1] *E.g.*, "Iliad," viii., 555 *sqq.*, translated by Tennyson :—

"As when in heaven the stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart,
So many a fire between the ships and stream
Blazed ——"

[2] "Oed. Col.," 668 *sqq.*

excite pleasure, but mixed with awe; while flowery meadows, valleys with winding streams and covered by browsing herds . . . also cause pleasant feelings, but of a gay and radiant kind. To appreciate the first sensations adequately we must have a feeling for the sublime; to appreciate the second a feeling for the beautiful."

Again, he says :—

"Minds which possess the feeling for the sublime are inclined to lofty thoughts of friendship, scorn of the world, eternity."

It would be easy to quote passages from Egyptian, Indian, Persian, Greek and Roman literature to show that their writers appreciated the might, the awesomeness and the majesty of nature, but we search in vain for the appreciation of the beautiful and sublime which eventually found expression in landscape painting. Schiller, speaking of the very limited appreciation of natural beauty to be found in ancient Greek literature, says :—

"When we think of the glorious scenery which surrounded the ancient Greeks, and remember the free and constant intercourse with nature in which their happier skies enabled them to live . . . we cannot but remark with surprise how few traces we find amongst them of the sentimental interest with which we moderns attach ourselves to natural scenes and objects.

In the description of these, the Greek is indeed in the highest degree exact, faithful and circumstantial, but without exhibiting more warmth of sympathy than in treating of a garment, a shield, or a suit of armour."

A striking instance of the lack of appreciation of natural scenery in ancient times is afforded by the references to Swiss scenery which occur in Latin writers :—

"No description of the eternal snows of the Alps, . . . or of any part of the grandeur of the scenery of Switzerland, have reached us from the ancients, although statesmen and generals, with men of letters in their train, were constantly passing through Helvetia into Gaul." "Julius Cæsar, when returning to his legions in Gaul, employed his time, while passing over the Alps, in preparing a grammatical treatise." "Silvius Italicus, who died under Trajan, when Switzerland was already in great measure cultivated, describes the district of the Alps merely as an awful and barren wilderness."[1]

Perhaps the earliest appreciation of the beauty of Swiss or Italian mountain scenery is the statement of Cassiodorus, who wrote in the sixth century: "Como with its precipitous mountains and its vast expanse of lake . . . is so beautiful that one would think it was created for pleasure

[1] Humboldt's "Cosmos," Bk. ii., p. 24 *sqq.*; compare also Livy's reference to the *foeditas Alpinum.*

only". Nearly two centuries before Basil the Great had written a description of the mountainous district to which he had been banished in which these words occur: "The contemplation of nature abates the fever of the soul and banishes all insincerity and presumption".

At a very much later date we find mountain and even hill scenery regarded with horror. Pepys (in 1668) spoke of crossing Salisbury Plain, where he encountered "some great hills even to fright us". Addison in his "Remarks on Several Parts of Italy," published in 1705, after expressing his admiration for the Lake of Geneva, said of the Alps seen from the lake, they "fill the mind with an agreeable kind of horror and form one of the most irregular, misshapen scenes in the world". Gray in 1739 speaking of the Grande Chartreuse Monastery wrote: "Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry". Of Mont Cenis, however, he wrote: it "carries the permission mountains have of being frightful rather too far".

Few would maintain that the immediate result of the preaching of Christianity was to develop an appreciation of natural scenery.[1] Nor is this

[1] "No one since Hellenism had climbed mountains for the sake of the view. Dante was the first to do so." *Cf.* "The Development of the Feeling for Nature," by A. Biese, p. 106.

surprising when it is remembered that Jews were the first interpreters of this faith to the world. In Hebrew poetry—that is, the poetry in the Old Testament—the power and awesomeness of nature are emphasised, and man's littleness and God's greatness are illustrated by comparison with the forces of nature.

