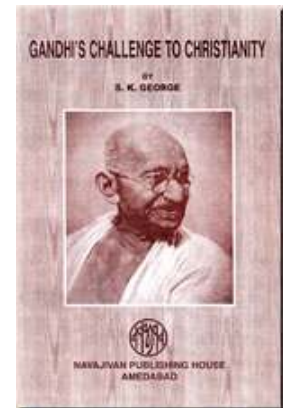


# Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity

By : S. K. George

With forewords by :

S. Radhakrishnan &  
Horace Alexander



First Published: 1947

**Printed & Published by:**

**Navajivan Publishing House**

**Ahmedabad 380 014 (INDIA)**

**Phone: 079 - 27540635**

**E-mail: [jitnavjivan10@gmail.com](mailto:jitnavjivan10@gmail.com)**

**Website: [www.navajivantrust.org](http://www.navajivantrust.org)**

TO  
MAHATMA GANDHI  
WHO MADE JESUS AND HIS MESSAGE REAL TO ME

### **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

This book by Sjt. S. K. George, of Santiniketan, Bolpur, Bengal, was first published in England by George Allen & Unwin Ltd. and was sold out soon; but, on account of paper shortage and other difficulties occasioned by the last war, they could not bring out its second edition. The author therefore approached the Navajivan Karyalaya if it could help him there. Messrs George Allen & Unwin were willing to allow an Indian edition of not exceeding 3000 copies to be published as a second edition. Hence this Indian edition is being issued by us.

The author has availed himself of the opportunity of a second edition to add a few pages on one or two new topics. And a new foreword has been added from the pen of Sjt. H. Alexander. We hope, therefore, the book will be specially welcome to the Indian readers.

In the end, I take this opportunity of thanking both the author and the first publishers for permitting us to publish this Indian edition.

20-11-'47

## FOREWORD

### TO THE SECOND EDITION

I am happy to write a note of commendation for the new edition of Mr. S. K. George's book. It is too soon to estimate Mahatma Gandhi's real significance in the history of our time. For many people, he symbolizes India's political revolt against British rule, or, more broadly, the demand of Asia, of the coloured races generally, for political, economic and social equality with the West. But Mr. George is chiefly concerned to suggest certain other aspects of his life and work which are, perhaps, even more important and challenging. He suggests that Mr. Gandhi is one of those rare souls – called prophets or seers – who appear in the world from time to time across the centuries, and who revitalize, even to some extent reorient, the course of human history. Certain it is that Mr. Gandhi defies the normal classifications. In some respects he seems to be a complete misfit for twentieth century human society. He is like a man who has been dropped into our century by mistake out of quite another age : some would say, out of a past age, others, from a happier future.

In an age when the human species is in danger of destroying itself through highly mechanized means of organized violence, here is a man who preaches non-violence, in season and out of season, who distrusts the machine; a man who, in an age of industrialism, puts the producer of food and other simple manual workers in the centre of the picture, and inveighs against the "dark Satanic mills"; a man who, when in politics the end is held to justify any means, however deceitful and however ruthless, tries to make politics conform to the most rigid moral code, and distrusts every kind of expediency. But, let it be noted, he is far too great a man, too many-sided, too much concerned with practical life – with the eternal problems of daily bread and of social order – to be a mere doctrinaire. Whether one or other of these aspects of his life – his belief in non-violence, his faith in the primary producer and in manual labour, his attempt to moralize politics, his devotion to truth – will stand out in ever-growing historic perspective, or whether some other side of his life, less visible

to his contemporaries, may seem more significant to future ages, who shall say? But one thing we can say : All those who attend to Mr. Gandhi and his writings and teachings must find in him a sort of gadfly to the horse of the modern age – as Socrates described himself. He is constantly putting searching questions and challenging our sense of values. No one but a fool could be complacent about the state of the world today. But, merely in order to live, we all tend to acquiesce in certain conventions and customs that are accepted as part of our age. Again and again Gandhi's life and thought say to us: Are you sure your conventions are right? He provides a constant stimulus to the sluggishness of the human conscience.

Mr. George helps us to see the value of this Gandhian challenge, especially as it touches the life of the Christian Church. But others, in addition to members of that Church, will profit by reading and pondering his suggestive and thoughtful chapters. Mr. George has a fresh, direct and luminous style. He deserves to have many readers.

October, 1947

HORACE ALEXANDER

## FOREWORD

### TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is a pleasure to write a brief note introducing Mr. S. K. George's book on Christianity in India. He represents the increasing number of Indian Christians who are alive to the currents of modern Indian life and aspiration and are anxious to bring their faith into an understanding with India's spiritual heritage. Whatever the Continental theologians may say, it is impossible for the Indian Christian to resist the impression that God has been present in the age-long struggle of man for light. When he sees that under the force and inspiration of Hinduism there has been an uninterrupted continuity for many centuries of saintly souls, true men of religion, who challenge comparison with the best of other religions, he is obliged to concede that the spirit of God has been at work in Hinduism also. The fact of Gandhi is a challenge to the exclusive claims of Christianity.

If Europe interpreted Christianity in terms of her own culture, of Greek thought and Roman organization, there is no reason why the Indian Christian should not relate the message of salvation in Christ to the larger spiritual background of India. Possibly India's religious insight may help to revivify Christianity, not only in India but in the world at large.

We have heard of what is called the Platonic tradition in Christianity. Such a celebrated theologian as Dr. W. R. Inge regards himself as a representative of this great tradition. He is a Christian Platonist. Cannot we have a Vedantic tradition in Christianity?

The late Max Muller thought of himself as a Christian Vedantin. There are thousands in the West today who have acquired a new and deeper impulse of religious life through the influence of Hindu thought. If even non-Indian Christians find it easier to understand Christianity in the light of the Vedanta, it is unfortunate that Indian Christians are led to adopt an attitude of indifference, if not hostility, to Hindu religion and metaphysics. It is my hope

that this little book may awaken the interest of the Indian Christians to the reality of the problem and help them to give their faith its proper place in India's religious setting.

OXFORD, 8-6-1939

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

## PREFACE

### TO THE SECOND EDITION

Reviewing the first edition of my book, in an English Church Magazine, the reviewer said: "The author is a great Gandhiite but whether he is a great Christian is more open to question." I do not claim to be great anything; but I do claim to be a Gandhiite and a Christian. That combination is to me vital and significant for the world today and especially so for India. The conviction came to me as a young man in the beginnings of the Gandhian era in Indian politics, a conviction that has only been deepened by the passage of years and a greater understanding of the message both of Jesus Christ and Mahatma Gandhi, that a true Christian in India today must necessarily be a Gandhian. The corollary to that, that a Gandhiite must also be a Christian, need not necessarily follow, unless the term Christian is understood in its widest, perhaps its truest sense, in the sense in which Gandhi, with his life-long devotion to Hinduism, is himself a Christian.

My proposition that a true Christian in India must necessarily be a Gandhiite is borne of the conviction that Gandhi today is giving a practical demonstration of the applicability of the teachings of Jesus, the Master, to modern problems. That was a sorely needed demonstration. The Christian Church in spite of all its adoration of Jesus, its exaltation of him to the very throne of Deity, has all along relegated his teachings as impracticable idealism. His great enunciation of the law of love, as the only rule of life for man as a child of God, though repeated *ad nauseam* by professing Christians, has continually been given the go-by in Christian practice, corporate and even individual. Modern politics and economics, with their dread alternatives of a unified world-order or internecine conflict in a world made one and also threatened with extinction by science, may yet compel the West to turn to the teachings of Jesus as offering the only way out. But so far as practical politics have been concerned no religious or political leader in the West has even thought of applying Jesus' teachings to them. A candid Western Christian scholar has recently confessed that "the real



obstacle to believing in Christianity is not miracle; no, not even such a miracle as a Virgin Birth and the Resurrection of a man killed by crucifixion. What really stands in the way of accepting the Gospel of Jesus is not the strain on our credulity but the demand on our characters. It is the Sermon on the Mount which is the central problem. If we could believe that the Sermon on the Mount was true, if it could work as a practical proposition in our present lives, then all the rest of the Gospel statements would certainly look far less improbable."<sup>1</sup> The sceptic Bernard Shaw has shown greater spiritual insight than all the ecclesiastics of the West when he says that Jesus' teachings are "a force like electricity needing only the discovery of a suitable machinery, to be applied to the affairs of mankind with revolutionary effect." It is the main contention of this book that Gandhi in his *satyagraha* has discovered that machinery, that technique, by which the law of love has been applied with revolutionary effect in Indian politics. Not to recognize that application in Gandhi's mighty experiments with truth, not to see in him the stirrings of the spirit of God, is to be lacking in spiritual discernment, is to come under the condemnation of Jesus himself for not discerning the signs of the times and the ways of God. I still cherish the hope that my fellow-believers, in India at least, will face up to the challenge of Gandhi's witness to essential Christianity.

I also cherish the hope that the essence of my second proposition also will be granted by both my Christian and non-Christian friends. It is that a true Gandhiite is essentially a Christian. If what is vital in Christianity is the message of the Master and its application to life then Gandhi is a true follower of Jesus. The story is told how the disciples of Jesus once came across a person doing good works in his name, who yet would not follow them; and *they "forbade him because he followed not us"*. When the incident was reported to Jesus, the Master said: "Forbid him not; for he that is not against you is for you."<sup>2</sup> Gandhi certainly is not only *not against Jesus, but is definitely for him*. What has so far stood in the way of an open recognition of Gandhi by Christians as a co-worker for the Kingdom of God has been their insistence on *his following them*, on his acceptance of one or other of the many orthodoxies in which Christians have sought to cramp the mighty spirit of Jesus. There is no justification for

Indian Christianity to accept as final the formulations of doctrines evolved in the West in utter ignorance of the treasures of the spirit garnered in the East. An Indian Christianity, true alike to its Christian and its Indian heritage, will, I trust, open its doors wide to welcome and include all those who seek to worship God in spirit and in truth and to walk the way of Jesus in all humility. Judged by the only test that Jesus himself prescribed, "by their fruits ye shall know them", Gandhi is a Christian; and Indian Christianity will be strengthening and not weakening itself by extending to him and others like him the right hand of Christian fellowship in the supreme task of bringing in God's Kingdom on earth.

It is these simple and honest convictions that I have tried to express in my book. I am happy that a second, an Indian edition, is being published by the Navajivan Publishing House. I could not have wished for a better publisher. My thanks are due to the original publishers, Messrs George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, for permission to bring out this Indian edition. They themselves hope to bring out a later edition when the paper supply situation eases in Great Britain.

I have added a new chapter at the end. In it I have sought to give expression to some of the questionings and doubts that arise as one reflects on the results of Gandhi's experiments with truth in the realm of Indian politics. Perhaps it raises more questions than it answers. My only object in adding it is to provoke thought on the issues it raises and to share my perplexities, with the reader. One is perplexed, though not unto despair, by many things happening in India and the world today. The Fact of Gandhi is, not only a challenge, but an aid to faith. The miracle of his latest reconciliation work in Calcutta shows how the spell of violence can be broken, if only we can believe and dare "to do or die". "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth."<sup>3</sup>

Santiniketan,

September, 1947

S. K. GEORGE

---

1 Quoted by Gerald Heard in *The Code of Christ*.

2 St. Luke 9 : 50

3 St. Mark 9 : 23.

## PREFACE

### TO THE FIRST EDITION

The articles here collected together were written between the years 1930 and 1939 and represent the reactions of a young Indian Christian mind to the challenge of movements and happenings in India during those eventful years. Indian Christianity has had many exponents and apologists but few from among the sons of the soil. *The Christ of the Indian Road* is yet of foreign conception and still speaks the language of conquest and consolidation. But the real Christ of India, stricken for the transgressions of her people, standing in with them against oppression and injustice, smitten of God and afflicted and of his travail bringing life and light to the nation, is yet to find embodiment in the Indian Church.

For that many more of her sons and daughters will have to drink the cup of suffering that the Master drank, will have to identify themselves far more completely than they have yet done with the poverty, the ignorance and the suffering of their fellow countrymen. It is the present writer's conviction that Indian Christianity is finding its soul in the travails through which it is passing in common with the rest of India; that the Church in India will embody Christ to India only in the measure in which it takes upon itself the sufferings of its people. For redemptive, suffering love is the central principle in Christianity and the manifestation of it in practice, and not the preaching of any dogma, is what is needed, is what will convince India of the truth and the power of Christianity. It ought to be a matter of supreme thankfulness to the Indian Christian that this principle is not unwelcome or alien to India; that it is the guiding light of India's leading statesman and has received at his hands a practical application on a scale unprecedented in world history. For it is one of the main theses of this book that Gandhi's *satyagraha* is Christianity in action and that the Christian Church lost one of its greatest opportunities in recent years in failing to fall behind Gandhi in his great movement for national emancipation on non-violent lines. This failure was largely due to the foreign

leadership to which it is still so subservient. Rid of that subservience, it is the present writer's hope that the Church in India will yet realize the time of her visitation and seize her still present opportunity to take the message of her Master right to the heart of a new India in the making. Christ's hope of the Kingdom of God, of the establishment of peace on earth and goodwill among men, is nearer realization in India because Gandhi has lived. Not to recognize in him the greatest ally of essential Christianity in India, the greatest worker for the Kingdom of God in the world today, is to betray gross inability to discern the working of God's spirit. To seek to condemn him as an enemy and to "forbid him to prophesy because he followeth not us", because he does not accept the Church's version of Christianity, is to judge him, not by his fruits, but by his label; and might even mean being found fighting against God.

To the Indian Christian who had even dimly perceived these things and was seeking to live in the light of them, these years were a period of a great trial, as well as of a great hopefulness. The present writer was fortunate enough to have come under the influence of the great national awakening in his early youth. He was a student in Madras during the years 1919-21, when the first great wave of "non-co-operation" passed over the country. The hopes it raised, the spiritual exaltation of its great leader, and the devotion it called forth even from the ordinary run of humanity, all these made real to his youthful mind the idealism and the passion of Jesus of Nazareth. And the call came to him to devote himself to the work of the Kingdom. Through all the years of faltering and failure, of wandering and weariness, that have followed, he claims to have remained faithful to the vision he had then seen and to have set the hope of the Kingdom in the forefront of his strivings. His own inclinations, the pressure of friends and the leading of circumstances led him to the service of the Christian Church. After a year of lay ministering in an Anglican parish he was sent on for theological training at Calcutta, as a preparation for the ordained ministry of the Anglican Church in Travancore, South India. Three years of study and contact with stimulating personalities in his theological college only confirmed him in his conviction that the central thing in Christianity is Christ's message of the Kingdom and that the way to its realization is that of the Cross.

He could not help feeling all the time the challenge of the life of Gandhi, living out the principle of the Cross. Theological differences kept him out of the ministry of the Anglican Church. These differences notwithstanding, he obtained the place of tutor in his theological College. This second term of residence in Calcutta synchronized with the Indian Civil Disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932, under Gandhi's leadership. Those were years of great stress of mind to him. A correspondence<sup>1</sup> with the Anglican Metropolitan in India, over the latter's defence of the Government's use of violence in suppressing a nonviolent agitation, almost cost him his position in 1930. When later in 1932 all India was in travail, during the second Civil Disobedience movement, he felt it his Christian duty to appeal to all Indian Christians to take their share in the non-violent struggle for India's freedom.<sup>2</sup> He published an appeal to all Indian Christians to join in and to act as custodians of nonviolence – as became a community which claimed to believe in the supreme instance of triumphant *satyagraha* the world has seen, viz. the Cross of Jesus of Nazareth. The Bengal Government took objection to this statement, and two Calcutta papers that published it were penalized. He himself escaped Government prosecution. But his sympathy with Indian nationalism was regarded as disloyalty to his college and to the Indian Church, and he had to tender his resignation from the college.

Since then he has been without helpful Christian affiliation and has been a lone voice crying out for what he believes to be essential Christianity. He has of late discovered his kinship with liberal movements in Western Christianity, and has hopes of working with them. But it is his conviction that an undogmatic Christianity, true to the spiritual insight of Jesus of Nazareth, will yet discover and establish its links with liberal elements in all other religions, and will especially find its rightful place in that larger fellowship of faiths that is yet to be. Of this fellowship, Hinduism, with its genuine catholicity, is an earnest as well as a foretaste, though the coming fellowship will be far more vital and effective than the incoherent mass of present-day Hinduism. He himself has found the warmest sympathy from many non-Christian leaders of thought in India. The present book is an effort to widen and strengthen that sympathy; is

like a hand stretched out seeking the grasp of kindred hands, in a joint quest of truth and of the good life, which is what religion is in its essence. It is his conviction that conditions are ripe in India for a co-operative effort on the part of all religions to realize truth and justice through non-violence, which is the way of religion. India with her genius for comprehension ought to lead the way in that synthesis of religions and cultures that is clearly demanded by the times. What has so far stood in the way of such synthesis has been the exclusiveness and the militancy of the missionary faiths that have come into the land. But Hinduism, with its genuine catholicity, points the way to a larger synthesis than has yet been achieved.

