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earth seemingly as unproductive of any life as the twigs of an almond-tree in winter. But the breath of spring blows gently and genially upon it; and just as at the fit time the almond-tree burst into radiant life, covering itself with a snowy shower of lovely blossom, so in good time would the word sent forth from God prove its vitality and its power. It, too, would leap to life and blossom abundantly.

This is the message that encouraged the shrinking prophet at the beginning of his task—that his word is God's word, and therefore cannot fail—this truth that the will of God must be done and always is done, in the world that God has made and is making. He knows that, whatever be his own fortune, that word will go on conquering and to conquer till it has subdued all things to itself. So Jeremiah is strengthened at the beginning.

This, then, is the great thought of our text. We are here in the world, and the word of God is with us. It has come to us by His prophets and messengers. God's word is here in the world, and God is in the world with the word, watching over it to perform it. We may believe that what was said of the word of Jehovah by Jeremiah is true of every word that is a word of God.

'Heaven and earth shall pass away; my words shall not pass away.'

Where is there such a message as this in Christ? He tells of God the Father and His infinite mercy. He speaks of life and love, of sin and forgiveness, of rest. He tells of a way that leads to life, and a way whose end is death. What a word is here in Christ! Who will trust it, venture his life upon it, believing that this is the way of peace and blessedness and immortality? Do we really believe that, amid all the voices that assail our ears, there is one voice, that is the Voice Divine? 'God has spoken unto us by His Son.' [1]

[1] J. Rutherford, *The Seer's House*, 295.

Hinduism and Christianity: Some Points of Contact and Divergence.

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I.

The study of Hinduism is indeed a study not of one religion but of all the religions, as set in the Indian environment and influenced by the Indian atmosphere. Its history is a history of all the toil and struggle of the human spirit, seeking God. For that reason it is a study that should stir in us, the deeper we probe it, a profound emotion. The more clearly its outlines emerge before us from the dust and haze of the long centuries of its history, whether we perceive it as the thought-product of the minds of ancient sages brooding over the mysteries of life and death and God in their desert solitudes, or as the movement in the heart of an unlettered peasant bowing before a red-painted stone, the more we feel every instinct of easy criticism and contempt changed to sympathy and respect. From the same root of aspiration have sprung, not only gross and cruel superstition, but profound and passionate conjecture as to God. Hinduism is a strange, formidable, sometimes monstrous, thing, but it is never contemptible, as nothing is contemptible that is the product of deep feeling or deep thought. We must always endeavour to understand it even when it seems to us most fantastic. Sir Alfred Lyall was a student of Hinduism who realized much of its breadth and variety and mystery. He compares it in one passage to 'a troubled sea, without shore or visible horizon, driven to and fro by the winds of boundless credulity and grotesque invention.' If we are to understand the sick heart of India, and are to be enabled, in the name and by the power of Christ, to heal it, we must mark its history and listen to its cries and its complaints as we have them written large for us in strange hieroglyphics in this religion.

If Hinduism, then, is a mosaic of almost all the types and stages of religious aspiration, Christianity should be able, as no other religion can, to furnish the key to its understanding in all its divers aspects,

and the standard by which their value can be judged. For Christianity is not a rival religion; it is, we believe, in its essentials the expression of that which Hinduism, 'with stammering lips and another tongue,' has been striving to utter, the realization of its incoherent dreams. For the Gospel of Christ, as Dean Inge reminds us, 'is not *a* religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance.' Just because that is what we believe Christianity to be, Hinduism can be compared with it, not as an alien and hostile system, but as a rich treasure-house of human hopes and fears and longings, by means of which we may test the capacity of the Christian faith to satisfy the heart of man. Hinduism is a great museum of human needs and searchings, and for that reason it must discover to us many places of desire where it reaches towards and so confirms the Christian revelation.

But it is not our concern here to seek for points of contact between Christianity and the vast continent of Hinduism. That is a task that is beyond our scope. There is another task that can be undertaken, and that is more practicable and more likely to prove fruitful. It is possible for us to discover and to examine some of the forms that the living Hinduism of to-day is taking, and to judge how far they are in agreement with Christian faith and practice, and what readjustments or more radical reformation may be needed to make that agreement more complete. It is impossible for Hindus or the adherents of any faith to come into contact continuously with Christians, even very imperfect Christians, and to breathe the atmosphere of a belief so significant and so widely prevailing, and not to have their own sentiments and convictions modified. This is bound to happen, and it has been happening in India by a continuous process that has gone on during the whole of the past century.

