

allow one to forget the necessity of the use by anatomists and physiologists of a precise and appropriate terminology, or the need for consistently used and logical principles of interpretation in scientific observation.

We have the right to ask for a terminology in physiological writings that is precise and physiological, and free from admixture—witting or unwitting—of terms from two other disciplines, philosophical or psychological, as though they belonged to the grammar of physiology; free also from the easy recourse to popular terms of no precise or constant reference, used to fill up gaps in scientific knowledge and to conceal their existence.

No reader of the relevant literature would deny that these standards of scientific language do not universally obtain today. The departure from them confuses thinking and expression and leads us unwittingly to the seeking of false goals far beyond the proper scope of natural science, and to the engendering at times of an absurd intellectual pride: and by that sin fell the angels.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD RELIGIONS

R. C. ZAEHNER

Spalding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics in the University of Oxford

EASE of communications brings all men together: but the contiguity of bodies does not necessarily entail the cross-fertilization of minds, and the mere fact that we can now move round the world at incredible speed does not mean that we are any better equipped to appreciate the ideas and cultures of other lands. Indeed it can be argued that the enormous development of the tourist traffic in Europe has done more to emphasize national peculiarities than to promote international good will: mere physical contact between nations does not necessarily lead to better understanding.

That there is need for better understanding, however, few would deny; and it is only since the last war that Europeans have come to realize it. For it is quite certain that the last war put an end to European supremacy for ever; and Europeans, so long the master race, will now have to learn the hard way how to get on on equal terms with peoples they had previously dominated. Moreover,

their recent attainment of freedom has given the Asiatics a new self-confidence and a new faith in their ancient civilizations.

Christianity benefited greatly from the imperialist expansion of nominally Christian powers, and Christian missions have made most progress where European political power has been strongest. With the retreat of Europe from imperialism all that has changed, and the newly liberated peoples of Asia see Christianity not so much as a rival religion to be judged according to its own merits as the religion of their late masters who so often seemed to behave in a singularly un-Christian way. For them Christianity means the religion of the white man, and on that account it is regarded with deep suspicion. Moreover, Asia is very different from Africa, and the missionary task for Christians there is immeasurably more difficult.

Most of Africa (except those parts which had already embraced Islam) only knew religions of the most primitive kind, many of them riddled with witchcraft; and it was therefore easy for Christianity to advertise itself as something immeasurably higher and more worthwhile: there was no serious competition from other higher religions. Asia, however, is the cradle of religion, just as Europe is the cradle of science, and not one of the world religions has originated outside Asia. But there are two peoples which stand out from all the others for the immense contribution they have made to the religious life of the world—Israel and India.

Of the world religions, only one arose independently of either the Hebrew or the Indian religious tradition—Confucianism: and most people would agree that Confucianism is rather a system of social ethics than a religion. Because China was so poor in religious ideas of her own it was possible for the Buddhists to spread throughout the Celestial Empire without meeting serious opposition on the purely religious plane. So it can be said that man's religious heritage derives overwhelmingly from the Hebrews and the Indians. Israel and India are the two peoples which have given the world the faiths by which they live.

Moreover, in both traditions we meet with a similar pattern of religious development. In both cases you begin with what was originally a national religion, in the one case Judaism, the religion of the Jewish people, and in the other, Hinduism, the religion of the Hindus, that is, the religion of the Indian people. Both peoples gradually develop throughout the centuries a canon of scripture, and after the completion of the canon both give birth to national heresies which very soon were to become international faiths. Judaism gave birth to Christianity and Hinduism to Buddhism. Again, about six

hundred years after Christ a new religion was to arise in the Arabian desert which saw itself as the completion of the full Jewish heritage in both the old and new Testaments: this was Islam, the religion preached by the Prophet Muhammad. Similarly in India, again perhaps some six hundred years after the death of the Buddha, a new form of Buddhism arose, the Mahāyāna, which was so different from the older Buddhism as almost to constitute a new religion. Thus, in each of the two religious traditions we start with a strictly national religion, which gives birth to two international or universal faiths. Nor does the parallel stop here, for in each case, beside the main stream flowing from the original source—Israel or India as the case may be—we find a minor subsidiary stream of the same type of religion originating in lands far removed from the main centre. Parallel to the Jewish stream is the religion of the prophet Zoroaster which arose in Iran, and parallel to the Indian is Taoism which arose in China. So akin to their own religion did the Jews feel the monotheism of the Iranian prophet to be that their own prophet Isaiah did not hesitate to refer to Cyrus as the 'Lord's anointed'. So too, when the Buddhists reached China they very soon saw that there was much in Taoism that was akin to their own religion.