It is the present writer's Christian conviction that Indian Christianity will realize itself, will save itself, in the only sense in which its Master would have it save itself, by losing itself in the larger life of India and of the world to be, in the universal Church of humanity that is yet to arise, "a Church whose life will be too vast and rich to be called by any of the names that are now familiar to our ears; a Church wise to gather to herself all the best truths that old times have won, but never seeking to build religion on a dogmatic theological idea; and forever strong to watch, with forward look, for the light that is still to rise from the unspent deep things of God; a Church whose one demand of all her children is that they shall be pure in heart, and whose worship is founded on one great motive of thought and action, 'Glory to God alone.' "<sup>3</sup>

It is a great privilege to have been allowed to dedicate this humble volume to the Great Soul who has provoked its thought and inspired its message. May Christianity today face the challenge of his personality!

The thanks of the writer are due to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in England and to the authorities of Manchester College, Oxford, for providing him with the opportunity of a year's residence in Oxford; and particularly to the Principal of the College for setting him free from strictly college work to devote himself to the preparation of this little volume.

But he would not have dared to produce it but for the encouragement and help he received from Sir S. Radhakrishnan, Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions

at Oxford. Dr. Radhakrishnan's presence in this historic centre of Christian culture and education is in itself a recognition of the need for understanding between East and West and an earnest of their possible reconciliation. If the series of brilliant books that he is giving to the world comes at present as a disturbing challenge to Christian orthodoxy that is but the disturbance that always accompanies the first mingling of divergent currents of thought. But this acknowledgment of his generous sympathy and help must not be taken to mean that he is in any sense responsible for the main thesis of this book or its presentation. His gracious encouragement was due to the fact that he seemed to see in it a glimmering fulfillment of his hope that Indian Christianity will effect a reconciliation between Christian and Indian thought. May greater and more capable minds than mine devote themselves to the fulfillment of that hope!

My special thanks are due to the Rev. Will Hayes (Brother John, Founder of the Order of the Great Companions) for encouragement and suggestions in bringing out this little book. He has very kindly read it in manuscript and also corrected its proofs. He is a pioneer in the West of humanity's united following after the Great Companions of all ages and countries, among whom Mahatma Gandhi will undoubtedly take his place.

Manchester College, Oxford

S. K. G.

June 1939

- 
1. This arose out of the Metropolitan-Kumarappa controversy, published in Mr. Kumarappa's brochure, *The Religion of Jesus*.
  2. This appeal is printed as Appendix III in this volume.
  3. S. H. Mellone in *Back to Realities*.

## 1. THE FACT OF GANDHI

THERE is a book that used to be much in evidence among Christian propagandists in India a few years ago, called *The Fact of Christy* by Dr. Carnegie Simpson. The book opened with the question of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, "Who do ye say that I am?" and said that that question was fundamental to every man. Another book on the same lines, by the world-famous missionary leader Dr. John R. Mott, had the expressive title of *Confronting Young Men with Christ*. These books and evangelists sought to confront Young India with the fact of Christ — told the non-Christian especially that Christ was a supremely significant spiritual fact and that he had to face up to him. That is certainly true. Christ is a stupendous fact in the spiritual history of man, in the story of human evolution, and everyone ought to face up to him. And the Christian evangelist is right in confronting everyone with that fact.

But then Christ is not the only fact in the spiritual history of the race. There are other stupendous facts as well, which it would be foolish for the race to ignore. Lao Tse, the Buddha, and Socrates, to mention only a few of the very outstanding names, are also facts which the race must face up to and draw what inspiration it can from them. These, and many others beside them, though dead yet do speak and continue to shed their beacon lights on the pilgrim path of humanity.

They are, each of them, what has been said of the Buddha:

That Blossom on our human tree,  
Which opens once in many myriad years,  
But opened, fills the World with Wisdom's Scent  
And Love's dropped honey.<sup>1</sup>

But most of these Great Ones have been unfortunate in the followers they have had. These latter have tried to make a monopoly of each of them, to shut in their scents and their lights within narrow cramping walls, to make exclusive



claims for them and thus prevent their light and their perfume from filling the world.

I believe that Mahatma Gandhi today is such a spiritual fact, another peak of human achievement, which it would be folly for the race to ignore. It may be fortunate that he is living at a time when nothing is hid, when even the least out-of-the-ordinary thing gets a blare of publicity. He has had his share of it. It is recorded that an American tourist once said that he came to India to see three things – the Himalayas, the Taj Mahal and Mahatma Gandhi. But this kind of publicity may not be altogether a blessing. For Gandhiji is not an object to be looked at like the Himalayas, though his uncouth features and his half-naked body might evoke some curiosity. But unlike a natural phenomenon a spiritual fact is a challenge— you have got to do something about it – make up your mind, take an attitude towards it. I submit that Gandhi is a spiritual fact of that category.

But the last thing the average human mind wants to do with a fact of this order is to face up to its challenge, to meet its demands. It has been said there are two ways in which humanity has tried to dispose of its spiritual leaders. One, and this in most cases is the first reaction, is to try to suppress them as dangerous innovators, rejecting them, despising them, giving them the cup of poison to drink or lifting them on the cross of shame; or in these days when seemingly more humane methods prevail, shutting them up in jails or in concentration camps. But that method has repeatedly been found to fail, at least in the case of the greatest of them. They are found to reign even from their crosses or their prisons. And so Humanity resorts to the second, the subtler way, of putting them up on a pedestal and worshipping them – calling them Master and Lord, singing their praises and ascribing uniqueness or divinity to them, but all the time evading their challenge, refusing to follow them. But what do these great men care for the homage of those who are not prepared to stand for the causes they stood for, to follow in their footsteps?

Both methods have been or are being tried on Gandhi. The first has obviously failed. Even the British Government might hesitate<sup>2</sup> to arrest him if he again

resorts to Civil Disobedience against it, as well he may at any time. But the second and the more dangerous method of shelving him is also being tried. So often do we hear it said: "Non-violence is all right for Gandhi – he is an exception, a Mahatma: but it will not work for the ordinary man or on a national or international scale." But Gandhiji, like all other great spiritual teachers, would repudiate such a distinction.

In fact, the essence of their message is that what was possible for them is possible for all others. And any- one who has read the story of Gandhi's life in his auto- biography will realize from what a very ordinary level of experience, even of sensuous desires, he has lifted himself up to be the great spiritual force he now is. Remember what the Churches have done to Jesus. His *Sermon on the Mount* has been shelved as an ideal, an impracticable code for the modern man.

There are two things that make the fact of Gandhi peculiarly disconcerting to the Christian propagandist, to the orthodox Christian, and make it a challenge to Christianity. The first is that even the orthodox Christian cannot refuse to admit, what is practically the unanimous verdict of the thinking world today, that Gandhiji is living out the Christian ideal, that he has demonstrated how the *Sermon on the Mount* can be practical politics. I think the following judgment of Mr. Kingsley Martin, Editor of *The New Statesman and Nation*, will be widely accepted: "I regard Gandhi as probably being of all modern leaders the most faithful interpreter of the philosophy of the Gospels?" It is strange indeed when the Christian Church as a whole has turned aside from the fundamental teaching of Christ, that *Love is the Law of Life* (I do not think there is a single Bishop in the Anglican Church who will make a stand against war if England decides to go to war) that a non-Christian should pin his faith to this teaching and make it the basis of his political programme for a country that is almost wholly non-Christian!

It was interesting to come across the following in a recent issue of Gandhiji's paper, *Harijan*. *The Statesman* of Calcutta, one of India's leading papers, under Anglo-Indian management, writing editorially about Gandhiji's advice to the

Jews to offer non-violent resistance to Hitler, said: "Christ is the supreme example of non-violence and the indignities heaped upon him at his tortured death proved once and for all that in a worldly and temporal sense it can fail hopelessly." Commenting on this Gandhiji wrote: "I was unprepared to find the view expressed by *The Statesman* writer that the example of Christ proved once and for all that in a worldly and temporal sense it can fail hopelessly. Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense the example of Jesus's suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions worldly and temporal. And I know there are hundreds of Christians who believe likewise. *Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal Law of Love.*"

Yes, Gandhi is an inconvenient and embarrassing challenge to Christian orthodoxy. But some orthodox Christians, who cannot help admitting this, have a curious, a disingenuous way of getting round it. I have heard it said by more than one of them: "Yes, Gandhi is great, perhaps the greatest man of modern times, but it is the Christ-spirit that is working in him. He would have been a greater man if he had been conscious of this and accepted the Lordship of Christ." But Gandhiji gives them no foothold for this contention. He has explicitly rejected this claim for Christ. It is this which has hardened Christian, and especially missionary, opinion against him of late. His outspokenness on this subject has made it impossible for them to exploit his achievements even in the interests of a comprehensive Christology. It is this which constitutes his other challenge to Christian orthodoxy. Over ten years ago Gandhiji was invited to speak at a Missionary Conference in Calcutta. He gladly accepted the opportunity, as nothing delights him more than Christian response to his message. It was a very frank talk that he gave them on the subject of why he was not a Christian. He told them of his early and long contact with Christian missions, how near he came to becoming a Christian and how in fulfillment of a promise made to a missionary friend in South Africa, not to leave any stone unturned in trying to convince himself of the truth of Christianity, he went to a highly respected Indian Christian, himself a convert from Hinduism, and had the fullest discussion with him on the matter. But he said he came away

unconvinced and has still remained outside the Church, though freely admitting his indebtedness to Christ. There were questions after the address, and one speaker after another put it to him that Christianity is experience of the Living Christ and if he had not that experience he is no Christian, however faithfully he may follow the teachings. To that Gandhiji replied in memorable words to this effect: "I do not know what you mean by the Living Christ. If you mean the historic Jesus, then I do not feel his presence. But if you mean a spirit guiding me, a presence nearer to me than hands and feet, than the very breath in me, then I do feel such a presence. If it were not for the sense of that presence the waters of the Ganges would long ere this have been my destination. Call it Christ or Krishna: that does not matter to me." That I believe is a crucial statement – a testimony to a living experience of spiritual power, borne out by a life of heroic activity, but mediated apart from Christian channels, and therefore testifying to a Source of Power beyond all labels, beyond and behind all historical manifestations of it in time and space.

This I believe is a momentous contribution to religious thinking – this positive assertion of an experience of spiritual power and equally so this deliberate denial of all exclusive claims. Gandhiji is not a metaphysical thinker but this statement of his fundamental belief is a profound contribution to religious thought. At one time he used to say, "God is Truth" Today he reverses the order and says, "Truth is God." Truth to him includes everything – Love, Beauty, Justice.

And the remarkable thing about him is that he makes that the basis of his practical programme. He is one who is immersed in the work of this world – even in work that has come to be in some ways the dirtiest of human occupations, the work of the politician. But he has refused to be soiled by it. He has insisted on carrying his religion into his politics – in fact, he has no politics apart from his religion. A famous journalist in India once told him, "Well, Mahatma, I have no religion; politics is my religion." Swift came the Mahatma's reply: "Religion is my politics." And he means it. Is it not strange that he is the one outstanding politician in the world today who speaks of his ideal

as that of building up the Kingdom of God – Rama Rajya, as he calls it – and he a non-Christian?

But even more significant than this is the method he has evolved for the realization of that Kingdom. It is the method of non-violence, of *satyagraha*. He has clearly grasped and insisted on in practice, what Western thinkers are coming to realize, that means condition end, that ideal ends cannot be attained by ignoble means, that there are no short cuts to Justice and Peace. So insistent is he on this that he has more than once risked his political leadership, even his reputation for sanity, by recalling movements which seemed to succeed, but which had departed from the path of non-violence. It is in this, I believe, that he is giving a new lead, breaking new ground in political and religious history. For religions so far have relied on preaching and propaganda only to get their principles of Love and Justice accepted by man and so have had to be content with limited and mainly individual successes only. They have lacked a technique of mass action whereby these principles could be made operative in the everyday problems of man and thus overthrow the reign of evil and selfishness in human relationships. Gandhiji's method of *satyagraha*, of nonviolent resistance to evil, seems to supply that technique of action whereby Love can resist injustice.

"The great problem of this day," said a Professor of mine in Manchester College, Oxford, "is how Love can realize Justice and yet remain Love." I believe the Way of Suffering Love, supremely illustrated in the Cross of Jesus of Nazareth, and now reduced to a science of mass-action by Mahatma Gandhi, provides the answer; and that if the world, especially the Christian world, recognizes the time of its visitation again and responds to the challenge of this supreme spiritual fact, then we might achieve in this generation the greatest revolution the world has yet known – the Non-violent Revolution of Love.

- 
1. Edwin Arnold : Light of Asia.
  2. They dared to do it again in 1942, misrepresenting him as a pro-Japanese fifth-columnist.

## 2. GANDHI AND PEACE

PERHAPS a picture of the man Gandhi is a useful and a necessary introduction, at least to the Western world, to what one may have to say about his message. For the man himself, as well as his methods, is an enigma to the West. During his latest fast,<sup>1</sup> e.g., England was a little uncertain as to whether it was a fast or a feast. The B. B. C. announcer actually said in his news broadcast that "Gandhi has started his feast," and it was only after many surprised telephone calls that he corrected himself. And a newspaper vendor in Oxford, from whom I bought a paper on the day the news of the breaking of the fast was first announced, told me as if to allay my anxiety, "he has finished his feast." A picture, therefore, of this enigmatic personality will not be out of place. I shall therefore present a picture of the man himself. But I propose to do it through two famous word-pictures, originally not drawn of him but to my mind strikingly descriptive of him. The application of them to him might seem audacious to some.

The first is a famous description of the Servant of God in Isaiah, particularly as it has reference to his physical appearance. Christians have commonly found the fulfillment of that picture in Jesus Christ, though Christian piety has greatly altered its lineaments and pictures the Jesus of history as the perfection of physical beauty. The original picture is now admitted to be applicable not only to Jesus but to have been a sort of generic picture of the typical Servant of God, whose lot in this world of sin is necessarily one of suffering. It has certainly had its fulfillment in many a faithful Servant of God. And one who has known Gandhi and sensed something of his significance cannot but find a remarkable fulfillment of it in him. I shall not take the reader through the whole of that remarkable description and point out its many resemblances to the man Gandhi, lest I weary and perhaps irritate him, though it might be an interesting and a profitable exercise.

But my main purpose in drawing attention to this picture is to give an idea of the physical appearance of this man who has attracted the attention of the

world. He is a physically small, frail man, hardly weighing a hundred pounds, of uncouth appearance, clad in the dress of Indian peasantry – a loin cloth only. (Everyone has heard of Mr. Winston Churchill's horrified picture in the House of Commons of "the half-naked *fakir* walking up the steps of the Viceregal Lodge in Delhi/') He is literally "a tender plant, a root out of the dry ground, without comeliness or beauty that we should desire him."<sup>2</sup> A man of sorrows, bearing the marks of the privations, the fastings, the imprisonments he has borne for his people, perhaps for the whole world. One can well understand an English man or woman turning away facetiously from a newspaper photograph of this man. And yet he has cast his spell over the millions of his countrymen, not only the illiterate and the poor, but over thousands of the cultured and the well-to-do, who have heard and obeyed his call to follow him to imprisonment, to exile or death. One of the most prominent of his followers is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, a man whom the West can understand, for he had all his education in the West. If Nehru had taken to a career open to men of his attainments he might have been a successful lawyer, earning his thousands, like his father, or become a shining light of the Indian Civil Service, instead of being in and out of prison for the greater part of his life at the call of Gandhi. This is what he says of Gandhi: "In spite of his unimpressive features, his loin cloth and bare body, there was a royalty and a kingliness about him which compelled a willing obeisance from others. Consciously and deliberately meek and humble, yet he was full of power and authority and he knew it and at times was imperious enough issuing commands which had to be obeyed. His calm deep eyes would hold one and gently probe into the depths; his voice clear and limpid would purr its way into the heart and evoke an emotional response."<sup>3</sup> He goes on to speak of the spell-binding power of this man, which however was not brought about by "oratory or the hypnotism of silken phrases. The language was always simple and to the point and seldom was an unnecessary word used. It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped. He gave the impression of tremendous inner resources of power."

And it is not only we in India who have come under his spell. He has had his fascination for more than one in the West. Some of his most devoted workers

have come from England and America. One need only mention the honoured name of Miss Slade, known and loved all over India as Mirabehn, giving up her life as a society lady in the West and spending herself in the service of poor village folk, in India, under the inspiration of this man. An English friend was telling me of another English lady who had met Gandhiji, when he had come to England for the Round Table Conference, and who said, "the moment I shook his hands and looked into his face I felt here was a man I could follow to the ends of the earth." And that in spite of his marred visage and his lowly form.