The process of change has been largely an unconscious one. But what was before instinctive and unaware of itself is to-day being more deliberately pursued. The transformation and readjustment of Hinduism under the stimulus of Christianity is becoming an acknowledged policy. Distinguished Indians who would not hesitate to describe themselves as Hindus are turning their attention to the task of reconciling, as far as that is possible, Hinduism and Christianity. Time was when, to any one who called himself with any sincerity of conviction a Hindu, Christianity was simply the enemy. No points of contact could be conceded. And if a change has come about in this matter on the part of many thoughtful Hindus, it has to be recognized that there has been a not dissimilar change on the part of Christians. Hinduism is being studied with a new sympathy and desire to understand. It is no longer merely 'of the devil,' as it was to our ancestors. There is thus a rapprochement between those who too often in the past occupied relations wholly of antagonism, and there is, at least, some attempt to come together in a common desire to find and follow truth. The Arya Samaj is still strongly hostile to Christianity, but it frankly admits that Christianity has compelled Hindus to endeavour to restate their faith. The attitude of others is more friendly. Few Christians, probably, would accept as correct a statement that recently appeared on this subject in the *Indian Social Reformer*, probably the most respected and the most worthy of respect of all the Indian journals, but it testifies to a new spirit of accommodation that is abroad to-day. 'To Hindus,' it says, 'in which term we include Indian Christians, Christ no longer stands out as a hostile and destructive influence. A Hindu-Christian synthesis is being worked out by men in different parts of India, which, we may hope, will become an abiding bond of sympathy between this country and the Christian world.' Again, Professor Radhakrishnan, an able Hindu student of philosophy, who has set himself the task of finding out and emphasizing some of the affinities between 'the fundamentals of the Hindu faith' and Christianity, affirms that 'Christian thinkers are engaged in a reconstruction of belief that brings Christianity nearer the Hindu religion, and promises to bridge the gulf that separates the Christian and the other religions.' To bridge the gulf may prove a more difficult engineering problem than these pioneers realize, but certainly it is good that they are taking measurements and preparing plans. The pontifex has taken the place of the fanatic.

It may be advisable, however, at the outset to indicate certain elements in Christianity which are essential to it as not a sectarian system, but 'religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance.' If that be a true account of what Christianity is, the Christian dare not sell the bridgehead of which he is the keeper, even if it be to bring

about so notable a reconciliation. One of the fundamentals which he dare not surrender is the requirement that religion shall be a way of life, and not merely an explanation of the meaning of the universe, that it shall, therefore, be a truth that is through and through ethical. Another principle that is inseparable from that first one is that the God at the centre of the religion must be a moral Being, one, in a word, such as the name 'Father' on the lips of Christ describes. There follows, accordingly, as a third fundamental, the moral supremacy and centrality of Christ Jesus, that indeed which is signified by the ascription to Him of the title Son of God. These conditions may seem to the Hindu to make the gulf unbridgeable, and, indeed, it may be that that is so. A leap may be necessary, a leap by one who, in doing so, takes his life in his hand. After all, Christianity, and indeed essential religion, means, as Donald Hankey put it, 'betting one's life that there is a God.' But while that is to be fully recognized, at the same time there certainly are points, which it is well to discover and emphasize, at which Hinduism touches Christianity or approaches it at least within stepping distance.

To clear the path of approach it may be well to recognize that the foreigner may frequently misinterpret Hinduism, deducing certain conclusions from its theory which may appear logical, and yet which the deeper logic of experience may have modified in actual Hindu belief and practice. This may be so, for example, in regard to the pantheism that is so often taken for granted as a fundamental rock of offence in Hinduism. No one, I suppose, not even the author of *The Dynasts*, has ever lived the life indifferent to consequences, indifferent to good or ill, that seems to follow from pantheism and a belief in the blind movements of the Immanent Will, 'An automatic sense, Unweeting why or whence.' In India there is a saying that is quite often heard on the lips even of plain people when they wish to put aside the pain of some untoward event or to justify a manifestly immoral way of living. They say, 'The doer and He who causes to do are one.' That seems the end of all responsibility and of all ethical values. The writer once had occasion to point out the moral perils that that attitude seemed to involve. An Indian friend, however, assured him—and his assurance must be taken as that of one who knew—that, as often used, the phrase means no more than what the Christian means when he resigns himself to suffering and says, 'God's will be done.' We may take it at least that an unmoral pantheism has never ruled the lives of Indian people—unless, it may be, of a few philosophers—that there, as everywhere, conscience will keep breaking in, and that the moralization of pantheistic thinking is proceeding at the present time, especially among the thoughtful classes. Fortunately for the world, life continually modifies our theory, and, as there have been few in India who have lived a lawless life because they were supposed to be the unconscious instruments of the sole-existent One or to have passed, while yet alive, beyond good and evil, so there have been few in the West whose Calvinism has raised them as high or cast them down as low as 'Johannes Agricola in Meditation.' The theory of Advaita may seem finally at strife with Christianity and, indeed, with the life of religion, and yet the living Hinduism of men and women who profess that doctrine may prove to be far less so in reality and may be steadily travelling towards agreement.