The Jew, who inhabited a country which was more or less surrounded by deserts, had a vivid appreciation of the fertility of his own land. Thus the Psalmist says, "The valleys shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing". Its fertility was often used as a symbol of spiritual blessings both in the Psalms and in the latter part of Isaiah, where the prophet calls upon the trees and mountains to rejoice with him in view of what God had accomplished. Thus he says, "Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest and every tree therein"; and again: "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the wood shall clap their hands". The words which immediately follow, "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree," seem to show that the predominant thought in the mind of the writer was that of the glorious fertility which the blessing of Jehovah should bring to his land.

The nearest approach to a sympathetic appreciation of nature is found in the Song of Solomon, where a delight in nature figures and reflects personal love. A reaction from the polytheism and pantheism of the surrounding nations prevented the Jew from developing any communion of the soul with nature or appreciating as he might otherwise have done the inspiring influence of the scenery by which he was surrounded.

In early Christian times the beauty of the world was held by many to be an enchantment of the devil. S. John's words, "Love not the world," were frequently interpreted as though they were intended to warn men of the danger of thinking too much of the beauty of nature.

"Philosophers were anxious to keep God clear of contact with matter; Marcus Aurelius found 'decay in the substance of all things, nothing but water, dust, bones, stench' (ix., 36). Jesus saw life in all things, God clothing the grass and watching over little birds. To-day the old antithesis of God and matter is gone, and it comes as a relief to find that Jesus anticipated its disappearance."[1]

Malebranche, at the end of the seventeenth century, declared that the irregularities of the

[1] "The Conflict of Religions in the Early Roman Empire," by T. R. Glover, p. 130 *sq.*

earth's surface, like the uncertainty of its seasons, both of which are painful to philosophical geometricians, were to be accounted for by the fact that God intended men's thoughts to be fixed on the world to come, and not on a world which is the abode of sinners, a world which He ordained to be given up to disorder, as is indicated by the irregularities of its rocks and the cliffs on its coasts.

No attempt can be made here to trace the slow development of the appreciation of nature from the time of the Christian era, but a brief reference may be made to the history of landscape painting, which is in some respects an index of man's power to appreciate nature. Landscape painting, in the strict sense of the term, is of comparatively recent origin. Perspective scene painting was made to contribute to the theatrical representation of the Greek plays, and the Roman painter Ludius in the Augustan age is referred to by Pliny as a landscape painter.[1] But in these cases and for many centuries after the landscape was regarded as an appendage or background to the main subject.

The first landscape paintings properly so called were produced in the Netherlands, the first

[1] During the same period—*i.e.* in the epoch of Vikramadit —landscape painting is said to have been practised in India.

ample being the altar-piece at Ghent completed by the brothers Van Eyck in 1432. A century later (1530) the painting of Titian for the Church of San Giovanni e Paolo at Venice, representing the death of Peter Martyr, includes woodland landscape which is very carefully elaborated. It was not, however, till the seventeenth century that any marked development of landscape painting occurred in Europe.

In the middle of the fifteenth century Pope Pius II. (Aeneas Sylvius) wrote his autobiography. It contains frequent descriptions of actual landscapes couched in language which shows the truest appreciation of natural beauty. Rousseau (*ob.* 1778) was the first to discover that the Alps were beautiful. As an interpreter of the beauty of nature he did for the French-speaking peoples what Goethe afterwards did for the Germans, and Wordsworth for the English. The standpoints of the three may roughly be described as deistic, pantheistic, and theistic. Great as was their devotion to nature neither of the two earlier writers could have described the all-pervading love revealed in nature to which Wordsworth refers in the following lines :—

> "In his heart
> Was wanting yet the pure delight of love
> By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,

Or by the silent look of happy things,
Or flowing from the universal face
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
Of Nature, and already was prepared,
By his intense conceptions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.
Such was the Boy—but for the growing Youth
What soul was his, when from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up and bathe the world in light! He looked—
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him :—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent faces could he read
Unutterable love." [1]

The words which the author of "John Inglesant" puts into the mouth of his hero must be regarded as attributed to him in anticipation of the appreciation of Nature which Wordsworth and later writers have developed. He writes :—

"God discourseth with me as a friend and speaks to me in such a dialect as I can understand fully—namely, the outward world of His creatures ; so that I am in fact an inhabitant of paradise and heaven upon earth ; and I may soberly confess that sometimes walking abroad after my studies, I have been almost mad with

[1] "Excursion," Bk. i.

pleasure,—the effect of nature upon my soul having been inexpressibly ravishing, and beyond what I can convey to you."