The second picture I want to present is one of his mind and spirit, the quality of his life, which explains the paradox of his uncomeliness and his strange fascination. The identification might seem the more outrageous, for it is a picture drawn by an out-and-out Britisher and was perhaps meant to depict the ideal Englishman. For it is one by Rudyard Kipling, and I have read of Mr. W. Churchill saying that every Englishman ought to learn it by heart. It is that remarkable poem of Kipling entitled *If*. The application in this case is even more complete and detailed than in the other. It reads as if it was written of Gandhi. I had learned to love this piece and note its many similarities with Gandhiji, before I found to my great delight that Mr. Richard B. Gregg had said that Kipling had written an unconscious description of Gandhi. I would ask those who know the piece to go through it with this comparison in mind and see if it does not work. And to those who do not know it I would endorse Mr. Churchill's advice that they should learn it by heart, even if they should think nothing of the comparison, for it is a remarkable poem. There are lines in it which are literally true of Gandhi:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings,  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch;



If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,  
And treat those two Impostors just the same;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run;<sup>4</sup>  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

We believe that is coming true; that in his case the ancient saying, "the meek shall inherit the earth," is being fulfilled. And that leads us to the second part of this discourse, the contribution of Gandhi to World Peace; for I believe that his way will yet win acceptance and lead the world out of its present chaos.

Gandhi calls his method of non-violent resistance *satyagraha*. It is an Indian word meaning the holding on to or the grasping of Truth. That devotion to Truth is fundamental to Gandhi. His whole philosophy of thought and action is rooted in the fundamental conception that the Universe is based on the bed-rock of Truth. It is that which gives him his conviction that the fight for Truth must triumph, however great the odds against it and however few its advocates, for it is the Universe that fights for it. When a man with that conviction and that courage begins to interest himself in the affairs of this world things are bound to happen.

Naturally, such a man will find himself up against the present world order in many things. For the kingdoms of this world, the transactions between men and between nations, are far from being based on Truth, but often on greed and self-interest. That was what Gandhi found in South Africa and later in India. He discovered that the attitude of the British Empire (in which he wholeheartedly believed at one time, and which he once accepted to be what it is still euphemistically called – a Family of Nations) towards his people was not based on Truth, which certainly involves Justice, but on greed and inequality. It was no wonder therefore that he felt obliged to hurl himself against the might of this empire.

His convictions necessarily dictated his method. It is that of strict non-violence. It rests not only on the belief that the Universe is based on Truth but also that man partakes of the nature of this Universe. It involves belief not only in God but in man as well. Bernard Shaw's clever remark that "the vegetarianism of the cow makes no appeal to the tiger," met with Gandhi's retort that he does not believe that the Britisher is all tiger and no man. His method appeals to the essential humanity in man, to that quality by which man has slowly lifted himself above the law of the jungle. It is to this latent core of humanity in the hearts of men and nations that Gandhi's method makes its appeal, in the sure confidence that the suffering of the innocent victim will convince the wrongdoer of the enormity of his wickedness and will work a change in his heart. That in brief is the method of non-violent fight that Gandhi has evolved, though it would take long to expound its strategy.

It may seem strange that one should be speaking of fight and strategy in discussing Gandhi's way to peace. But that is because his is a militant pacifism. It is unfortunate that the epithet "passive" should ever have been applied to his methods. There is nothing passive about him or his resistance. His is no passive acquiescence in injustice or any avoidance of fight. He realizes as all great pacifists of the world have realized that it is only on the foundation of justice that any real peace can be built. They are all out against those who cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Like Jehu<sup>5</sup> to whom King Joram sent his messengers to ask, "Is it peace?" They can only answer, "How can there be peace when the whoredoms of Jezebel are so many?" How can there be peace in the world when nations and empires are built on injustice? No, Gandhi has been reckoned among the disturbers of the peace, as one who stirred up the people; because of his relentless exposition of the injustices on which British rule has been based in India, and his resolute fight against them. That is why he has so often been numbered with evil-doers and assigned his place in the prisoner's cell. That is why the Nobel Peace Prize has not yet been awarded him, nor will be so long as existing imperialisms distort men's visions as to what real peace means. But Gandhi is working for no prize, he is not attempting any mere appeasement; but is aiming at a sure and lasting peace which can only be

based on Truth and Justice. That is why he pleaded with Great Britain at the Round Table Conference, pleaded with her still more powerfully through Civil Disobedience and imprisonment and does still plead, through friendly co-operation, to settle accounts with India, to make a just and real settlement, that will go far to contribute to world peace.

And here I am reminded of a principle of Gandhi's philosophy which he stresses almost as much as that of non-violence. That is his principle of Swadeshi – that of limiting oneself, concerning oneself, and contenting oneself, with one's surroundings, one's nation and country. This might seem at first sight strange, and a negation of all our wider conceptions of internationalism and human solidarity. But it really is not a negation of them; but rather the ground on which alone they have any meaning and reality. It is a recognition of our limitations and of our graded responsibilities and duties. It stresses the fact that our responsibilities are primarily towards our immediate surroundings, our homes, our people, our nation and only then to the wider world. Far from being a negation of our accepted philosophy it is a working principle of all our life. To Gandhi it means that his primary duty is towards India, that if he can serve India right, solve her problems on right lines, then he will be making his greatest possible contribution towards setting the world right. That is why unlike some other Indian leaders he has not interested himself much in international politics, has not ventured to issue statements about them. I refer to this to draw the lesson that the greatest contribution those in England who are interested in world peace can make to it is to work for a right readjustment of relations within the British Empire. That will not only be an example, not only an earnest of the pacific intentions of England, but will go far to remove one of the biggest causes of discontent and unrighteous ambition in other countries. A clear-headed pacifist like Mr. Bertrand Russell sees that. In his book *Which Way to Peace?* he admits that Britain's imperial possessions are one of the greatest provocations to war in Europe, and advocates Britain giving immediate self-government to India and dispossessing herself of the Crown Colonies.

I have drawn attention to this not to canvass support for the granting of self-government to India, though that would be a consummation devoutly to be wished for, but to indicate to lovers and workers for peace in England what would be the Gandhian way to peace. It would be to concern themselves primarily with things within the Empire, to ask for and to see that Empire relations are based on Truth and Justice. That would be Swadeshism for Britain, and the real beginning of internationalism. Further, it would mean beginning the fight here and now. I think it is a mistake for pacifists to think that their biggest stand for peace is to refuse to fight when there is a war. That I believe is to give the battle to the enemy. If you wait till war comes you will be dragooned or betrayed into some kind of war service or thrown into prison as offensive lumber. No, the way to win the battle for peace is to take the initiative and to fight for it before a war becomes inevitable, to remove the causes of it; but to fight for it non-violently.

In this again Gandhi shows the way. His method is that of taking hold of some specific wrong, something in your country's policy that means a clear injustice, however small the issue may seem to be, and making a determined stand against it. That was what he did with the salt-tax in India. The way of sweet reasonableness comes first; presenting your case to those in authority, exposing the evil, canvassing wide public support. The pacifist demand for a world conference to settle international differences is clearly on those lines. But what if that demand and similar efforts in the way of sweet reasonableness fail? One of the things that has struck me in England is the ineffectiveness of her great men to make themselves felt in the life of the country. England has an imposing array of men and women of the greatest intellect and the soundest ideas; but where are they in the counsels of their nation? Beyond writing letters of indignant protest or sympathy – and there were many such at the time of the Czech crisis – they seem to avail nothing. If those in authority do not heed the voice of the people, of the best and noblest among them, there ought to be a way to make them amenable to that voice. Gandhi's way is that of Civil Disobedience, of trying to make the life of that Government impossible by non-co-operation with it, of Civil Disobedience to it. This method when wisely

applied will galvanize the resistance of a people, and, because it is non-violent and will involve the suffering of those who adopt it, will call forth the latent heroism of a people and will appeal to the best and the bravest among them to come in. In fact, a non-violent fight for Truth and Justice will tax to the utmost the spiritual energies of a people and will be a direct challenge to their real spiritual leaders to come forward and play their part in the active life of their country.

I arrived in Oxford at the time when Dr. Lindsay was fighting his by-election there. I rejoiced at it that a man of his standing and calibre should enter active politics. The result, of course, was disappointing. But it shows how the thing can be done. When the spiritual leaders of a country can enter and direct its active politics then that country is on the road to peace, and not far from it. That is what is happening in India under the lead of Gandhi. But it means a determined and perhaps a prolonged fight for Truth and Justice – a fight inspired and sustained by love. Strange that in talking about the Gandhian way to peace one should be talking so much of fighting; but that is the only way to attain peace in a world that is based so much on untruth. Perhaps even greater effort will be needed to maintain that peace when it has been attained. For any peace that we can establish will be one that is continually threatened and which can only be maintained by a jealous guarding of its foundations in Truth and Justice.

- 
1. The Rajkot fast : 1939.
  2. Isaiah 53.
  3. J. Nehru : *Autobiography* (Bodley Head), P. 129-30
  4. There is no man on earth who can give a better account of his minutes and his seconds than Gandhi.
  5. 2 Kings ix.

### 3 IS SATYAGRAHA CHRISTIAN?

A distinction has been sought to be drawn between the character of Christ's death on the Cross and the offer of Mahatma Gandhi to lay down his life more than once for causes that seemed to him to justify the final sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> It has been pointed out that Christ gave his life and did not take it, while the Mahatma's attempt savours of suicide. I do not think the distinction is real. For Jesus's self-giving is seen upon close study to have been an act of deliberate choice. The element of strain and effort apparent in his final decision points to that conclusion. Modern students of his life have laid stress upon the evidences to show that Jesus deliberately planned the hour and manner of his death. Indeed, one of the most brilliant of them, Mr. Middleton Murry, has ventured the suggestion that the betrayal itself was a part of Jesus's deliberate design and that Judas was merely acting as Jesus's agent. Be that as it may, it is clear from the narrative that Jesus chose and faced his destiny with determination, knowing that through it he was fulfilling God's purpose for himself. This accord with the emphasis laid by the Fourth Evangelist upon the voluntariness of Christ's death. "I lay down my life of myself," says the Johannean Christ, "no man taketh it from me." If a deliberate self-giving of oneself in obedience to a divine compulsion is to be equated with suicide then Christ's death also comes under that category. But the great lesson we learn from Christ's teaching as well as his death, and from the example of countless martyrs, who counted not their lives to be clung to, but poured themselves out as offerings on the altars of Truth, Justice or Freedom, is that a man has the supreme right not only to risk his life but to give it away in a cause that he believes to be right and to demand such sacrifice from himself. Surely the Mahatma's pure offering of love is not to be condemned on that ground.

If the charge of deliberate courting of suffering and death is to be brought against the Mahatma's latest act<sup>2</sup> it ought with equal force to be levelled against his whole method of *satyagraha*. For fasting unto death in obedience to an inner conviction is, Gandhi himself says, only the final form, the crown of

*satyagraha*. The element of deliberate choice, of going out to face danger in order to bring moral pressure on the object of it, is present in all manifestations of *satyagraha*, from the picketing of a foreign cloth shop to the starving of oneself to death. But is not that the very element of newness in it, that which it adds to the practice of Christianity and the other religions which have preached the conquest of evil by love? *Satyagraha* reduces to a system the art of grappling with evil, the science of aggressive love attacking evil in its strongholds and dragging it out into the open for a life and death struggle. The Cross of Christ is the supreme, perfect historic example of such assault and victory of love over evil. But, alas, Christianity has made of it a creed, a doctrine, belief in which is to secure a heaven of comfort and security! It was necessary to bring it back from the realm of creed and dogma and set it up again as a working principle of life, still mighty to overthrow entrenched evil and still possible to be lived out. That is what has been achieved by one who does not profess himself to be a Christian, but in whom the central Christian principle of the Cross has again incarnated itself. The Christian preaching of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, though it calls forth here and there an emotional response on a mass scale and in individual cases does produce real transformation of character, has not yet availed to relieve the stranglehold of sin and evil on civilization. Christianity seems powerless to achieve the realization of a juster social order, which Christian ethics agrees with Marxian dialectics in picturing as the goal of humanity. Is there no other alternative to the Communist way of violence for its realization but the ineffective way of Christian preaching? Must the Churches be forever content with plucking brands out of the fire and abandon the world- order as beyond redemption? Is there not the way of the Cross yet to be tried in seeking to realize God's Kingdom on earth? And is not the application of that way to the everyday problems of life, to the solution even of political questions, what this great non-Christian shows in his method of *satyagraha*? The Cross of Christ can yet be a working principle of conquering love overcoming evil everywhere.

Of course, *satyagraha* is open to gross abuse. It might be resorted to for silly and unjust causes. But is not every other good principle and method liable to

similar misuse? And surely the remedy is not to discard it altogether. The best safeguard of the sanctity of *satyagraha* lies in the increasing number of pure offerings of it, whereby its essential principles will be grasped by the people at large and false manifestations of it will cease to coerce individual or public opinion. For *satyagraha*, in its essence, is not a method of coercion but of conversion. Its appeal is to the conscience of the evil-doer, and its strength lies in the justice of the cause it espouses. Where its cause is not just and its methods are not pure it ought not, and when the method is widely practised will not, move the conscience of the people. For its fundamental principle that Truth is dearer than life itself will be turned against false expressions of it and people will refuse to be coerced into giving up the right out of any sentimental regard for the life of the false *satyagrahi*. Mahatma Gandhi was asked after his recent fast at Rajkot the question: Suppose the Prince of Rajkot or one of his advocates had undertaken a fast for the very opposite cause to what Gandhi was fasting for, whom was the Viceroy to satisfy? To that Gandhi replied that the Viceroy need not satisfy one or the other but simply do the right thing. For *satyagraha* is a challenge to the conscience of each individual to do his duty; to do the right thing, regardless of consequences to oneself or others. It is a practical application of the teaching of Christ that he that loseth his life shall find it; that one realizes one's true and larger life in the pursuit of the eternal values, even though the way to it may lie through the death of the physical body.

Another element of safety in the practice of *satyagraha* is its demand for the inner guiding voice of God. *Satyagraha* is only to be undertaken at the call of God. He it is "who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men," and who alone can make the suffering of the innocent change the heart of the indifferent. If self-chosen, unmerited suffering on behalf of the sinner be Christian, is not the inspiration and the guidance to it peculiarly so? Do not Christians claim to be the Pentecostal people, living under the direct control and guidance of the spirit of God? If we accept the Cross as a working principle for the everyday work of redemption can we not rely on the spirit of God to guard us from false choices and to make our offering touch the hearts of those



for whom it is made? Surely *satyagraha* can be and ought to be used as a Christian weapon in the fight for Truth and Justice in the individual and in society, to which the Christian is committed by his profession. Christians ought therefore to be profoundly thankful to the Mahatma for his demonstration of the potency and practicability of the method of the Cross, and to ponder over the significance of his latest offering of love which has compelled the attention of the world. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

---

1. Gandhi undertook "a fast unto death" on behalf of the "untouchable?" in 1932, and again at Rajkot in 1939, to enforce fulfillment of a pledged word.
2. "The fast unto death" undertaken in Rajkot, 1939, already referred to. Gandhiji again intervened with a fast unto death to successfully nip in the bud revived communal rioting in Calcutta in Aug. 1947.

#### 4 THE COST OF CHRISTIANITY

It was one of the lessons that Jesus found it most difficult to teach his disciples and hence had need to reiterate more than once that life, as he lived it and wanted men to live, always costs. Often it can only be entered into and lived at the cost of things that men hold most dear; sometimes even of life itself. Thus we hear him speak of the cup of suffering and the baptism of death which he and those who would share life with him must accept, however bitter the experience of them might be. This must be so, so long as human society and the kingdoms of this world are organized apart from God. Politicians speak of making the world safe for democracy. I wonder if there can ever be such a thing as the world being safe for Christianity. Christianity is so explosive a thing for the practice of it ever to be a safe or a tame affair; unless it be in Heaven or in a Kingdom of God on earth, if such a contingency is ever going to happen. But the opposite process, of Christianity being made safe for the world, has been going on ever since its first appearance on earth, with the result that its custodians and interpreters are today among the safest men on earth and the best safeguards for the things that be.

But Christianity when it first entered the world wore another aspect. In its simple faith in a loving Father and its hope of a Kingdom of God it challenged entrenched authority and asserted the right of man as a child in God's universe. Of its earliest preachers it was said that they were people who turned the world upside down. The idolaters of Ephesus, who brought this charge against St. Paul and his companions, showed a truer insight into the implications of Christianity than its exponents and ecclesiastics of the present day, who invoke its sanctions for upholding the order of the world as it is, in the interests of what they consider peace and safety. For Christianity, or life according to the will of God, is ever a challenge to a world order based on anything but that undiluted will. So it has ever been since men began to walk in the fear of God and to be moved by the knowledge of that good and perfect will. For the understanding of it lays upon man the duty of seeking to fulfill it; since in the

fulfillment of that alone can he or the world find true peace. But seeking to fulfill it he finds himself, too often, pitted against the world order. Thus it was, e.g., in the case of the Old Testament prophets. They were accused of being disturbers of peace by those who failed to understand the secret of peace. Thus has it been in the case of all men of God, of whom the world was not worthy, and whom therefore it condemned to the hangman or to the flames. Thus will it be till that City, which they sought for, of which the builder and maker is God, is established foursquare on this earth, which has seen of their travail and may yet be satisfied with it.