To the student, who approaches the religion of the Upaniṣads from a study of the documents, or who contemplates from without the law of *karma*, to all appearance so inexorable, it seems as though there was no place for worship to be found in the former, and no room for human freedom and the Divine grace and forgiveness in the case of the latter. And yet Professor Radhakrishnan and, no doubt, many others like him, refuse to accept these conclusions. Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar, for example, is known to be one of the noblest and most devout of Indian theists, and yet this sincere worshipper of a God of holiness finds much of his spiritual nourishment in what to some appear the pantheistic husks of Upaniṣad speculation. It is well if these things are possible, and if, just as the harsh anthropomorphism of Old Testament religion can be rejected by the Christian while he studies the prophets and psalmists and feeds his soul upon their inspired intuitions of the Divine character and purpose, so also the student to-day of the ancient Hindu scriptures may take the wheat and cast away the tares.

We see Hinduism setting its house in order and seeking to free itself from some elements at least in it that have been a reproach and a scandal in such a book as the courageous exposition of his religion recently issued by a learned scholar, Babu

Govinda Das.[1] His aim, as he describes it, is to assist in the house-cleaning of Hinduism that he sees to be so urgently necessary, and to get rid of 'all the degenerate tissue and toxic stuff that has gathered therein.' He agrees with Professor Radhakrishnan in retaining *karma* in reconstituted Hinduism, but, as in the case of the Professor so with this interpreter, it is to be a new law which is vaguely conceived, but which is alleged to leave room for moral growth and moral responsibility. It is united with a modified doctrine of rebirth which seems to signify little more than 'other heights in other worlds, God willing.' It is realized that a truly ethical life demands that there be room in it for repentance, and that an ethically exalted Deity who rules by the influences of His Spirit must be a God who can forgive and who finds out a way of forgiveness. The interest of these suggestions lies in the fact that their authors are labouring to moralize their religion, and so to bring it into line with such an ethical religion as Christianity. Unconsciously or half-consciously, Christianity is the standard by which they judge its tenets. This is well, and the further the process proceeds the more it will be possible to build a bridge between the two faiths.

If, indeed, Babu Govinda Das is right, Hinduism is not to be described as a faith at all. It is 'an attitude, a discipline, a philosophy of life,' and there is no reason why those who have that inheritance should not pass, bearing all that is worthy in their inheritance with them, into the obedience of Christ. A Western student of Hinduism has maintained that it has only two distinctive marks that apply to all its Protean forms, namely, worship of the cow and reverence for Brahmans. It is easy to prove that there are classes of Hindus to whom neither of these tests applies. Babu Govinda Das boldly affirms that Hinduism has no peculiar criteria by which it can be distinguished. Any one who calls himself a Hindu is a Hindu. Hinduism is, he says, 'an anthropological process rather than a religion,' and therefore it is 'free and untrammelled.'

This may seem to be the freedom of a drifting fog-bank, driven to and fro by every wind. It is hardly the freedom of a self-determining spirit, seeking the Highest and guided towards the Highest. Just because it is so vague a product of man's wavering desires and hopes and fears, and because it is so heterogeneous a thing, it is not possible to compare it as a whole with Christianity, or to forecast the process of its adjustment to a closer harmony with that faith. We can note, however, some aspects of its multifariousness by which it seeks to achieve that which it is the aim of religion to achieve, and which for that reason are the aspects of it that bring it nearest to Christianity.

[1] *Hinduism*, by Govinda Das, of the Benares Hindu University. Madras, Natesan & Co.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Theology at its Best.

To many it will be good news that Herrmann's Outline of Dogmatic has at last been published.[1] This slender booklet, containing the paragraphs which he was accustomed to dictate to his classes before expanding them freely day by day in lecture, is the quintessence of his lifelong thought. And it is a book of rare worth. It might be seriously questioned, I think, whether anywhere in the world a hundred pages (priced at half a crown) could be found which set before us so clearly the essential Christian convictions. Let us hope it will not have to wait long for a translator.

Herrmann, severe as his canons of thinking were, is really the theologian of the evangelist. He is perpetually saying to us that contact with Jesus Christ will give us all we need. Henry Drummond's meetings of thirty-five years ago and Herrmann's classroom at Marburg were different in a variety of ways, but the atmosphere was the same in both. It would have been quite natural for the lecturer to close, any given day, by announcing that an after-meeting would be held in a room upstairs. Conversions must often have taken place under his teaching.

[1] Wilhelm Herrmann, *Dogmatik* (F. A. Perthes, Stuttgart, 1925, pp. xxiv. 103. Mk. 2.50).