The patterns between the historical development of the two great religious streams in the Far and Near East are, then, strangely alike; but the similarity is all of form, not of content. The development is similar, but the message is completely different: for some of the oriental religions are so different from our own that few Westerners would understand in what sense they could be regarded as religions at all.

No completely satisfactory definition of 'religion' has, perhaps, ever been made, but at least in the West we consider that worship of God is an important element in it, and if God is to be worshipped 'in spirit and in truth', then, it would seem, we must have some sort of conception of what sort of Being God is. Hence the necessity of revelation. Here, however, we immediately run into difficulties, for how can we be sure that any particular revelation is a true revelation?

Take the Jewish revelation first. Jews, Christians, and Muslims all agree that the Old Testament is a direct revelation of God to man. The Jews, however, maintain that it is the only such true and direct revelation. What Christians consider to be God's final revelation in Jesus Christ, because Christ is not a mere prophet, but the Incarnate Word of God, the Jews reject out of hand as being a heresy because Christ did not conform to their own idea of what the Messiah should be, nor did the idea of an Incarnate God enter into

their way of thought at all. So we find the One Truth divided: with the coming of Christianity we no longer have one true religion, we have two, the older one denying all validity to the new. Finally we have yet another revelation in Muhammad, who claimed to be the Seal of the Prophets among whom Jesus was his immediate predecessor. Islam, moreover, denies much that Christians hold most sacred, it denies the Incarnation, and—although the Koran is ambivalent on this point—Muslim tradition has always denied the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, that is to say, it makes nonsense of the whole doctrine of the Atonement. So we find ourselves faced with three religions, all springing from one stem, each of which claims to be uniquely true. This is, obviously, not a very satisfactory state of affairs. It has, moreover, made for intolerance, persecution, and religious war; and it is only recently that we have grown to be a little ashamed of the Crusades, which do not now appear so very different from the ideological wars of today.

How do matters stand in India? There we enter into a totally different climate of opinion—the whole *way* of thinking is different. The parent religion, Vedic Hinduism, is about as different from Judaism as it is possible to be. The sacred book is known as the Veda (meaning ‘knowledge’ or ‘wisdom’), and this is thought to have been revealed to sacred seers in immemorial antiquity. It is composed of three main strata of which the last is by far the most important. The earliest part of this enormous store-house of sacred texts is the Rig-Veda, which consists of over a thousand hymns extolling a number of deities, many of whom obviously represent natural phenomena; only towards the end of the tenth and last book of the Rig-Veda do we find anything resembling monotheism, but this too remains undeveloped. Then what to us seems a very strange phenomenon occurs: interest in the gods as such diminishes, and overriding importance begins to be attached to the ritual as such. The sacrificial ritual is believed to be possessed of immense magical power of itself, quite independent of the deity or deities to whom it is offered; and the welfare of the gods themselves now depends on the correct performance of the ritual: the priest then becomes more important than the god to whom, in theory, the sacrifice is offered. All idea of a supreme, personal, creator God vanished, and instead another concept assumed ever-increasing importance, *brahman*, which can best be translated as ‘sacred power’. I have not the space to trace the development of this concept in early Hinduism, but must now pass straight on the third stratum of the Veda, the Upanishads.

Though the whole of the Veda is supposed to be equally sacred,

in practice it is the Upanishads, the end of the Veda or Vedānta, which really constitutes the sacred book of the Hindus. Very roughly speaking, it can be said that the Upanishads occupy the place in Hinduism that the New Testament occupies for Christians.

The Upanishads are philosophical in content, and are comparable to the earliest type of Greek philosophy in which the philosopher strives to discover the origin of the universe, that is, that one changeless thing from which all change arises and into which it must again dissolve. What they are looking for is a changeless, absolute something that has its being outside space and time, change and causality. This they call *brahman*. Their search for *brahman*, however, is not confined to the outside universe, it is also conducted within the human being himself. These ancient seers are not only looking for the deep ground of the universe, they are also looking for their own immortal souls; they are looking both for the immortal substrate of the world and for the immortal substrate of their changing psychophysical organism. In the event, once they had found the one, they assumed, rashly perhaps, that they had found the other.