This truth that Christianity witnesses to is of cosmic significance. We see it woven into the very texture of life. "Life," says a great writer of modern days,<sup>1</sup> "wherever you encounter it, even in the lowest of its physical forms, is always pang-born and to some extent pang-sustained. And if that is true of our physical life, it is more obviously true of the life of the intellect, of the imagination, of the moral consciousness. All the great ideals of humanity are pang-born. They are the answers which the heroic spirit of man has given to the challenge of suffering, to the challenge of frustration, to the challenge of bereavement, to the challenge of death, to the challenge of pain in one or other of its innumerable forms." "Out of sorrow has the world been built; and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain," says another.!

"It has been said," writes Dr. Jacks, in his *Religious Perplexities*, "that Christianity reduced to its simplest and most intelligible form needs only two words to express it – 'Follow me'. It has been said also that if all Christian men for the next twenty years would give up the attempt to *explain* Christ and devote their attention to *following* him, at the end of that time they would know more about the person of Christ than they had ever known before, and they would put Christianity in a posture to conquer the world. I accept all that. But whoever sets out to follow Christ will have to follow him a long way and to follow him to some dark places. Easy enough while the road runs by the shining shores of the Lake of Galilee, but not so easy when it turns into the Garden of Gethsemane and becomes the Via Dolorosa. To follow Christ is to follow a

victor in life's battle, a conqueror over suffering and death, through the completeness of his loyalty to the Great Companion. Hence the power which makes his teaching live; hence the driving force which makes his Gospel effective for the regeneration of society."

Christianity has got to recapture this fundamental element in its teaching. A religion which has the Cross for its centre and its symbol ought never to forget that it was pang-born and that the values it stands for can only be conserved and enshrined in the heart of a world it seeks to save by the willing endurance of pain. It is this great lesson that is being emphasized anew by that true servant of God, Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever the judgment of the world may be on his politics, his understanding and interpretation of the significance of suffering, of the meaning of pain, will be accepted as a message from God to the times, perhaps a much-needed message to a world that has not yet, in spite of nineteen centuries of Christianity, understood the Way of the Cross. It may be that when his politics are forgotten he will chiefly be revered by future ages for the measure in which this great principle has attained incarnation in his life.

- 
1. Dr. L. P. Jacks in *The Art of Living Together*. | Oscar Wilde in *De Profundis*.

## 5. CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

THE story of the missionary enterprise of Western Christendom in the East is a record of heroic adventure on the part of the men and women who went forth on it, and of equally heroic self-giving on the part of its supporters in the home Churches. The widow's mite, we are told, has contributed no inconsiderable part of the enormous budget of Christian missions; while for the early missionaries at least it meant real adventure and a passion for souls to go out into strange and distant lands and face unknown dangers.

If the missionary enterprise of the Western Churches synchronized with or followed in the wake of the commercial and military expansion of the Western nations, it only shows how all human activities are linked together and stimulate, if they also corrupt, each other. Thus "the Catholic missionary orders of the sixteenth century accompanied the explorer-conqueror or preceded him. The Protestant missionary of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed in the wake of trade."<sup>1</sup> If this 'association with the explorer-conqueror and the exploiting trader has been rather unfortunate for Christian missions, it has to be remembered that the association was almost inevitable and that missions represent the better, the redeeming, side of the impact of the West upon the East.

It is interesting to note that the mere trader and conqueror often objected to the incoming of the missionary as a disturbing factor in his process of exploitation.

Thus William Carey, the great English pioneer missionary, had to find refuge in what was then the Danish settlement of Serampore to elude the prohibition to missionary work in India maintained by the East India Company. The directors of that trading, and soon conquering, corporation, showed real insight into the implications of Christianity when they regarded its dissemination as dangerous to their continued domination in the country. Christian missions have undoubtedly contributed their share to the new awakening in India of which a heightened national consciousness is but one expression. The *rapprochement*

that has since come about between the missionary and the British Government in India, by which missions act under the aegis of the Government and the missionary is bound to acquiesce in all the acts of the Government, is really more inimical to the objective of the missions than their one-time antagonism. But on the whole there is no denying the fact, as the Laymen's Enquiry Commission put it in their report, that the missions represent an expression of goodwill of, willingness to serve and give of one's very best, and there ought to be no time when such expressions of goodwill should cease; perhaps they are more needed at this time than ever before, when nations are so much thrown together and yet seem to be in danger of devouring one another for lack of that very goodwill and understanding. The great question is how that goodwill should find expression under the changed conditions that exist in the mission field at the present time, changes to which missions themselves have contributed their share.

Christian missions as originally conceived and undertaken had an openly avowed objective and a clear-cut programme. The one objective was to impart the saving knowledge of the one and only revelation of God to the millions who were believed to be perishing for lack of that knowledge. Preaching the word, disseminating the knowledge of the Scriptures, baptizing those who believed and gathering them into the fold of the Church, away from the contagion of their heathen surroundings – these were as clearly defined items in the programmes of the early missionaries as was the scheme of salvation they believed in. Works of philanthropy, social uplift, medical aid or educational service, were all undertaken with the sole object of furthering the one end of saving the souls of the people to whom such services were offered. The scruples that perplex the sensitive modern missionary, in the face of non-Christian criticism of his methods, as to whether it is right to use these philanthropic services to one's fellow men as baits to attract them to one's religious fold did not so much as occur to his predecessors. Every item of missionary enterprise was meant to sub serve the supreme end of evangelism, and was expected to yield tangible results in conversions. Even the task of higher education in India, to which missions have devoted a very great deal of

resources in men and money, was undertaken with the evangelistic end in view. Western education, it was hoped, would prove a preparation for the Gospel – a hope that has to a great extent been falsified and been largely abandoned. Since the recent report of the Lindsay Commission, missionary education is directed to serve the less ambitious end of equipping Indian Christians rather than that of evangelizing India through the education of her youth. The increasing assumption by the Government of the task of education, in all its stages, and the restrictions imposed on the use of education as a means of evangelization, have deprived missions of their lead in educational service and an important avenue of missionary effort.

The same is true of most other lines of missionary service, which were entered upon in all good faith as means of evangelization. It was the love of Christ that constrained the missionary to come out to the foreign field and give himself in service to the brother for whom Christ died; and what more natural than that he should seek to use every means, every approach, to make that brother share in the saving grace of that sacrificial death! The love of man as man, and the duty to serve him as such – not as a prospective convert to any sect – and the belief that this life has a value in itself, other than as a preparation for a realm of future rewards and punishments, are modern conceptions, and the pioneers of missionary work are not to be condemned for not sharing that outlook or for adopting the means that seemed justified by their noble objective.

But not so their present-day successors. They are faced with a changed outlook and a different situation. The modern mind sees that health and sanitation, education and social uplift are good in themselves and are the undeniable rights of every individual, and that these ought to be provided as good in themselves and their provision not used as means to realize other ends. Further, the modern conception of the State makes the provision of these a charge upon Government and the prevention of their exploitation a duty of the State. This not only deprives the missionary of fruitful avenues for the spreading of his message, but presents him with a testing and a rethinking of his motives. Is his love of his fellow man but a cover for his selfish devotion to

his own creed? Ought he to engage in much-needed service when such service may not lead to acquisitions to his Church or sect? Can he rejoice in removals of injustices and provision of services, even when these are not accomplished by himself and may even retard his objective of gathering people into his fold?

Such a crucial testing was presented to the Christian missionary in India by the recent achievements in the removal of age-old injustices to the untouchables of India. It was from this so-called *Submerged Sixth* of India that Christian missions had in the main been drawing their converts. But as the result of the leavening influences of Christianity the Hindu conscience has been awakened towards this crying evil and great efforts are being made to have it removed. Mahatma Gandhi's devotion to this cause is prior to, and more intense than, that to any other of the innumerable causes with which he is connected. His Harijan Sevak Sangh, organized after his great fast on behalf of the untouchables, has branches all over India and is vitally affecting the life of these people, who are now collectively known by the beautiful name he has given them of *Harijan* – the people of God. As an earnest of their all-India emancipation the young Maharaja of Travancore has given the untouchables of his State the right of entry into all Hindu temples on equal terms with all other Hindus. These efforts mark the beginning of an awakening in Hinduism that is bound to go far and deep.

But how have the Christian Churches and Missions met this awakening? Instead of rejoicing at the removal of an injustice – an injustice that had infected Christian communities as well, for caste distinctions are not unknown among Christians too in India – and the purification of a sister religion, Christians have shown a tendency to pick flaws in and impute motives to it, for the obvious reason that it would stop the flow of converts to the Christian Churches. Missionaries, e.g., have on the whole been inclined to accept and magnify the claim of Dr. Ambedkar to represent the depressed classes over against Gandhi, because the former threatened to lead an exodus of his people from Hinduism to what they fondly hoped would be the Christian Church, though the Doctor himself was expressly undecided as to which his promised land was to be, the



only thing he looked for being the securing of highest political advantages for his people. In spite of all wooing and bolstering up, Dr. Ambedkar still remains undecided and with as little appeal as ever to those in whose name he claims to speak, while the whole Harijan population is fast being assimilated into the general Hindu community.

Much has been said and written about methods of missionary approach to non-Christians, as to what constitutes proselytism and what is implied in the genuine right of conversion. I do not think there is real divergence of opinion on these things. I trust Gandhiji's dictum on the matter will be universally accepted: that religious missions must like Caesar's wife, be above suspicion. The religious worker can never be too scrupulous as to the motives and methods that he employs. If his object is conversion, if he believes, with Dr. Kraemer, that the only attitude the Church can take towards India's outcastes is to do its utmost to bring them under the dominion of Christ, then he ought not to hedge about that objective or veil it under cover of helping them to fulfill natural aspirations, for there is no indication that left to themselves they would lift their eyes in the direction of the Church, as the learned doctor assumes. That is where the Indian appreciates the candour alike of the early missionary and of his fundamentalist successor, who make no secret of their motives and are prepared to face opposition and forgo aid and protection from "heathen governments". But the type of missionary who bewails the changed conditions and finds in them obstructions to his objectives is one who is unwilling or unable to press home his call to conversion. The blunt appeal to "come out and be separate", he finds will call forth no response and in fact he is often unable to sound it because increased knowledge and contact with other religions have taught him that they are not wholly evil, nor altogether to be scrapped. He therefore uses specious words like "sharing" and "co-operation" with other faiths while what he really means is "giving" and "conversion". It is the disingenuousness that is often involved in this position that causes the misunderstanding and the heartburning that exist wherever the missionary approach is made in India today.

For what an awakened Hinduism resents is not so much the methods of Christian Missions – methods are but an expression of the faith – but the content of the message itself. Dr. Kraemer in his book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian Worlds* shows real insight when he stresses the distinction between the essentially mystical and non-dualistic background of all Hindu thinking and the transcendentalist and Salvationist conception of Christianity which has stereotyped itself in Christian orthodoxy and which is sought to be revived in what he calls the school of Biblical realism<sup>2</sup> of today. He therefore does not set much store by the efforts so far made by Indian Christian scholars like Dr. A. J. Appaswamy merely to clothe the orthodox Christian doctrines in terms borrowed from Indian heritage. He rightly points out that no amount of Indian terminology will bridge the gulf between the Hindu conception of God's continuous incoming into the world- order, "moving a man among men, when righteousness declines and wickedness is strong, succouring the good and thrusting evil back,"<sup>3</sup> and the one and only incarnation of the transcendent God, in the Jesus of history. But he forgets that this position of Biblical realism is riddled through and through with difficulties, historical and metaphysical; and is the one position that a Christianity that would come to terms with thinking, instead of seeking, as Dr. Schweitzer puts it, "to take the place of thought," has ever been in difficulties in maintaining. He does not face, e.g., the undoubted apocalyptic element in the Gospels, which is so bound up with the divine claims of Jesus and so invalidates those claims.

In his chapter on Islam Dr. Kraemer admits that this claim of unique revelation, seeking no sanctions from thought but imposing itself on the human mind as the expression of Divine Will, stands confronted with the similar but contradicting claim of Islam. Against that impregnable rock he can only counsel patience; but no amount of patience can wear down the opposition between systems of implicit belief, each claiming infallible authority. And, as Professor Radhakrishnan points out, orthodox Islam is not the only rival to such claims of Christian orthodoxy. National Socialism in Germany today, with its supra-rational belief in and demand for unquestioning obedience to, its inspired Leader, presents a kindred though contradictory phenomenon.

Dr. Kraemer advises Christian missionaries to harbour no illusions about the easy breakdown of the tenacity and the resistance of Islam to the Christian approach. It were good if Christian Missions realized also that in Hinduism they have to face a religious outlook that is even more tenacious than the stolid orthodoxy of Islam. The flabbiness and nebulosity of Hinduism has given it an impression of vulnerability. But it is really an expression of an elasticity and comprehensiveness that is sure of its strength and therefore only seems to offer no resistance. Even Islam, in spite of the inroads and conquests it has made in the field of Hinduism, has mellowed and deepened under the impact of the older religion till there has developed even within its straight and narrow system a movement that is universal and vitally spiritual.

Dr. Kraemer regards this mystical development in Islam as an alien growth and would not look to it for the establishment of any *rapprochement* between Christianity and Islam. Mysticism is to him a dangerous product of naturalistic monism. If that is true then a very great deal in the religious heritage of Christendom must also be written down as dangerous aberrations, and this bleak and barren creed of Biblical realism with its supra-rational doctrine of a unique revelation must fight its way till it batters down all opposition and establishes world dominion, much as the Nazi Fuehrer would do if he could. To picture or present Jesus to the world as a religious Fuehrer is the worst disservice that can be done to him or to religion.

But tendencies other than Biblical realism in Christian thinking, and the genius of Hinduism, as it has expressed itself in its contacts with other religions, give ground for a different hope from the meeting of the two religions on Indian soil. In the early formative centuries of Christian thinking various elements entered into its development and modified the original core of its message. Unfortunately the process was once for all officially halted and the syncretist achievement of the early centuries was codified in creeds and handed down as a fixed deposit of the faith. But in spite of this, Christian thinking has constantly been enriched by other systems and there have all along been spirits who went beyond the bounds permitted by Church and creed and realized

experiences that transcended all definitions. Further, the hard crust of doctrine, jealously guarded by the Churches, with threats of excommunication and eternal damnation, has crumbled under the expansive influences of increasing human knowledge. Today this battered Christian creed is thrown into the melting-pot of religions and civilizations, which is what the world is at the present time. Particularly in India it comes into the closest contact with Hindu thinking. The Hindu world-view is something that has maintained itself for centuries and is finding new life today. Is reconciliation possible between that and Christian thought? Is there a place in it for the personality and ethic of Jesus, for the cult and devotion centering round him? The Hindu will not say no. Hinduism is no closed, no credal system. It has certainly a place for Jesus among the many leaders and teachers it reverences as revealers of God to man, nay, as incarnations of God in His aspect as the Lover and Redeemer of man. Its conception of a Favourite God, *Ishta Devata*, would sanction even an exclusive worship of him to those who find in such adoration the way to God-realization. But it would definitely place him in its own setting among the diverse modes and ways in which the Unfathomable and the Eternal manifests itself to mortal minds. Who can say that this is not the setting in which he will find his permanent place in the religious heritage of the race, at any rate in India?

It is an adventure of the spirit, as well as a daring exercise of the consecrated intellect, to which the Indian Christian and the discerning missionary is challenged by the religious situation in India. But if the Christian thinker in India might well tremble at the immensity of his task and the uncertainty of the goal it might lead him to, he has great examples in the history of Christian thought to encourage him to go forward. Christianity has rooted itself in the West, not by displacing the great intellectual and cultural traditions of Europe, but by incorporating them into its own systems of thought. The great creative periods in Western Christian history are those when the Platonic and Aristotelian systems of thought were wedded to the original Semitic strand in the Christian heritage. If to Clement of Alexandria and Origen the Greek philosophers were schoolmasters leading them to Christ; if St. Augustine could interpret Christianity in Neo-Platonist terms; if the synthesis between Christian

and Aristotelian thought worked out by St. Thomas Aquinas could become the basis of Roman Christian orthodoxy; if in modern days a leading Christian scholar like Dean Inge can describe himself as both a Platonist and a Christian, why should not the attempt be made to incorporate Hindu thought, which is far more pronouncedly religious than Greek thought ever was, with the Christian? It is to such an interaction between Christian and Hindu thought that discerning minds in the West are looking for a new flowering of human culture. "A. Ee.g., says,<sup>4</sup> "If Europe is to have a renaissance comparable with that which came from the wedding of Christianity with Greek and Latin culture it must, I think, come from a second wedding of Christianity with the culture of the East.\*" The world yet awaits the real assimilation of the Christian Gospel into the religious heritage of India.