When we turn from Europe to Asia we find two countries in which appreciation of natural beauty has been developed to a far greater degree than it has been in Europe, if we except the development that has taken place during the last two or three centuries. Almost the whole of the Rig Veda consists of hymns addressed to nature gods. The later and secular Indian literature contains many beautiful descriptions of scenery. A prevailing pantheism and the belief in re-incarnation helped men to realise their nearness to nature, but at the same time made it difficult for them to rise above nature to nature's God. S. Augustine was devoid of the keen sense of natural beauty which can be traced in the literature of India, but we feel how much more inspiring and uplifting was his conception of the beauty of nature than any that can be found there :—

"I asked the earth and she said: 'I am not He,' and all things that are in her did confess the same. I asked the sea and the depths and creeping things, and they answered: 'We are not thy God, seek higher'. I asked the flowing breezes, and the whole expanse of air with its inhabitants made answer:

'Anaxagoras was at fault, I am not God'. I asked the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, and with a loud voice did they exclaim: 'He made us'. My question was the inquiry of my spirit, their answer was the beauty of their form."

Of the non-Christian nations, whether in ancient or in modern time, the Japanese possess by far the most remarkable appreciation of natural scenery and of the beauty of flowers.[1] Baron Hübner says:—

"The Japanese are wonderful lovers of nature. In Europe a feeling for beauty has to be developed by education. Our peasants will talk to you of the fertility of the soil, of the abundance of water so useful for their mills, of the value of their woods, but not of the picturesque charms of the country. They are not perhaps entirely insensible to them, but if they do feel them it is in a vague undefined sort of way for which they would be puzzled to account. It is not so with the Japanese labourer. With him the sense of beauty is innate."

How far this appreciation of the beauty of nature is due to the influence of Buddhism it is difficult to decide. Some writers have maintained that it is the direct outcome of the accept-

[1] In the ninth century A.D. the Emperor Saga held garden parties during the flowering of the cherry blossoms at which the *literati* of the day composed verses in honour of the flowers.

ance by the Japanese of Buddhist teaching. Others have suggested that it was because Buddhism was a religion not of ethics, but of aesthetics that it appealed so strongly to, and was accepted by, a people with whom beauty was divine. A recent writer on Japan points out the passion for perfection of detail which co-exists together with the more general appreciation of beauty :—

"Coupled with an inherent aesthetic, which the Tokugawa influences fostered into exquisite taste, and linked with the Oriental habit of patient industry, Japanese thoroughness has produced the most minutely perfect specimens of art that have ever delighted the world. An artist will chisel at a little block of ivory for years—not to reap pecuniary reward, but to satisfy his passion toward perfection—until at length you hold in your hands a tiny figure which is a microcosm in itself, and will yield to the microscope alone the completeness of its dainty perfections."[1]

The art of painting was fostered and was perhaps introduced by Buddhism. Shinto appears to have had no art. Its ghost houses, silent and void, had no decoration, and continue in their pristine simplicity to the present day. It cannot, however, be claimed that Japanese art or painting has interpreted man to himself or nature to

[1] "Young Japan," by S. A. Scherer, p. 154.

man as has been done by those who lived in a Christian atmosphere.

"The Japanese," says Professor Chamberlain, "are undoubtedly Raphaels of fishes and insects and flowers and bamboo-stems swaying in the breeze, and they have given us charming fragments of idealised scenery. But they have never succeeded in adequately transferring to canvas 'the human form divine,' they have never made grand historical scenes live again before the eyes of posterity, they have never, like the early Italian masters, drawn away men's hearts from earth to heaven in an ecstasy of adoration."