Yet, when all is said and done, the main pre-occupation of the Upanishads is not so much a quest for the unknown God as the search for an immortal state of being in which, it was thought, the soul, at its deepest level, lived.

Now, parallel with the speculations of the Upanishads went the practice of Yoga which seems to have been practised in India long before the arrival of the Aryans more than a thousand years before Christ. Yoga is a technique the object of which is to gain complete control of body and mind, through which, the Yogin maintains, man can pierce through to the immortal substrate of his own soul; and in this connection it is very important to know what we mean by the word 'immortality'. It does *not* mean 'life everlasting' as usually understood by Christians; it does not mean just going on living for ever and ever, least of all the 'pie in the sky' variety of the Christian heaven. It means conquering death by escaping into a form of existence which death cannot attack. The idea is not unfamiliar to Christianity, for Christ himself says that Satan can slay the body, but he cannot slay the soul, but the Yogin would understand this saying in a different way. For him everything that is conditioned by space and time is subject to birth and death; but what has its being outside space and time cannot be subject to the power of death. His technique is designed to enable man to realize his own true being which inhabits a world, if such we can call it, where neither space nor time have any meaning; and where there is no time, of course, there can be no death.

The ultimate aim of all the myriad forms of Hinduism is described by the word *moksha* which is best translated as 'liberation', and by 'liberation' is meant liberation from mortal life as we understand it here and now. Indian religion is through and through mystical, and until quite recently it has attached very little importance to this world: it stands poles apart from the Judaic idea of a personal God leading his people through history towards a historical consummation at the end of time. For the Indian, history has no importance whatever.

Historically, however, the Yoga technique was based on a philosophy that was basically atheist, the so-called *Sāmkhya*. According to this philosophy, reality was two, not one. There were two orders of existence, two eternities. There was the eternity of time without beginning and without end on the one hand, and there was the eternity of timeless and spaceless substances on the other. Timeless being was, however, not an unfractionable Absolute as in the rival philosophy of the Vedānta, it consisted of an infinity of pure essences or souls which, in a manner that is never explained, become enmeshed in this world of space and time. There they are imprisoned, and the goal of man's religious striving must be to escape once and for all from matter and return to his true timeless existence where he is isolated from all that is not his own eternity for ever and ever. To show how completely different is this Indian scheme of things from anything we are accustomed to call religion in the West, it should be mentioned that in the classical Yoga system, the existence of a God who controls the universe is admitted, and up to a point he is a God of grace, for he can and will help souls still in the bondage of matter back to their eternal home; but that is all, for once the soul is released not only is it liberated from time, space, and matter, it has no contact with any other spiritual substance and therefore no contact with God. This, then, is a type of mysticism that is quite foreign to the Christian variety, for in Christian mysticism the ultimate goal is regarded as being union with God: it is usually spoken of in erotic terms, for according to St John God is love. Such terminology would be unthinkable to the *Sāmkhya*-Yoga: its aim is not union with anything at all, it is *dis*-union from all that is not man's own eternal self.

Buddhism broke from the Brahmanical orthodoxy because the Buddhists did not recognize the authority of the Veda as a sacred book, and because they regarded the whole of official Brahmanism, with its interminable sacrifices, as so much mumbo-jumbo. Early Buddhism was consciously atheistical, that is to say, while it was perfectly prepared to admit the existence of the Brahmanical gods

as inhabiting another and no doubt a better world, it was not prepared to bow down and worship them, for the gods themselves were subject to space and time and were bound—at the end of millions of years, maybe—themselves to die and be reborn again. As to whether there was a supreme God, creator of heaven and earth, the Buddha was prepared to keep an open mind. Whether there were many gods or only one or none at all was, for him, simply irrelevant: it was not part of the religious life.

What then for the Buddha was the religious life? Religion, for him, had only one purpose, and that was to enable man to make good his own deliverance from this world of space and time. Nothing else mattered. The source of the human malaise, the Buddha considered, was impermanence. Like all Indians of his time he accepted, not as an article of faith but as a simple fact of existence, the doctrine of transmigration. Our existence stretches back to all pre-eternity and will stretch forward to an eternity without end of more or less miserable lives, sometimes in human form, much more often not, unless the Gordian knot is at some point deliberately cut, and we quietly drop out of space and time, never to be heard of again. This must be the aim of all our striving—to pass away utterly from all our purely human occupations into the timeless peace of *nirvāna*. To achieve this state is alone important and everything not connected with it is irrelevant. More irrelevant than most things is to believe that there is a God or gods who are supposed to be able to help you to achieve your passage to *nirvāna*, for the salvation of every man is in his own hands. 'Work out your salvation with diligence', are traditionally the last words the Buddha addressed to his disciples on earth. All the Buddha claimed to be able to do was to point the one sure way that would ultimately bring man to his true goal, which is *nirvāna*, but each individual had to apply the Buddhist precepts for himself. Belief in God was, if anything, a hindrance rather than a help.