- 
1. W. E. Hocking, *Rethinking Missions*.
  2. "Biblical realism" regards the Bible as a unique revelation of God, a revelation not through the enlightened mind or conscience of man; but as the record of God's breaking into human history in certain revelatory acts. It demands not understanding but faith on the part of man, unquestioning acceptance of these as acts of God. This sets up an unreal conflict between faith and reason. But faith need not run counter to reason, though it may go beyond it – "Faith is reason grown courageous" – No revelation can take the place of thought.
  3. Bhagavad Gita iv. 7-8.
  4. The Living Torch, Edited by Mark Gibbon. (Macmillan)

## 6 A VISION OF THE FUTURE

A thing that will strike even the most casual visitor to India at the present time is the swiftness with which the scene is changing in this country and the immensity of the changes that are coming over the life and outlook of the people. The whole nation is seething with a new life and there is no foretelling the shape of things to come.

The influences of modern education on Western lines, imparted in the schools and universities for close upon a century now, though directly touching only a small percentage of the population, have been slowly percolating to the masses. Modern methods of transport have been breaking down barriers and making impossible the observance of many of the old caste regulations. Missionary inroads upon the ancient faith of the land, challenging it to a life-and-death struggle, and creating centres of Christian life throughout the country, have also contributed to the disturbing of the placid waters of ancient life. Powerful reform movements like the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission, have also worked from within the old faith, to rid it of its many accretions and give it a new power. But above and more than anything else, the spirit of nationalism in the country, rising up against continued foreign subjugation, has roused the entire nation. All these have contributed to the new awakening in the country and made it a veritable melting-pot out of which a new nation is to arise.

This is a supreme opportunity for any philosophy or religion to make its contribution to the new structure. Communism, e.g., has seen the opportunity and is making a great bid for the soul of India. Surely Christianity in India, if it has anything vital to give, should regard this as its greatest opportunity, the crisis in which it is to find its fulfillment. But it can only do that if it is prepared to act upon its own principle of being the little leaven leavening the whole lump, instead of seeking to consolidate itself as a rival organization over against the ancient religion of the land.

But so far Christianity in India has been represented by missionary efforts and these have tried the opposite method of drawing out its converts from the life of the people as a whole. The appeal to the convert has been to come out and be separate from his kith and kin. Indians were to be saved out of their ancient faith. It was to be a case of replacing the old by the new. Hence any attempt at assimilation of the Christian teaching by the Hindu, without complete acceptance of the Christian creed, was regarded as worse than complete refusal. Thus Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, was bitterly attacked by devoted missionaries for holding out to his countrymen "the Precepts of Jesus" as a guide to peace and happiness. Though the missionary attitude has greatly changed in recent years, yet the roots of it are still there. Missionaries as a body are not particularly happy at the present time, about Mahatma Gandhi's testimony to the essential soundness and practicability of Christ's teachings (invaluable as such testimony is, when even Archbishops could speak of "the massing of might" as the only practical policy for a Christian country), because he is not a Christian in their sense of the term. There is a growing opposition to him in Christian circles in India because his rejection of the exclusive claims of Christianity is more clearly understood of late and even the missionary hope of his leaving the fold of Hinduism is fading out. No, Christianity in India has not yet had the courage to throw itself into the melting-pot of India's new life, risking its own in the process.

It is interesting, in this connection, to note that there was a small community of Christians, the Syrian Christians of Malabar, settled in the country perhaps from the beginnings of the Christian era, which by its isolation from the larger bodies of Christians and its envelopment by Hindu influences, did work out a *rapprochement* with Hinduism. It settled down as a caste or community within Hindu society, accepting beliefs like the transmigration of souls and that Christian baptism was not essential for salvation. It is interesting that these were the doctrines denounced as heretical when the Roman Church, with the aid of the Portuguese power in the sixteenth century, attempted the wholesale conversion of this community to Roman Catholicism. But since its revived contact with the Western Churches, this little Church, in all its many sections,

has gone back upon its *rapprochement* with Hinduism and is now stolidly orthodox.

But this *rapprochement*, though historically interesting and showing how the thing is possible, was itself effected at a low level and at a time when one at least of the interacting religions was not very much alive. Hence there was very little of active give and take, and the two existed side by side without vitally affecting each other. But the survival of this small community through the centuries and its material prosperity under Hindu rulers show the tolerance of Hinduism and its willingness to assimilate other faiths, provided these are prepared to shed their exclusiveness and militancy.

This attitude of tolerance and assimilation has remained true of Hinduism throughout her long history. She has been able to do it because of the nature of her evolution and the character of her outlook. The simple nature worship of the Aryans came early in contact with the cruder animism of the earlier settlers in the land. Instead of annihilating these or their beliefs the Aryans relegated them to a lower level in society and gave a protecting sanction to their cruder faith. Their own higher thinking, the conception of the One Reality behind all phenomena, gave the sanction to their recognition of even the lowest forms of belief as acceptable to this all-comprehending Reality. True, this has often meant a too easy tolerance of the crudest superstitions. This easy-going comprehensiveness and acquiescence in a vast mass of superstitions on her fringe proved a great weakness when Hinduism was faced with the proselytizing efforts of the well-organized and militant missionary faiths that invaded the land. Her own preoccupation with ultimate values in her higher thinking left her indifferent to the material welfare of her people and without the incentive to educate and uplift the submerged classes in society.

But all this is changed now. Partly through the impact of the more active faith and culture of the West, but more especially through an awakened sense of nationalism that irks to throw off a foreign domination, the people are alive to the needs and the demands of the age, of the present world order. Indian thinking wherever it is virile tends to forget its spirituality. It is the Westerner



who now extols Indian spirituality – men like Paul Brunton, who upholds a Ramana Maharshi as typical of India's genius. True, such types have an abiding appeal to the Indian mind; but for the present Indian youth is not captivated by such recrudescence. It demands action heedless of what sanction religion may or may not give to such temporal activity. Modern Communism is having an ever-increasing appeal to, and may find a fertile soil in, India. A reawakened religion, when it asserts its supremacy, will have to reckon with this factor of a new-found belief in life, life on this earth.

Perhaps the lines of this reassertion are already indicated by the one Indian leader who has not lost his moorings in Indian spirituality, and has at the same time assimilated the creative activism of the West to a remarkable degree. Mahatma Gandhi claims to be a *Sanatani* Hindu, in spite of all his reforming zeal and revolutionary activity. He makes that claim because he accepts the authority of the *Vedas*, though he is far from granting their verbal infallibility; because his ethics is rooted in India's essentially non-dualistic and spiritual outlook on life, symbolized in what he calls cow-protection, and expressing itself in the practice of *ahimsa*; and because he admits the need of variety in religious belief and practice, an admission which underlies his principle of equal reverence towards all religions. It is significant that while he openly acknowledges his indebtedness to Christian ethics he claims to find the roots of his own in Hinduism itself. He has not had to go outside his own religion to find terms to express his goal or his method. He calls his goal "Rama Raj", the equivalent of the Kingdom of God, because Rama to the Hindu mind symbolizes the ideal of earthly kingship. And he finds examples of supreme devotion to ethical ideals within Hindu mythology. Ethical activity is certainly one of the ways of God- realization in Hinduism. But even this is set against and held to find its fulfillment in spiritual discernment –in *Jnana* – which recognizes the One Doer behind all human agents. This is the doctrine of the Bhagavad Gita, which to Gandhi is the guide to conduct far more than the Christian Gospel.

Perhaps an important difference between the Hindu and the Christian attitude towards ethical activity and its value is found in Gandhi's oft-repeated assertion

that to him the primary goal of all his efforts is God-realization – that all his temporal activity is but the process of his release from all activity. That gives to his spirit a detachment from the results of his actions. It saves him from the desire to "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied", the clinging to results in this life or the next, which is at the root of the Christian belief in personal immortality. But this ethical strain in Hinduism is so mixed up with other elements that it takes a master-spirit like Gandhi to see and live it in its exacting demands; and such is the exuberance of the other elements in it that even his witness might be submerged and the sting and the challenge removed out of it by himself being added to India's already crowded pantheon.

It is here, I think, that Christianity can make its best and most useful contribution. The strength of Christianity lies in its emphasis, almost to the exclusion of everything else, upon ethics, upon the moral holiness of God and His demand of such holiness from man – upon morality as the way to union with God. It has dared to picture God as a Person, as Man at his highest and best and thus to exalt man. But in doing this it puts man almost at the centre of the Universe, making the redemption of his individuality and its survival the central theme of its message. Its naive dualism of Good and Evil, struggling for the possession of the individual soul, satisfied it in its early days; but it has had to make continuous adjustments with ever-increasing human knowledge. But, as its wisest exponents realize, its strength lies not in explaining the World or Evil, but in overcoming them. This it does by its principle of active love, which the insight of its Founder revealed to be at the heart of things. That apprehension is its highest contribution to religion, and its strength lies in the clarity of its emphasis on that and the thoroughness with which it practises that. If it lives up to that demand it will find itself at one with the new flowering of Hinduism in Mahatma Gandhi, and will contribute towards its fruition and perpetuation.

It may be that Christianity in India will have to accept the wider setting against which the Hindu sees even his ethical activity. It may be temperament, tradition or natural environment that has given India its characteristic outlook

on life, its realization of kinship and oneness with all that lives. A Christianity naturalized in India will have to discover itself in that larger setting. Wandering about in Hindu temples with their overwhelming massiveness the realization came to me that nothing will be able to replace those giant structures or the faith they express in granite. The Christian churches I had seen in India seemed ephemeral in comparison. It was only in England that I felt the same about Christianity. Standing under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, in London, it occurred to me that here was the same phenomenon of a religion going down to the depths of a nation's being and expressing itself in a vastness symbolic of that depth. Christianity can never hope to replace Hinduism in India, just as nothing can replace Christianity in England.

Nor should the attempt be made. Any new light, any new emphasis that another religion may bring, must be added to the ancient faith, rather than seek to blot out the ancient light. Sometime after I had that experience in the Hindu temple I happened to see a Christian church built in Hindu style, as some Christian churches are coming to be built in India; and I was reminded of some of the smaller shrines adjoining the central structure in Hindu temple yards, and I seemed to see a vision of the future of Christianity in India, existing by the side of, never seeking to displace, the giant structure of Hinduism; but keeping the light of its own ethical knowledge of God bright and clear, that it may not be overlooked, whatever else the worshipper may find inside the great temple to satisfy the myriad needs of his whole self, which perhaps only a religion that has entered into the marrow of the life and culture of a people can wholly satisfy.

## 7. INTER-RELIGIOUS CO-OPERATION

SPEAKING at the convocation of the Muslim University at Aligarh, during his recent visit (1937) to India, Lord Lothian asked the searching question of India's great religions whether they will withstand the impact of the modern critical and scientific spirit better than the religious orthodoxies of the West have done. The recent report of the Archbishops' Commission on Christian Doctrine in the Anglican Church, cautious and compromising as it is, shows how much the ancient faith has been battered by the inroads of modern knowledge. India is a place where meet not only Science and Religion but the different religions as well. So far they have met in conflict, seeking to oust each other out of their possessions, though there have been a few illustrious instances of efforts at comprehension and co-operation. For the different religions of the world have not yet consciously faced the challenge of their inter-mingling; nor the challenge of modern science to their ancient orthodoxies and, least of all, the far greater challenge of modern life with its pressing needs and demands.

If Religion is to meet these challenges it must do so in its united strength, conserving all the forces of the Spirit in its manifold manifestations and not wasting them in internecine conflict to assert the superiority of one religion over another. For, as Dr. L. P. Jacks says: "Behind the battle of the creeds lies the battle of life – a much more strenuous affair.

Wherever the seriousness of the greater battle is deeply felt, the acrimony of the lesser is mitigated. Churches and sects which begin by fighting for their creeds are apt to end by fighting for their own importance – which is contrary to the spirit of the Christian religion and to the express command of Christ."<sup>1</sup> That is why to many keenly religious spirits of the day the hope of world unity and human fellowship lies through inter-religious co-operation.

But there is a great deal of vagueness and misunderstanding as to the nature and implications of this movement. It has, in the first place, to be recognized that this is a new movement, this drawing together of the religions in mutual understanding and co-operation. For some at least of the orthodoxies that are

to come into this new intermingling were formulated in entire ignorance of other systems. Christian orthodoxy, e. g., was codified in the early centuries of the Christian era, and the Church Fathers who drew up the creeds, which are accepted by all orthodox Christians as fixed definitions of the faith, had not so much as heard of the *Upanishads*, the Buddha or the *Bhagavat Gita*. True, early in its career the Christian Church came to know of Muhammad, but it easily dubbed him the false Prophet. Islam, too, in its familiar forms wears an aspect of militancy and exclusiveness. But these features are less pronounced in it than in orthodox Christianity. For the Prophet himself recognized the validity of the kindred theistic systems of Judaism and Christianity, though to him they had not preserved their primitive purity. Some Islamic thinkers would extend this tolerance to other religions too, though it is highly doubtful if it can legitimately be extended to a religion like Buddhism, which is certainly not theistic, though not necessarily atheistic.

But if the inter-religious movement is new it is even more necessary. For while religion can and ought to be an integrating force, welding humanity together, perhaps the only force that can do so, it has also been one of the most divisive forces in the world. Religious intolerance has been responsible for some of the blackest crimes in human history. The old jibe of Dean Swift still holds true that we have enough religion to hate one another, but not enough to love each other. There is a very grave danger in these days, when different religions and communities are thrown together and have got to co-operate for the common good, of militant tendencies in them being exploited by interested leaders to create discord and hold up progress. That is what is happening in India today, where it is the religious sentiment that is often evoked to unholy communal squabbles. But we see in other countries too how religious differences stand in the way of a nation attaining unity and achieving very desirable political and social ends. If religion is to justify its claim to provide a basis for human unity then the different religions must learn to co-operate with each other.

Of course there is the way of conflict and conquest, of one religion fighting its way through all others and establishing its hegemony over the whole human race. That was, and still is, the dream of the Roman Catholic Church, though it

has really been shattered by the great schism of the Reformation and is not justified by the scant successes attending on the attack on non-Christian religions in other lands, and the loss of ground that Christianity has suffered in so-called Christian countries. What such a religion offers is not co-operation but conversion; it means a fight unto death with other religious systems. The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, rightly keeps out of all attempts at inter-religious co-operation. But the Protestant Churches seem to be realizing the need of cooperation, at least among themselves, and are drawing very close together on the mission fields. There is a comity among most Protestant missions at the present time by which they agree not to infringe each other's rights and to seek to co-operate with each other in the common task of converting "the heathen". That is because after years of conflict and claims to exclusive possession of the way of salvation they have come to agree on a few fundamentals and to agree to differ on what they have now come to see as non-essentials. What is needed is that this spirit of co-operation should be extended to include the different religions as well; for essentials as between the different religions, too, are few and simple and it ought to be possible to conceive and state these in the broadest spirit, so as to exclude no honest seeker after truth, no true believer in goodness and no real creator of beauty.

It is certainly one of the most encouraging signs of the times that various efforts are being made all over the world at understanding and co-operation between the different religions. A hopeful movement in India is the International Fellowship and even more its recent off-shoot the Inter-Religious Student Fellowship.<sup>2</sup> One of the best known of kindred organizations in the West is the "World Congress of Faiths" under the leadership of Sir Francis Young husband, which aims at promoting "a spirit of fellowship among mankind through religion". It has been holding successful conferences in recent years, and following up the good work by a Congress Continuation Movement.<sup>3</sup> But there are several other attempts on similar lines, some with a longer history and a few with a more definitely universalistic basis, engaging the labours of devoted workers, following after the Great Companions of all ages and religions. It is perhaps to be regretted that most of these are working in

isolation from each other and that slight differences of emphasis or accidents of organization should prevent them from joining forces and becoming a strong united World Movement. The Rev. L. J. Belton in his recent book, *Creeeds in Conflict*,<sup>4</sup> gives a useful conspectus of such efforts in the West.

Being a new movement, it has necessarily to go slow and face many misunderstandings and obstructions. One of the commonest charges brought against it by its critics, especially those of the monopolist systems, is that it is syncretistic and will but results in adding one or more new fancy religions to the crowded world of religions. But the inter-religious movement does not aim at evolving a single universal religion for all mankind. That, as we have seen, is the dream of the militant missionary faiths, which would blot out all other religions. What inter-religionism stands for is the acceptance of the need and the fact of variety in religious experience, of diversity in man's approach towards and realization of the One Eternal Reality, which is the common object of religious quest throughout the ages. It admits the limitations of all human understandings of the Divine – even unique revelations are mediated through human channels – and is, therefore, humble and willing to accept light from varied sources. It accepts the revelations through the spiritual geniuses of all mankind and while it does not aim at, or believe in, evolving a uniformity of creed and conduct, it looks forward to a time when the spiritually minded of all religions will unite in the appreciation of all known truth and in welcoming fresh revelations from the unspent deep resources of God.