There are not many Japanese to whom the words of one of our English poets might be attributed :—

> "When on some gilded cloud or flower
> My gazing soul would dwell an hour
> And in those weaker glories spy
> Some shadow of eternity." [1]

Landscape painting was practised in Japan as early as the ninth century and was largely developed in the fifteenth century. The aim of the Japanese landscape painter was to interpret rather than to copy the scene which he depicted.[2]

[1] Henry Vaughan.

[2] A Japanese critic speaking of a painter of later time, says : "In his landscape there is less success, as he was so particular about ensuring correctness of forms that they were lacking in high ideas and deep spirit. For a landscape painting is not

When we turn to Burma where Buddhism has exerted the greatest influence, we find that the Burmans possess a considerable appreciation of the beauty of colour and form. Yellow is their favourite colour, but in this case the idea of beauty is associated with that of preciousness: gold is in fact one of the most frequently used words in the Burmese language.

In a recent letter which the present writer received from one who has lived long amongst the Burmese, the author says :—

"The Burmans admire sweet perfumes, a nice dress, a pleasant face, a neat garden, pretty flowers, clear water, bright ornaments, a shady glade (but not the deep forest), bright, cheering dawn (but not the sun in its full power—it is hot and inconvenient), the clear, cool light of the moon.

"Their ideal garden is one in which there are pretty flowers, trees planted in geometrical order, and a neat masonry tank. Purely natural beauty does not appeal to them. The sight of cultivated fields, of healthy-looking plantations, fruit-laden trees gratifies their eyes; the uncultivated 'jungle' is so much waste land. I do not think a Burman would understand one who spoke

loved because it is a facsimile of the natural scene, but because there is something in it greater than mere accurate representation of natural forms, which appeals to our feelings, but which we cannot express in words." *Cf.* "Arts and Crafts of Old Japan," p. 29.

to him of 'beautiful' trees, or 'beautiful' mountains, valleys or rivers. A tree is shady, or yields beautiful flowers, or good fruit, or is useful for timber; it is nothing more. A mountain is big, it is an obstacle to travel, it is the abode of wild beasts, or wild men. A river is difficult to cross, or is useful as a means of communication or for fishing; the sea is solely a thing to be dreaded.

"The sun is employed in figure as an emblem of might, the moon of benignant dignity; the stars do not seem to suggest imagery—they are but astrological signs; the sky is described only with reference to the weather—as 'cloudy,' 'dark,' etc.

"There are no words in Burmese corresponding to our 'scenery,' 'landscape,' 'view' (in its technical sense). The Burmans never paint landscapes; the artist's subjects are human, or architectural, trees and flowers being added only as ornaments. The ornamentation on silver-work, cloth-work, lacquer-work, in wood, stone, etc., consists of geometrical or floral designs, or of figures.

"We may conclude therefore that the Burman does not appreciate the beauties of what we call 'scenery'. I cannot recall any passage in any Burmese writing I have read, descriptive of a landscape; I cannot remember any Burman expressing admiration of 'scenery'; I should never expect to see him stop to take in a 'view'."

Inasmuch then as Buddhism has not succeeded

in developing to anything like the same extent the appreciation of natural beauty in the country in which it has for so long exercised influence, it would seem that a large measure of the credit for what has been attained by the Japanese must be given to themselves. One of the most inspiring hopes of the Christian missionary is that the day will come when this people to whom he is endeavouring to explain the message with which he believes himself to have been entrusted, will be able to grasp and to interpret to the world the underlying meaning of the beauty which they have developed so great a capacity to appreciate.

If the ancients possessed but an imperfect consciousness of the beauty of natural scenery, they seem to have lacked altogether an appreciation of the beauty of flowers. Flowers were constantly used as ornaments or decorations, the prettiness of their form and colour was recognised, but if we may judge from the literature which has survived, there was no appreciation of their glory and significance such as that of which Wordsworth speaks in his "Intimations of Immortality":—

> "To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Still less would it be possible to find in ancient

literature any consciousness of the possibility of intercommunion between man and plants such as that suggested by the lines :—

> "One impulse from the vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can." [1]

Theocritus and Meleager contain frequent references to flowers, but even they did not look upon flowers as beautiful in themselves. The only approach in Greek art to such an appreciation is in the acanthus leaves carved on the Corinthian columns, but this is conventionalised and reduced to a geometrical formula.