The objectives of this movement have not been better put than by Sir S. Radhakrishnan, speaking at one of the world conferences of faiths. "Fellowship of faiths," says he, "which implies appreciation of other faiths, is no easy indulgence of error and weakness or lazy indifference to the issues involved. It is not the intellectual's taste for moderation or the highbrow's dislike of dogma. It is not the politician's love for compromise or being all things to all men; nor is it simply a negative freedom from antipathies. It is an understanding insight, full trust in the basic Reality which feeds all faiths and its power to lead us to the Truth. It believes in the deeper religion of the Spirit, which will be adequate for all people, vital enough to strike deep roots, powerful to unify

each individual in himself and bind us all together by the realization of our common condition and our common goal." Perhaps his own Hindu faith is a foretaste of such a fellowship and an answer to the contention that a fellowship is not possible without the co-operating faiths losing their integrity and distinctive flavour. For Hinduism is not a single religion but a fellowship of faiths, sanctioning a wide variety of religious beliefs and practices. The Shaivite and the Vaishnavite, the animist and the Vedantin, the worshipper of idols and the mystic have each his place within its wide portals. Is not a vaster and a wider fellowship possible, comprehending all man's diverse apprehensions of the Divine, none seeking to destroy the other, but each helping its neighbour to fulfill itself, by being faithful to its own inner light? For

They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

The inter-religious movement believes in the extension of that essentially religious attitude, the attitude of fellowship and open-minded search after Truth. Its spirit and aspiration are beautifully expressed in that hymn of George Matheson:

Gather us in, Thou Love that fillest all;  
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold;  
Rend each man's temple veil, and bid it fall,  
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;  
Gather us in.

Some seek a Father in the heavens above;  
Some ask a human image to adore; Some crave a Spirit vast as life and love;  
Within Thy mansions we have all and more;  
Gather us in

- 
1. L. P. Jacks, *Religious Perplexities*.
  2. For a statement of its Aim and Basis, see Appendix I.
  3. Its fourth World Conference was held in Paris in July 1939.
  4. I give in Appendix II a very valuable statement of Policy and Principles for efforts at inter-religious co-operation from this book.



## 8. CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

JESUS once rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees for not discerning the signs of the times. If he were alive today he would have rebuked in no less scathing terms those who profess to follow him but are strangers to his insight and his compassion for the multitudes. For if the signs of the times tell us anything now, it is that the world is being remade, that the old accepted order of things, political, economic, and social, is yielding place to the new. But the Christian Church goes on in its old rut, hardly feeling the breath of new life that is vitalizing the world. This spells disaster, for not to discern the signs of the times aright, not to be responsive to the breath of God as it re-creates the world, not to face up to the need of rethinking and refashioning the old, but to be content with a little deft patchwork here and there, and to stick to the old wine-skins, is to be found opposing God, who is ever fulfilling Himself in new ways. Here it is the words of the Master, "He that is not with me scattereth," that are true.

One of the significant things in religious thought, wherever it has felt the breath of the new spirit, is what an American writer<sup>1</sup> has called "The New Range of the Christian Conscience". As he points out, there has long existed and does still exist a disastrous gulf between individual and public morality, between the ways of private goodness and those of public righteousness, or rather, public unrighteousness. He gives a telling illustration to make his meaning clear. Some years ago there died in Brooklyn, U. S. A., a successful industrialist. At his funeral the officiating priest said, with truth and conviction, that he was a model husband, an ideal father, who made his home on earth a little haven of love and virtue. That was true, but it was also true, though it was not mentioned at the funeral, that shortly before his death about fifty people working in his factories had lost their lives because their only haven of rest and repose was situated in tenement houses, through which a disastrous fire came sweeping. There was an investigation into the matter, and it was proved that even the minimum requirements of the Government were not

satisfied in the building of those tenement houses. The model husband and ideal father of private life was responsible for the blasting of the lives of fifty of his workmen.

And the writer goes on to say, "Many a man has had a compassionate Christ at his side when he was *spending* his money; but he has had no such companion or looked for one when he was *making* it. He spends it like the Good Samaritan; but he makes it like a brigand dividing the spoil. Christianity has so far occupied only the by-ways of life, filling them with works of mercy, building schools and hospitals, sending out missionaries, and in these days providing refugee relief and sending food-ships – but it has left the highways of life largely unoccupied; and it is along these highways that great injustices, cruel exploitations, racial discriminations, political dominations and other great evils stalk the world." Can religion synthesize the needed effort to lift the world out of its present confusions, injustices and futilities, and bring in a new and better social order? If it cannot, the world will have scant use for it; nay, will seek to sweep it aside. And who can tell if Jesus himself will not be on the side of those who want to sweep it aside; "for why should it cumber the ground?"

One thing that has to be clearly grasped in this connection is that religion must either occupy the highways as well as the by-ways, the whole of life, or abdicate. No patchwork, no piecemeal solution will satisfy. Religion has always had a tendency to be content with partial solutions, with encouraging charity instead of securing justice, with saving the individual and leaving the environment unredeemed. This is futile as well as dangerous and results in the anomalies referred to above. It is widely realized now that there can be no private or individual solution to the modern world problems; that they can only be met and faced collectively in their world-wide ramifications. The solidarity of mankind, man's inter-relatedness with his fellow man, the fact of our being each other's keeper, is now a demonstrable and experienced fact. As Mr. H. G. Wells has said, "There is no peace now but a world peace, no prosperity but a common prosperity." And Mr. Wells has an interesting parable to make it vivid. He calls it the Parable of Provender Island.<sup>2</sup> It is the story of three sailors and a

small cabin boy shipwrecked on a desolate island. After some days of enforced vegetarianism they become aware of the existence of a pig on the island and simultaneously aware of an intolerable craving for bacon. But they would not set about getting it in the only sensible way in which it could be got, by jointly going for the whole pig. One of them longed for a ham, another a loin-chop, the third for chitterlings; and each of them like the sensible, practical people they presumed themselves to be, with no nonsense about them, wanted that and nothing more. Only the observant little cabin boy suggested that they should capture the whole pig. But him they accused of swelled head and impudent, impractical idealism. So each of them separately, without so much as telling the others, tried to get his little bit of the pig. But they were all foiled and came to grief. The roastloin hunter, e. g. after long lying in wait, jumped upon the very loin he desired; but the pig bit Him deep and septically. The boy alone tried the sensible plan of making a pitfall for the whole pig, but as he was very small and as the others did not help him, he could not make it well and deep enough and so the pig escaped. Thus the pig was left intact and in sole possession of the island when shortly afterwards a ship touched on it and carried away all four of them; the moral of it all being that it is sheer folly, and not sanity or realism, to attempt to reform one corner of the world without boldly planning to transform the whole – thus making, in Christian language, all the kingdoms of the world the Kingdom of God. Was not that the vision the Prophet saw when he spoke of the world being full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea?

The present world situation is such that if religion will not make the needed effort to realize justice on earth other forces will, sweeping religion aside. For the demand for economic and social justice has become irresistible. The new factor in the situation is that the dispossessed of all countries have become aware of their plight and of their power. Therein lay the revolutionary appeal of the clarion call of Marx and Engels: "Workers of the World, Unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains." Their organization may be delayed, their efforts may be thwarted and groups of them may be misled; but they are bound to assert themselves and achieve their ends. If religion does not provide them

with the sanctions for this realization of justice they will seek it under other sanctions. But the most interesting and challenging thing is that real religion does provide these sanctions, that religion is entirely at one with the Communist in his demand for elemental justice on earth. This, e.g., is what some of the luminaries of religion have said on the matter: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"<sup>3</sup> Or again, this of the prophet Micah: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" Jesus Christ definitely stands in the line of these prophets, endorsing and fulfilling their demand and making the same relentless demand of his followers. Is not that the meaning of his marvellous parable of the final judgment, when men are judged not by what they professed but what they did to their fellow-men? Professor MacMurray has rightly said that what started the present revolt against religion was the saying of Karl Marx, "Let us turn from ideas to reality. Let us look not at people's theories but at their actions." And Jesus, the great realist, also agrees. "Not by their professions but by their fruits," said he. Dare modern Christianity face that test?

There has recently been a revival of What is claimed to be the Christian way of changing the world, through changing the individual. That is the claim of the Oxford Groups. It is a big claim to make and is not justified by their achievements so far, nor even by the long record of Christian preaching and persuasion; but it must be admitted that they indicate the religious way to the solution of the world problem. But the Groups do not seem to have sufficiently recognized what has been called "the brutal character of the behaviour of all human collectives, and the power of self-interest and collective egoism in all inter-group relations." "Society," as Professor Niebhur<sup>4</sup> has pointed out, "is so much more immoral than the individual, that the methods by which the lives and conduct of individuals have been raised to higher and higher levels can be

expected to achieve but relatively small results when applied to classes and nations. It is mere romancing," he continues, "to suppose that the preaching and teaching of the Social Gospel movement can do more than a little toward the achievement of social and international justice." Commenting on this, Professor J. B. Pratt wrote some time ago in a *Hibbert Journal* article, "Merely to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to give to him that asketh and to cultivate that charity which suffereth long and is kind, are not enough to answer the needs of our day. The situation involves complicated economic principles; and the achievement of the social ideal would seem to require not only exhortation and education; but also some sort of political action." It is this latter that Christian Churches and groups have so far been unwilling or unable to take. The Oxford Groups, in spite of their claim to be guided by the "four absolutes", and in spite of a new and welcome interest in social service, seem far from having recognized the need for such collective action.

Perhaps the only convincing instance in the world today of the way of religion applied to the needs of the present situation, of individual regeneration going deep enough and far enough to effect world regeneration, is the *satyagraha* movement of Mahatma Gandhi. He has realized the need for collective action, the inevitability of conflict to achieve higher social ends. He goes far beyond the Christian and the Groupist preacher in organizing resistance to collective injustice; but unlike the secularist the power with which he would challenge entrenched injustice is the power of the spirit, the power of love. That is the religious way of achieving world regeneration. The Communist, seeking an ultimate social good, would invoke class hatred as a necessary means to its realization. But the wisdom of the sages, as well as the experience of history, teaches us that means condition ends. "Not by hatred does hatred cease; but by love does hatred, cease; this is always its nature," said the Buddha of old; "He that takes the sword will perish by the sword," said Christ five hundred years later. And today it will be widely admitted that it was the violence of the Communist that provoked the violence of the Fascist and the Nazi, to make the world the veritable mad-house of violence that it is today.

But it is no use religion claiming that it knows the better way. The supreme question is: "Can it make that way effective and that in time to prevent disaster?" For it is, as Mr. H. G. Wells has said, "a race between education and disaster." If religion is to do that, it has to set about its business with far more zeal and expedition than it has yet shown. It is true, says Dr. L. P. Jacks,<sup>5</sup> that the injunction, "What thou doest do quickly," was spoken to Judas Iscariot. But "does it follow", he asks, "that 'What thou doest do slowly, putting it off, if it so pleases, for fifteen centuries' was intended to be the motto of the Christian Church?"

- 
1. Dr. V. T. Pomeroy.
  2. H. G. Wells, *What Are We to Do with Our Lives?*
  3. Isaiah lviii
  4. R. Niebhur, *Morel Man and Immoral Society*.
  5. Dr. L. P. Jacks, *Religious Perplexities*.

## 9 RELIGION – A REVOLUTIONARY FORCE

AN advocate of religion these days is forced to adopt an apologetic attitude, as if religion is something one is half-ashamed of, an infection like measles which one would fain keep secret. This is in glaring contrast with the position religion once held in the life and thought of mankind and with the claims still made for it by those who cling to it. In former days nothing roused so much enthusiasm as the observances of religion, and religious leaders were honoured above everyone else. Today it is the politicians who dominate our thinking and demand our obeisance. That is symbolic of the change that has insensibly but surely come over the outlook of people. Organized institutional religion has fallen into a decrepitude from which even frenzied recalls to religion cannot rescue it.

But organized religion has nothing but itself to blame for this state of things. It has brought it upon itself by its indifference to the vital issues of life and its acquiescence in existing injustices. If there is one thing that characterizes the modern mind it is its belief in life; its conviction that this life is good and can be made rich and happy for all. The vast potentialities that Science has opened up to the vision of mankind have revolutionized man's outlook on life and given him a new zest and joy in it. The modern mind is not in a mood to listen to the whisperings of religion that all this is a delusion and a snare and that attention should be turned away from these things to things to come and things not of this world. It rightly refuses to give up the joys and opportunities within its reach for something which the human eye hath not seen, nor the human ear heard, but into which a good deal of human fantasy has entered. And when it sees the advocates of other-worldly religions acquiescing and sharing in the spoils of injustice, as in the case of organized religion in imperialist countries, or meekly submitting to exploitation, as in the pseudo-spiritual religions of subject nations like India, its sense of justice is outraged and it is often roused to violent opposition to all manifestations of religion. That is how one can account for the antagonism to religion of some high-souled thinkers and

movements, who are themselves striving to establish righteousness and justice on earth.

But a significant thing, a thing that anti-religious thinkers and movements all over the world have failed to realize, is that real religion is at one with them in this revolt against the false. For real, vital religion has all along been a revolutionary force in the world, inspiring all the great advances humanity has made in its corporate life. Far from being a spent force, it is perhaps the one force that can yet weld humanity together, can yet help to realize and maintain that goal of justice, peace and prosperity, which advancing knowledge has brought within human reach, but of which man's inherent selfishness still balks him. For, in its essence, religion is that which lifts man above self and links him with his fellow beings and with the Totality of Being, however that may be conceived. This distinction between true and false religion is fundamental. All the great religious teachers of the world have been persons who sought to emancipate the human mind from the trammels of tradition and to set it free to realize its kinship with the Universe. But they have all alike been unfortunate in the followers they have had. It would seem as if the human mind has an inherent tendency to conservatism and this has nowhere been in greater evidence than in the realm of religion. For the insights of the great religious teachers, instead of spurring the race on to higher and higher levels of realization, have each been codified and set up as exclusive and even conflicting systems of salvation. It is sad to think how humanity has treated its religious leaders, rejecting and despising them when alive, giving them the cup of poison to drink or lifting them on the cross of shame and, worse still, bowing down in senseless adoration of them afterwards, but all the time leaving their teachings unheeded. What do these great men care for being called "Lord, Lord" by those who follow not their precepts? It has been the same from Socrates and Jesus down to Gandhi in modern days. The great religious teachers of the world were not in their days regarded as religious; they were even accused of corrupting the youth and denying the gods.



Mention of the gods leads me to speak of a great misconception regarding these teachers. Religion is so much identified with belief and dogma that it would be incredible if one were to say that the great luminaries of religion never thought or taught dogmatically. The systems that have been foisted on them have so overlaid their teachings that it is difficult to realize that they were more system-breakers than system-builders. They were all Experimenters with Truth, who felt after the great realities of life, and blazed trails of noble living. Their conflict with the men of their days, particularly with the custodians of religious systems, was that they questioned these systems and felt after larger and more satisfying truth. It is true they were all, in a measure, some more, some less, bound by the beliefs and conceptions of their time and people; but they all alike stood for progress and change; and it is this progress and change that is resisted by the system-makers of all time and all religions. The very idea of God, which most of these teachers accepted from current thought, has been filled by them with such ever-broadening and ennobling content that there is not another word in human language that has undergone an equal change. Far from clinging to narrow and exploded ways of thought, these great teachers, if they were alive today, would have been abreast of modern thinking. What can be more modern, e.g., than this saying of the Buddha, 2,500 years ago: "Do not believe in what ye have heard; do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe in anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; do not believe in that as truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely on the authority of your elders and teachers – after observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it." That modern religion wherever it is real is carrying on and forward this spirit of search and quest for truth is seen from the great saying of Mahatma Gandhi, "Truth is God." If the modern rationalist, who so shies at the idea of God, would but go to the fountain-heads of religious inspiration, he would, like the great Indian leader Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, himself not a man of religion, admit himself to be "a humble camp follower of the Grand Army of the Religious Soul in its fearless search after Truth at all costs." For that is what

religion in its essence is; and so long as man is surrounded by mystery and set in the midst of constant change he will feel the fascination of the quest after the Eternal and the Abiding. What is needed is that the religious spirit should be rescued from the monopolists and system-makers of all religions and set free to establish its contacts with the Eternal in the light of ever-increasing knowledge.

But if the religious spirit has been thwarted and cramped in its quest of truth by system-makers, their influence has been even more pernicious in the practical results that should flow from religion. For real religion sees humanity as the offspring of one Eternal Love and all mankind as brothers. But organized religion has sought to restrict and confine this love within narrow limits. And it has often allied itself with the powers that be and acquiesced in existing injustices and oppressions. There has too often been a tendency in it to direct attention from this world, with its many injustices and inequalities, to a fancied future world where these would be righted. But here again real, vital religion is at one with the modern demand for justice for all, here on earth. We see this aspect of religion clearest of all in the long and glorious line of Hebrew prophets. In burning, scathing words, which have come ringing down the centuries, they demanded righteousness and justice to the common man in the name of the God of all creation. To one who is conversant with Jewish prophecy Karl Marx, himself a Jew, stands in the line of succession of these great prophets which this remarkable race has given to the world. Listen to one of them, the prophet Amos: "Let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream." Their denunciations of the idle rich and the oppressors of the poor are couched in words the sting of which time has not dulled. They are entirely at one with Marx and his followers in their denunciation of religion which is a cloak for exploitation of the poor. Speaking in the name of God, the same prophet, Amos, declared, concerning the much-vaunted religious practices of his people: "I hate, I despise your feasts and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Take away from me the noise of your songs." Karl Marx has but recaptured and reiterated the emphasis on social justice which was the keynote of Jewish prophecy. Here again the distinction between true

and false religion is fundamental. It would be folly not to claim the comradeship, and draw upon the inspiration, of these great religious leaders of the race in man's struggle to realize the better life on earth.

What is needed is an open repudiation of false religion that teaches people to be content with their lot on earth, whether it be in the quest of a false spirituality or in the hope of a realm of future rewards and punishments. Coupled with this there must be a stern demand for justice and equality in the name of real religion. But this demand of religion has so far lacked a technique of action whereby it could be pressed home and made to yield results. Religion has so far relied on preaching and propaganda, and has therefore had to be content with individual successes only. It is idle to hope that where twenty centuries or more of preaching and propaganda have not succeeded continued doses of it will be more effective in modern days. Nor does the urgency of the situation, verging as it does on the edge of catastrophe, justify reliance on mere moral appeal. What is needed is a technique of religious mass-action. And that is what Mahatma Gandhi's *satyagraha* bids fair to supply. It is the principle of Love, which religion has all along testified to as the Law of Life, applied to the stern realities of the world around us. It resists all injustice in the sure conviction that justice will and must triumph. It refuses to acquiesce in evil because it believes that good and not evil is the foundation and meaning of life. It consciously affirms, what is only implied in the Communist belief, that the highest social order is bound to triumph in the end.

It is this belief that forms the whole differentia between religious and secularist thought in its reaction to present reality. We have seen how real, vital religion is at one with the best secularist thought in its attempt to bring in a new and better order of things in this world. But while secularism can offer no guarantee that its ideal will triumph, religion is confident of a cosmic backing to its venture. Nay, more, religion with its belief in man as an offspring of Divine Love, sharing in the life of the Universe, makes its confident appeal to the human heart to see this better order realized. But secularist thought lacking this confidence, this faith in man, would resort to speedy, violent

methods to establish and maintain the rule of justice. Dostoievsky, in a famous novel, pictures the great choice before mankind as that between the Grand Inquisitor, representing a benevolent autocracy, and Jesus, symbolizing the spirit of religion. The Grand Inquisitor, loving man, but despairing of him, would deny him the gift of freedom to ensure him justice. But Jesus, loving man and believing in him, in spite of the mess that man has made of the gift of freedom, would seek and maintain justice through freedom. It is clear which is the grander, though the more difficult and daring enterprise. If freedom, if democracy, is to survive in the world along with justice, then we must look to religion with its faith in man to realize it for us. The way to it may be, as this book has tried to show, the way shown by Mahatma Gandhi, the way of Suffering Love, Love resisting evil, bearing upon itself the consequences of evil, but refusing to yield to it, or to repay evil with evil, but overcoming it. It is the old way, the way of the Buddha and Socrates; the way supremely illustrated by the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. But it yet awaits application to the everyday problems of man, the perplexing problem of the relations, not only between individuals, but between nations as well. It may be that, as so often in the past, light and leadership in religion is breaking out again from the East.

## 10 RELIGION AND POLITICS

WHAT has been unique in Gandhiji's experiments with Truth, carried out not in the seclusion of an *ashrama*, but in the arena of life, is the application of religion to politics, the attempt to permeate all life with the spirit of religion. Writing to me some years ago he said: "Religion to be true must pervade every activity of life. And that activity which cannot be pursued without sacrificing religion is an immoral activity to be shunned at all costs. Politics is not only not such an activity, but is an integral part of civic life."<sup>1</sup> This combination of religion with politics or this religious politics is of the very essence of Gandhism and on its legitimacy or otherwise depends the whole significance of the Fact of Gandhi which this book has so far attempted to evaluate.

I have said it is unique; but it is not without its parallels and precursors in the past. It is certainly unique in the modern world, which is very much under the influence of Western thought and practice. There has been in the West for over three hundred years now a disastrous divorce between religion and politics. This is not really in line with the ancient Western Christian tradition, which following the Jewish concept of a theocratic State sought, though in ways often not commendable to modern thought, to order the State according to the demands of the Church. It was the Reformation in Europe that laid the foundations of the secular State that drifted more and more from the control of the Church. The Indian concept of *Dharma*, of a this-worldly order planned and organized in the light of eternity, as a scheme of life preparing the human soul for its eternal destiny, was itself such an effort to permeate politics and all life with religion. The patterns it worked out, *Varnashrama Dharma* for society and the sequence of the four *ashramas* for the individual, held good under the conditions in which it was evolved and wherever it was practised in its spirit. But the spirit that gives life has long ago escaped from the body it informed and the letter that kills has too long had its sway. The ancient scheme of *Dharma* has long since been out-moded by changing circumstances and has not been adapted to modern conditions. It undoubtedly has in it the seeds of such

adaptation; but it yet awaits the genius who will give it its modern shape and sanction.

A less comprehensively worked out but a more arresting attempt to dominate politics with the spirit of religion was that of the ancient Jewish prophets, the records of whose witness have come down to us in the Christian Bible. They were men of God, often wild men of God, who spoke in the name of God, in the light of eternity, to the kings and peoples of their generations, on the policies of their nation. They were men obsessed by the idea of God's sovereignty over the whole world and were convinced that in obedience to Him alone lay the way to peace and prosperity, not only for their nation but for the whole world. The significant thing about them was that in the light of that conviction they dared to lay down policies to be adopted by their nation. There are innumerable instances of their giving specific guidance to king and people regarding military campaigns, foreign alliances and internal administration. Instances are not wanting of some of these intrepid men of God instigating rebellion and crowning successful rebels. Their counsels were too often unheeded and they themselves cast into prison or sent into exile or cut off from the land of the living. We read of more than one of them resorting to symbolic ways of living, like going about barefoot or wearing a yoke round the neck, as warnings to the people of impending visitations of God. Gandhi today in his loin-cloth, with his sense of divine commission and his obedience to the inner light, is reminiscent of these ancient men of God.

The Christian ideal of the Kingdom of God is the culmination and fulfillment of their hope of God's sovereignty on earth. For not only had they seen the vision of a time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea", but the noblest of them had also realized that the way to its realization was that of Suffering Love. The ideal Servant of Yahweh<sup>2</sup> is one who bears the sins of his people and redeems them by his suffering. It was this ideal that was fulfilled in Jesus. Ever since he came the Kingdom of God has been a living reality on earth and those who would follow in his steps have been entering and living in it. But his hope also included the extension of that

Kingdom over the whole earth, till the little leaven of it had leavened the whole lump. That consummation has not yet been realized and today the hope of it has receded far from the hearts of people. Instead of this world becoming a Kingdom of God, parts of it have become veritable hells, with the real danger of the whole becoming engulfed in that abyss. It is at such a time when the hearts of men grow faint everywhere, thinking of the things that happen on earth, that God has again visited His people, seeking to redeem them by another Servant of God.

What Gandhiji has done is to fill this concept of God's Kingdom on earth, or Rama Raj, to give it the Indian equivalent he uses, with a modern content and to demonstrate the ways of its realization. The glorious hope of God's sovereignty on earth in all its varied expressions, in Hindu, Christian, Islamic or other hopes, had become dim and had given place to the hope of a brave new world fashioned by science on the one hand, or, on the other hand, a falsely spiritual escape from the realities of life in a heaven beyond or a mysticism within. But the hope of it has become a glowing reality in Gandhi and a challenge to all men of goodwill to grasp it and embody it on earth. He has had the courage to work out the implications of it in terms of modern life, to specify the politics and the economics of the Kingdom of God. It may be that his deductions do not take sufficient note or make the fullest use of the immensity and intricacy of man's modern knowledge and resources; but the very fact that such a blue print of the Kingdom of God has been made in modern times by a practical politician is vitally significant. His contribution is even more significant and more enduring in the realm of the means he advocates for its realization. Ends, in the sense of the full and detailed contents of the ideal, can be left to shape themselves out when the means adopted are in consonance with the ideal.

Yet the final victory of those methods still remains to be tested and vindicated. It will depend on the lines on which the new independent State will organize itself. And it is here that doubts thicken and questions arise. It looks as if a free India is departing in many vital points from the India of Gandhi's dream, the

Rama Raj or the Kingdom of God in the battle for which he has given the lead. The lust for power and the ways of power-politics do not seem to have been eradicated and seem to be raising their ugly heads all over. The men called to offices seem to be not all those who had shared the vision or endured the sacrifices. It is here that Gandhi's politics seems to have tainted his religion. Practical politician that he is, leader in the fight for wresting power from a foreign bureaucracy, Gandhi was often willing to use people who were far from accepting his goal. The great religious leaders of old were always insistent on the quality of their following. Striving above all things for self-realization for themselves and for those who followed them they were content to wait for the Kingdom that comes not with observation, that establishes its sway in the hearts of men and women, without raising hopes of a speedy millennium on earth. To the truly religious mind an earthly Utopia is a by-product of the effort at individual regeneration. There is the story told of Jesus rejecting as a temptation of the Devil the lure of the kingdoms of the world on condition of bowing the knee to the Prince of Evil. Was Gandhi seeking the short-cut of political freedom towards his ideal of Rama Raj when he accepted the following not only of vast masses, but even of some outstanding co-workers who did not share his vision .and would not work out his programme?

His attitude towards the question of war seems to be a case in point. Was he more of a realist or more of a compromising politician than the honest war-resister in the West during the last war in not totally repudiating war? Many of these in the simplicity of their faith in non-violence dared to embarrass their nations in their total abstention from war. Certainly Gandhi's stand on that issue was not clear. Was his anxiety not to embarrass Britain during the last war a clever compromise to gain political advantage for his country? And has not that led his followers and the nation on to the slippery slope that leads to the militarization of India? The suggestion of conscription for military services, even when the foundations of the new nation-state are being laid, seems to many pacifists a danger signal. An India, especially as a house divided within itself, armed and drilled for modern warfare will not be a guarantee for, but a menace to the peace of the world.



The fact is that Gandhi as the leader of a freedom fight against foreign domination had to accept the limited goal and the half-hearted following, which alone he could get. He was content to shoulder the leadership of an organization that was committed to nonviolence as only a policy, as the only weapon available to it under the circumstances. It is rather surprising that only now has Gandhi fully realized or openly admitted the half-heartedness of that following and its implications. Writing in the *Harijan* of July 27, 1947, S. N. quotes Gandhiji as saying: "I have admitted my mistake. I thought our struggle was based on nonviolence, whereas in reality it was no more than passive resistance, which essentially is a weapon of the weak. It leads naturally to armed resistance whenever possible."

And S. N. comments on this: "He now realized that it was not based on non-violence. If he had known so then he would not have launched the struggle. But God wanted to take that work from him. So He blurred his vision. It was because their struggle was not non-violent that they today witnessed loot, arson and murder." Between non-violence as a creed and nonviolence as a policy there is a deep gulf, clearly marked if not irrevocably fixed. A policy is given up the moment it has fulfilled its purpose, while a creed is clung to at all costs, irrespective of immediate success or failure. The Congress policy of non-violence certainly worked against the British Raj and has enabled Gandhi to see the fruits of his labours, to some extent, in an India that has won virtual independence.

Yet none knows more than he that the fight for the Kingdom of God is far from over. That Kingdom can come on earth only through the devoted labours of individuals wholly surrendered to God. In not demanding such a surrender on the part of even his closest followers Gandhi may have been a good political leader, using all those who are not against him, but the less of a religious leader, to whom he that is not wholly with him is against him. It may be that what Gandhi has succeeded in achieving as a politician may be undone by what he has failed to conserve as a religious leader.

It is such considerations as these that have led such a searching student of the subject as Aldous Huxley to conclude that goodness-politics, which he distinguishes from power-politics, must ever be marginal, concerned with providing antidotes to the poison brewed by power-politics. In his *Grey Eminence, A Study in Religion and Politics*, Huxley tells the story of a genuinely religious soul turning aside to pursue the path of power-politics under the illusory hope of "leading a whole national community along a political short-cut into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." Father Joseph was one well advanced on the mystic way and was thoroughly detached in all his actions. He wielded the most absolute power in France, being next only to Cardinal Richelieu, yet he lived the life of an ascetic, with no earthly possessions and finding his truest delight in directing the lives of a very strict order of nuns he had organized. Yet this man was Richelieu's instrument in provoking and prolonging the disastrous Thirty Years War, which, though it seemed to succeed in achieving his object of setting up France as the instrument of God in bringing in the Kingdom of God on earth, utterly failed in the end, was the cause of untold misery to millions and left a legacy of war in Europe. Father Joseph died bitterly regretting the part he had played. Huxley's conclusion from this profoundly interesting historical study of the problem of religion and politics is that goodness-politics must be jealously marginal and avoid all contamination with power-politics. And he quotes the example of the Society of Friends as maintaining that aloofness through about three hundred years of very fruitful service in the international field, counteracting the poison of power-politics.

Gandhi's varied constructive programmes provide instances of such effective antidotal services to offset the poisons of power-politics. There are many who hold that Gandhi's services in these fields are more significant and far-reaching than his politics. They surely represent a flank attack on the entrenched evils of modern society and may succeed where frontal assaults are baffled. And in the devoted band of workers he has trained for such services he has proved himself to be a real leader of men, calling into being spiritual off-springs who will carry on his work after him. It may be to them that we have to look for the continuance of his work and the ultimate triumph of his ideals.

But Gandhi has not been content with marginal politics. Greatly daring and in the fullness of his confidence he has plunged into the very vortex of the whirlpool of modern politics and sought to direct its current along right channels. The very fact that he took that plunge and that he has not been overwhelmed by it, that even at the moment of success he could deliberately eschew power and take the lowest place in the land, that he still chooses to be in a minority of one when he could wield undisputed sway, is proof positive that the experiment can be carried through. Yet in this field Gandhi has not been the fruitful parent of off springs, who give the guarantee that they will carry forward his work. There has appeared none on the horizon as yet on whom Gandhi's mantle as the religio-political leader of India will fall. But it must be that there are many among the rank and file, who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of power- politics, and from among them may rise some who will carry the torch of Truth, which the Mahatma has held aloft, and lead India and the nations to peace along the paths of goodness-politics which is not merely marginal. The hope of the world lies in them. Gandhi's great experiment in this field has got to be carried on and carried to success; for there can be no peace on earth till it knows the peace of God, till God's Kingdom is established foursquare on this solid earth.

- 
1. For the full text of this correspondence see Appendix IV.
  2. The Jewish name for God, mis-spelt and mispronounced Jehovah in English.

## APPENDICES

### I

THE following is the Aim and Basis of the All-Kerala Inter\* religious Student Fellowship, which might give a lead in the matter to kindred organizations all over India, adopted at its first conference, held at Alwaye, South India, in May 1937:

We believe that the religious attitude is a thing of permanent value to mankind, individually and collectively; and consider it, wherever it is found, deserving of reverent recognition. Amidst the conflicting claims made on behalf of different religions, all of which have sprung from this common attitude, we believe there is an urgent need for a full and free exchange of our differing religious experiences, in a spirit of mutual respect, appreciation and sympathy. We consider that for such mutual respect and sympathy to be real it is absolutely necessary that no member of the Fellowship should claim for his religion any exclusive and final possession of truth.

We believe that such an interchange of experiences will lead to :—

- a) An enrichment of one another's religious life;
- b) Mutual respect, understanding and tolerance; and
- c) Co-operation in purifying and strengthening the religious attitude of mind as against the irreligious or materialistic attitude, as the one attitude from which our personal, social, national and international problems have to be tackled.

In order that each may bring into this Fellowship the very best that he can, we desire to explore fully the value of our religious traditions and disciplines and present them for the benefit of all. But we do not desire to persuade any within the Fellowship to our own religious belief and practice.

We realize that any attempt to weaken the hold of the truth of any religion upon mankind is to weaken religion itself. Therefore we strive not to weaken but to strengthen each other by mutual respect, trust and co-operation.