It would be impossible to find in classical or in Jewish pre-Christian literature any parallel to the command of Christ, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow". This, and the further statement that not all the wealth of the world, or the gorgeous raiment which wealth might provide, could make a man as beautiful as a flower of the field, constituted a new revelation. The fact that this command to contemplate flowers is apparently never referred to by any of the Christian Fathers seems to show that the world was not yet prepared to appreciate its significance. Many centuries were to pass before

[1] Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned".

obedience to this command of Christ was to exert any visible influence on men.

Amongst native races in Central Africa, as the writer has proved by his own experience, the surest way in which to be mistaken for a lunatic is to be seen picking wild flowers; so completely wanting is the appreciation of their beauty. In Japanese schools, on the other hand, a large amount of time is devoted to instruction in the arrangement of flowers, both wild and cultivated, and few, if any, peoples derive so keen an enjoyment from their contemplation; but what the Japanese lack and what is essential to the deepest appreciation of natural beauty, whether of flowers or scenery, is the consciousness that beauty in nature is the sign and sacrament of a beauty which lies behind nature. There is no touch of spirituality, no hint of mystery, no sense of something underlying nature. We look forward with hope to the time when Japanese poets shall add to their close observation of natural beauty that religious sense which may enable them to interpret to their fellow-countrymen and to us the significance of the divine beauty of which nature is in part a revelation.

Thus the present Bishop of Lahore says:—

"Who that has seen anything of the innate sense of beauty which is so wonderfully developed in the

Japanese character can doubt what one at least of its contributions to our common life will be when they, in God's good time, take their place alongside of us in the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, and as members of the Body of Christ? I often think that in such a text as that of Isaiah, 'Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty,' a depth of meaning will open out to Japanese minds and hearts, and a power of attraction be exercised upon them, far beyond that which is present, or which is possible in our own case.

We began by defining the ultimate object of Christianity and therefore of the Christian missionary as the enlargement of the area and the deepening the consciousness of man's communion with God, man and nature. In order that this threefold object may approximately be fulfilled man must realise his own individuality. The pantheist who believes that there is no line of demarcation between himself, nature and God ends by degrading himself and God to the level of inanimate nature, and becomes incapable of developing any communion with nature which can uplift or inspire him. So too the man who believes, as was the case with many in the early Christian centuries, that he and his fellowmen are born into the world as children of the devil, and that the material world is essentially evil, will naturally feel that to attempt to

hold communion with nature is worse than vain.

Such communion can only be attained by the man who believes that he is himself distinct from nature, and that nature is the handiwork of a personal Being, who believes also that the words of the old Jewish writer were and remain true, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good".

> "Earth's crammed with Heaven,
> And every common bush afire with God,
> But only he who sees takes off his shoes,
> The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."[1]

Furthermore, inasmuch as men have never succeeded in discerning the love of God revealed in nature until they have first discerned that love revealed in Christ, the acceptance of the faith of Christ should prepare the way for the fullest and deepest communion with nature. For the Christian—

> "Heaven above is softer blue,
> Earth around is sweeter green:
> Something lives in every hue,
> Christless eyes have never seen."

No one would suggest that the primary object of the Christian missionary should be to teach his converts to climb mountains or to contem-

[1] E. B. Browning.

plate the beauty of flowers. Nevertheless, the missionary whose ultimate object is "to widen the area and deepen the consciousness of man's communion with nature, man, and God," will welcome every sign which tends to show that the minds of those to whom his appeal is made are becoming increasingly responsive to the beauty of the divine handiwork of which nature is at once the expression and the veil.

If it be true to say that every country and every people have something to contribute to the interpretation of the Christian faith, and that the completion of the Christian revelation awaits the contribution of each, may we not go further and say that every department of nature has a contribution to make, and that the significance of the divine revelation in Christ will only be fully grasped when God's revelation of Himself in nature is perfectly understood?