We seek to help one another more fully to understand and to live up to the best in all religions.

---

II

THE following is the Rev. L.J. Belton's<sup>1</sup> very valuable statement of principles and policy that ought to guide attempts at inter-religious fellowship, born of years of experience of efforts in that field:

- 1) "Pat on the back" tea-parties are of little practical avail; no inter-religious fellowship can fully achieve its purpose by conducting itself in the manner of a mutual admiration society. If it tries to do so it encourages tacit dishonesty; for in the interest of policy and for the sake of politeness, people will tend to assume towards the other man's point of view an attitude which in sober reality they cannot honestly adopt – and to say tomorrow, elsewhere, what they dare not say today.
- 2) Tolerance is not enough. Tolerance is easy, but it is sometimes question-begging and negative. One should, of course, concede to other that same right to express their views which one expects for oneself; but not on that account ought one to concur, or let it be assumed that one concurs, in views one holds to be fundamentally erroneous. Inter-religious fellowship should not demand of us that we tolerate superstition or acquiesce, for the sake of harmony, in what we believe to be social wrongs. But criticism, if it cannot be avoided, should be constructive and helpful, and courteously expressed. Each man should be met, so far as that be possible, on his own level, with all the sympathy and understanding that are ours to command.
- 3) Inter-religious fellowship is incompatible with exclusive claims, by whomsoever they are made. Any religious society or Church which assumes to be the vehicle of a unique and final revelation is self-excluded from inter-religious fellowship and does better to remain in the safe seclusion of its own sheepfold than to mingle with "wolves" in sheep's clothing outside the fold. In this respect the Roman Catholic Church has at least the merit

and logic of its own uncompromising exclusiveness, for the loyal Romanist will never consent to meet on equal terms the members of other faiths; whether they be Protestant Christian\* or "Pagans" they are heretics from the standpoint of Rome.

- 4) The will to proselytize is likewise incompatible with the spirit which should actuate all gatherings for inter-religious fellowship. This means in practice, not that the members of the more militant of the missionary faiths are to be summarily shown the door (for many a man individually is larger-minded and larger-hearted than the institutional faith to which he belongs), but that within the fellowship propaganda and polemics should be barred as inconsistent with the fundamental basis of fellowship and as discourteous to others whose views may be different from one's own. Least of all, it need hardly be said, should zealots be allowed to use the inter-religious platform for open or veiled advocacy of their particular faith. When that is done harmony is destroyed and the platform is at once in danger of collapse. If at times fervent believers are asked to expound their own convictions, such exposition need involve neither an assumption of superiority nor the will to convert.
- 5) At the same time no less impermissible, or should I say undesirable and destructive of fellowship, is the open advocacy of a synthetic faith compounded of fragments of many existing faiths. One cannot make a new religion by artificial selection – one may try but one will not succeed. Even if one were to succeed, what final advantage would there be, one may well ask, in a new religion which could maintain its integrity only at the price of uniformity and ultimately, it might be, of repeating the errors of authoritarian religion? Anything which imposes from without that which man should find within is in the long run a hindrance to spiritual understanding.
- 6) Acknowledgement of diversity is a *sine qua non* of inter-religious fellowship. Uniformity of belief is possible only among slave-minds, and is neither possible nor desirable in a community of thinking (i.e. awakened)

people. An inter-religious fellowship should recognize the fact of diversity in tradition, conviction and temperamental needs.

- 7) But in virtue of its ideal aims, an inter-religious fellowship will seek to mark and to emphasize those teachings which all religions, under varying symbolisms, hold in common. Religion is that which binds and in this sense everything that is divisive, local and non-essential in the several faiths may gradually be relegated to the background and finally set aside, as universal truths emerge into the light and are recognized for what they are. Thus the more far-seeing and intuitive enthusiasts for inter-religious fellowship will gain a new, more adventurous, more inclusive faith and a deeper understanding of the Design of all existence.

---

### III (a)

#### TO ALL CHRISTIANS IN INDIA<sup>2</sup>

Dear Fellow-Believers,

The story of our Religion is nothing but the record of the appearances of Divinely inspired prophets, coming forward with compelling messages for their times, to lead their fellow men to fuller life and closer walk with God. But that story is also full of warnings to us, not to fail to discern the signs of the times, to know the day of our visitation; for it has been the lot of most of those prophets to be despised and rejected in their generation, though later ages have built their tombs and enshrined their memory. It is India's glory that in these latter days God has raised up a prophet, like unto these ancient men of God, from among her children. For it is my conviction that Mahatma Gandhi has been raised up by God in these days, as Moses of old, to lead his people out of the desolation of foreign domination and to set their feet on the path of self-realization and world service. But the representatives of insolent might have, as of old, driven from before their faces the people's representative and God's. But what of the people? Will they too reject and disown him? We are persuaded better of the people of India as a whole. For India has never stoned her

prophets or rejected those that have been sent to her. But what of our Christian minority?

*India is on trial.* We are confident that her people will come out vindicated and triumphant out of this trial. But *Christianity in India is also on its trial.* We wish we could have been equally confident about that issue too. So far Indian Christians as a community have held aloof from the National struggle and allowed their inaction to be interpreted as acquiescence in reactionary measures and thus estranged themselves from their countrymen whom they seek to serve. But we trust they will not miss this last great opportunity to take their religion to the heart of the New India<sup>^</sup> in the making. For this time the struggle will be swift and the issue decisive. We Christians ought to be devoutly thankful that that struggle is directed along strictly non-violent lines, enabling us to bear our part in it with a clear conscience. To us our Christian profession has already committed us to this struggle both as to its objective and its method. For as Christians we are bound to stand out against all injustice and oppression; and it needs no labouring the point at this time that British rule in India, in spite of all its seeming benefits, has in its totality done more harm than good to the country; and that in the interests both of India and Britain the present relation between the two countries must be radically altered. As to non-violence, it/is our Master's method, the Way of the Cross; and it is certainly up to us to be interpreters of its meaning and guardians of its integrity in the Holy War<sup>4</sup> that has already begun. If I appeal to Indian Christians, men and women, in all parts of the country to join in their thousands in the movement, it is because I believe that this movement under Mahatma Gandhi will lead to a partial realization at least of that great goal before mankind\* the Kingdom of God, of which our prophets have seen visions and for which our Lord lived and died. It is our Christian duty, due both to God and country, to help in the realization of that ideal. May we not be found wanting in this hour of our trial!

As to methods and programme, Mahatmaji in his last appeal to the community, issued through the Nationalist Christian Party of Bombay, has suggested two



items in which Indian Christians can and ought to join. These are Khaddar and Prohibition. As he puts it, he has felt that the poor Indian Christian community needs Khaddar as much as any other community in the land for its economic salvation. So he expresses the hope, in his own inimitable language, that "every Indian Christian house will be adorned with the *charkka* and every Indian Christian body with Khaddar, spun and woven by the hands of their poor countrymen and countrywomen."

As for Prohibition, he could not understand, he says, how a Christian could take intoxicating drink. If we Christians have not been in the forefront of this work it is because we have been culpably indifferent to one of the curses that is ruining our country.

The fullest co-operation with the country in these two items of constructive work seems to me the least the Indian Christian community as a whole can do at this juncture. But if individual Christians feel they ought to do more they ought to do so in the name of the Christ we serve; and I appeal to all Christian Churches and leaders to send them forth with their blessings and to uphold them with their prayers.

YOURS IN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

S. K. GEORGE,

Lecturer (Resigned),

Bishop's College, Calcutta

---

### III (b)

#### A PERSONAL CONVICTION<sup>3</sup>

PERHAPS I owe it to my friends in different parts of the country to explain why it is that I felt it my duty to give up a place so congenial to me as Bishop's College, to wander into the wilderness, giving up for the time being even the care of my little family. To make my position fully clear I had better begin at

the beginning of my 'spiritual pilgrimage'. It was during the great Non-cooperation days of 1921 that I began really to live. Up to that time I was merely the child of good parents, myself a good boy, which meant a harmless boy, though I had, all unsuspected by others, my own inner stormy life<sup>3</sup> Mahatma Gandhi's life and message gripped me at that time and they have remained with me as an abiding influence, deepening and vitalizing as the years go by. Above all else they helped me to realize Christ and his message more than anything else. I realized with a distinctness, that has been blurred at times by considerations of safety and expediency, but which has never entirely faded out, that the central thing in Christianity is the hope of the Kingdom of God and that the Lord Jesus is inviting us to carry on the building up of that Kingdom with the devotion and in the spirit which characterized himself in his life on earth. Doctrinal affiliations have always seemed to me of less importance than devotion to the ideal of the Kingdom and it was in that belief that I came as a student and later as a member of the staff of Bishop's College. I shall ever be grateful to the Principal of Bishop's College<sup>4</sup> for his understanding of my position and his uplifting faith in me, even though his own interpretation of Christianity differed in its emphasis from mine.

But it was inevitable that my attitude should in the end clash with that of the authorities of the Church in India, especially at a time like this, when I believe that the Spirit of God is moving mightily to establish the foundations of the Kingdom of God in this land. For the Church with its commitments, its alliances with vested interests, its natural conservatism, and unfortunately in India its foreign leadership, was not to be expected to welcome such a radical thing as the Kingdom of God coming in power, particularly when God's chosen agent for it happens to be one outside its own fold. For it is my conviction that Mahatma Gandhi today is a worker for the Kingdom of God, perhaps the greatest force working for it here or anywhere else. I have for long felt it in my innermost being that he is a man of God and that the greatest duty of any Christian or any God-fearing man at this time is to stand with him for Truth and Justice, and true Brotherhood between men of all classes and creeds and races. This, of

course, is a personal conviction which no one can be argued into. But it made my own way clear.

My differences with the authorities of Bishop's College are of some years' standing. During the last Civil Disobedience movement I had a little correspondence with the Metropolitan over his very unconvincing reply to Prof. Kumarappa.<sup>5</sup> That time the Metropolitan had threatened to take action and the threat hung over me all through the next two years. When the struggle was renewed this year I could not remain indifferent to it. Believing as I do, that the Indian *satyagraha* is the Cross in action and that it gives Jesus Christ his greatest opportunity to enter the heart of a remade India, I held it to be my highest duty both towards the College and the Church in India to identify myself entirely with this non-violent movement, based absolutely on Truth and seeking solely to establish peace on earth and goodwill among men. But such an attitude on my part was regarded as disloyalty to the College and therefore I had no other alternative but to leave the College to follow my own conscience at this time of my country's need and my Lord's opportunity.

I fully trust that the Church in India will not long continue in its present apathy and will not finally miss this great opportunity to take her religion and her Lord right into the heart of the New India in the making and thus win for Him the devotion of this dear Mother of us all. May this consummation not long be delayed is the prayer of

YOUR FRIEND AND COMRADE

S. K. GEORGE

Calcutta, March 31, 1932

---

IV<sup>6</sup>

A

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I was glad you were in the Ashram. I hope your fever has left you. For the time being only this note. Yes, Rama Raj is possible even with this mixture, if the

workers are true. This does not exclude me. If I am true, there must be true co-workers, if false also. Do write whenever you feel like it.

Yeravda Mandir, 3-10-'32

LOVE,

BAPU

---

**B**

The Ashram,  
Sabarmati,  
Oct. 5, 1932

MY DEAR BAPU,

I wonder whether my short note of September received your notice at all. As I said in that I have been striving to follow you for the last ten years, seeing in you God's chosen agent for bringing in His Kingdom on earth in this generation. Your life and your devotion to your ideal of Rama Raj made Christ and his Kingdom more real to me and I felt that in standing behind you I was helping to bring in Christ's Kingdom. It was this conviction of mine that brought me into conflict with the authorities of the Church in India and led to my resignation from Bishop's College, Calcutta, where I was a tutor. But having taken that step and having come to the Ashram for fuller identification with your cause, I find myself still perplexed as to my Christian duty. Before leaving the Ashram (I am going for a short stay at the Christa Seva Sangh, Poona) may I use my privilege as an *ashrarmite* of sharing my perplexities with you?

It is your ideal of Rama Raj that has won my allegiance. But my growing misgiving is whether it is possible to build up any Kingdom of God with people who have not seen the vision of it and do not accept its ideals as life-principles. The Congress does not share your ideal and is not working out your methods – for non-violence as a principle is poles apart from non-violence as a policy. I do not blame the Congress for it. It is a political organization, working for a political goal and for the realization of that it has adopted non-violence as the best policy – nonviolence in the sense of avoidance of violence – so as not to give a handle to its enemy, against whose organized violence it would

otherwise have no chance. That, I believe, is all the non-violence that is in practice in the Congress campaign, though individuals may be found who carry it further. Undoubtedly even as a policy it is superior to violence and the only workable one in India; and I hope and pray that India will stick to it. But you will admit that non-violence as a policy cannot bring in the Kingdom of God. A worker for that Kingdom seeks no immediate and tangible success. He is content to wait till God's good time for its coming; indeed its coming means the perfecting of its methods and its workers. The goal of Indian Swaraj obviously cannot wait for such perfection. It is a political goal and it cannot long be delayed without disaster to the country, without making unrest habitual and driving impatient spirits among the youth to reckless acts of violence. The distinction therefore between the two ideals and the methods of their attainment ought, I think, to be made far more clear than at present. You, as a worker for the Kingdom of God, ought, in my humble opinion, to stand aside from the struggle for mere political power without hampering the swift acquisition of the latter by your insistence on methods which really pertain to the former and which you cannot get practised by a mass of workers who are in the main moved by the lesser ideal.

Take the case of your recent fast. I quite see that to you it was a religious issue and consequently far more important than the political question, and therefore you were prepared to lay down your life for it. But, as the leader of the Congress, you are fighting the political battle and thousands have followed you to prison expecting a speedy settlement of that. In turning aside from that main issue to fight untouchability, I humbly submit that, you were betraying the cause of the Congress. In taking up the untouchability question in the manner you did, you were really being true to yourself, but that as a worker for Rama Raj and not for Indian independence. India can get independence with separate electorates and with many imperfections which may not be tolerable in the Kingdom of God: only it would not be the independence of your conception; it would not be Rama Raj. But the issue has not been cleared as to whether the masses, and even the leaders, who stand behind you would prefer political independence in the immediate future or be content to wait and suffer

for the Kingdom of God "which comes not with observation" and which cannot be forced upon men. I believe the majority of those who work under you, especially the leaders, would be willing to let go the distant and glorious ideal for the more tangible and immediate goal. Unless that issue is cleared in your favour you should stand aside and let the Congress fight its battle for its own legitimate, though lesser goal, while you should come out as a worker for God's Kingdom, challenging the allegiance of all who work and pray for it throughout the world.

Having ventured to say so much, may I go on to make a further criticism? That relates to your fast. The time and circumstances at which you elected to fast on the issue were such, it seemed to me, as to throw part of the odium of it on the Government. This would be more clear if we think of the eventuality of your death. It would have irrevocably embittered the country against the Government, while you would really have died at the hands of the people. For however much the Government may be to blame for exploiting our unhappy differences this issue is peculiarly one of our own creation and maintenance, and one who felt, as you do, the enormity of our guilt in the matter would have exonerated the Government altogether and directed the fast solely against the people. What I mean is that this issue had better been fought with the Government left out. A deeper sense of your Hindu responsibility for the crime would have led you not to embarrass the Government even to the extent that the decision did and was meant to. I know I am treading on sacred ground when I question what you claim to be your divinely guided choice of time and say that the issue had better been tackled when the independence question was settled and you, from the height of your power, could have hurled your life as a challenge against this long-standing injustice.

Forgive me if in anything I have seemed to be irreverent. I was only being utterly frank with you. May I be favoured with a reply C/o the Acharya, Christa Seva Sangh, Poona?

Your humble follower,

S. K. GEORGE

C

Yeravda Central Prison,  
Poona

My Dear George,

I prize your letter for its gentle frankness. Only I cannot give you the full reply it deserves. My position as a prisoner would not warrant my giving you a detailed reply. One thing I may say. I do not isolate politics from religion as you appear to me to do. Religion to be true must pervade every activity of life. And that activity which cannot be pursued without sacrificing religion is an immoral activity to be shunned at all costs. Politics is not only not such an activity but it is an integral part of civic life. The rest of the discussion must be postponed to a more auspicious occasion. Only do not give me up in despair. I hope you had my previous letter.

14-10-'32

Yours,  
Bapu

- 
1. L. J. Belton, *Creeeds in Conflict* (J. M. Dent, 1938)
  2. An appeal issued by the author in March 1932 to his fellow Indian Christians to join in the Civil Disobedience movement.
  3. Issued along with the foregoing.
  4. Bishop H. Pakenham Walsh.
  5. This correspondence has been published in J. C. Kumarappa's brochure, *The Religion of Jesus*.
  6. The following is the text of a correspondence between Gandhiji and the author, while the latter was an inmate of Sabarmati Ashram and Gandhiji in Yeravda Central Prison.