APPENDIX I.

THE ZODI BUDDHISTS IN BURMA.

THE following passage occurs in Father San Germano's work, "The Burmese Empire" :—

"Christianity has hitherto experienced no persecution in these parts, partly on account of the small number of the converts, and partly through the prudence of the missionaries, who have been solicitous to preserve themselves and their disciples from observation. Otherwise it is probable that they would have had to suffer much, as we may gather from the fate of the Zodi ('enlightened ones'), who began by making a great stir throughout the whole kingdom, and thereby excited the zeal of the Emperor against them. It is believed that great numbers of them still (*i.e.* about the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Father San Germano was writing his work) exist in divers parts of the Empire, but they are obliged to keep themselves concealed. They are of Burmese origin, but their religion is totally different from that of Gautama. They reject metempsychosis, and believe that each one will receive the reward or punishment of his actions immediately after death, and that this state of punishment and reward will last for eternity.

Instead of attributing everything to fate (*karma*), as the Burmese do, they acknowledge an omnipotent and omniscient *Nat* (*i.e.*, spirit), the Creator of the world; they despise the Pagodas, the *Baos* (a name used by the Portuguese in India) or convents of *Talapoins* (the name used by the Portuguese for 'monks'), and the statues of Gautama. The present Emperor, a most zealous defender of his religion (and most cruel despot, who waged many awful wars, Badon Min), resolved with one blow to annihilate this sect, and accordingly gave orders for their being searched for in every place, and compelled to adore Gautama. Fourteen of them were put to a cruel death; but many submitted, or feigned to submit, to the orders of the Emperor, till at length he was persuaded that they had all obeyed. From that time they have remained concealed, for which reason I have never been able to meet with any of them, to inquire if any form of worship had been adopted by them. All that I could learn was that the sect was still in existence, and that its members still had communications with each other. They are for the most part merchants by profession."[1]

[1] Pp. 88 *sq.* of Government reprint of the translation of "The Burmese Empire," by Fr. San Germano, 1885, quoted by G. Whitehead in "The East and the West," vol. v., p. 8.

APPENDIX II.

PRAYERS OF THE CHINESE EMPEROR.

THE following prayers amongst others were added in 1539 A.D. to those used by the Emperor of China in the worship performed by him in the Temple of Heaven twice each year :—

"Thou hast vouchsafed, O God, to hear us, for Thou as our Father dost regard us. I, thy child, dull and unenlightened, am unable to show forth my feelings. Honourable is thy great name. With reverence we spread out these precious stones and silk, and as swallows rejoicing in the Spring praise thine abundant love. The great and lofty One sends down his favour and regard, which we, in our insignificance, are hardly sufficient to receive. I, his simple servant, while I worship, present this precious cup to Him whose years have no end. Men and creatures are emparadised, O God, in thy love. All living things are indebted to thy goodness, but who knows whence his blessings come to him? It is Thou alone, O Lord, who art the true parent of all things. The service is completed, but our poor sincerity cannot be fully expressed. Thy sovereign goodness is infinite. As a potter hast Thou made all living things. Great and

small are curtained round by Thee. As engraven on the heart of thy poor servant is the sense of thy goodness, but my feeling cannot be fully displayed. With great kindness dost Thou bear with us, and notwithstanding our demerits dost grant us life and prosperity. Spirits and men rejoice together, praising God the Lord. What limit, what measure can there be, while we celebrate his great name? For ever he setteth fast the high heavens, and shapeth the solid earth. His government is everlasting. His poor servant, I bow my head and lay it in the dust, bathed in his grace and glory. We have worshipped and written the great name on this gem-like sheet. Now we display it before God, and place it in the fire. These valuable offerings of silks and fine meats we burn also, with these sincere prayers, that they may ascend in volumes of flame up to the distant azure. All the ends of the earth look up to Him. All human beings, all things on the earth, rejoice together in the great Name."

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