On the subject of what *nirvāna* was the Buddha was purposely vague. It is the 'unborn, not become, not made, not compounded', the 'stopping of becoming', the 'destruction of old age and death'; above all it is the 'immortal or deathless', a state beyond time and space in which death can have no possible meaning.

Now, to experience timeless immortality is considered by some to be the essence of all mystical experience; and for the Buddha it was certainly the only experience that was supremely worthwhile. Christian mysticism, however, has rarely spoken in these terms, but in terms of an overwhelming mutual love between God and the soul: and I have heard Buddhists argue that this is simply to express

in Christian terms an experience which is of its nature ineffable. Christians speak in this way because for them God *is* love as he is also the Eternal; the taste of eternity, therefore, is interpreted as direct experience of the one Eternal who, for Christians, is God. But, when all is said and done, according to the Buddhists, the experience must be the same, and any rationalization of it must be more or less false. We shall be returning to the validity or otherwise of this argument later.

Indian religion, and particularly Buddhism, represents one type of religion—the mystical, the type of religion that seeks the kingdom of God within you. The opposite type is represented above all by Israel and Islam. The contrast between the two types of religion was great enough to make the partition of the sub-continent of India almost inevitable—for Islam is everything that Hinduism is not, and conversely Hinduism is everything that Islam is not. The two seem mutually incompatible.

Now when we turn from India to the Middle East, a very different picture meets our eyes. For the Jews of the Old Testament God was an ever present reality. God alone is the Eternal, but he is the Eternal manifesting himself in history, and his relationship to man is that of a Lord to his servant, and man's correct attitude to God is 'I hear and I obey'. Mysticism is not only wholly foreign to the Old Testament: as understood in India it is foreign even to the so-called Jewish mysticism of the Middle Ages, for the Jewish mystics, though sometimes ready to admit that communion with God is possible, are very reluctant indeed to speak of union; and the Buddhist conception of nirvāna would seem not only incomprehensible to an orthodox Jew, but also perhaps blasphemous. As a Neo-Calvinist scholar has put it, 'It is to repeat the Fall', it is the original sin recorded in the second chapter of Genesis, to try to be 'like gods', to seek to be immortal in total independence of God. The Old Testament Jews were acutely conscious of the presence of God as an objective fact: he taught them, rewarded, and punished them here in this life, and because he was so real to them as the controller of their destiny and their guide both in their individual lives and, on a larger canvas, in the history of their nation, they never gave any thought to the immortality of their own souls. For them this was as irrelevant as was the existence of God to the early Buddhists. Moreover, when they did finally come to the idea of the immortality of the soul it was through their contact with the Zoroastrians in the Babylonian captivity.

Though their conceptions of God as omnipotent, omniscient Lord, who creates the universe out of nothing and communicates

with man through prophets, were very similar, the Jews and Zoroastrians differed in one important respect. God's revelation to the Jews is a revelation to a nation, a gradual revelation to a historical community who regarded themselves as God's chosen people. In Zoroastrianism revelation is to one prophet only, and the content of the revelation is therefore very much concerned with the individual and his destiny. So it was the prophet Zoroaster who first proclaimed a life after death, and not only did he claim this, he affirmed that at death the soul of each individual soul would be called to judgment at the Bridge of the Requiter, there to receive his lot of weal or woe in accordance with his good or bad deeds on earth.

We have seen that in the *Sāmkhya* philosophy in India reality is regarded as being dual: there is a material world which is governed by change, and there is a spiritual world which is changeless. So too with man: he is not a single being; he is an uneasy mixture of two diametrically opposed elements—soul and body. The soul is immortal because it cannot change since it has its being outside time, but the body is mortal; it is subject to birth and death, and then re-birth and re-death for ever and ever. By his body man belongs to the animals, by his soul he is pure spirit, what we would call an angel. The combination of these two elements in one organism is regarded as being a disaster for the angelic half of man, and it can have no goal but to escape from the animality of the body. And this escape must be radical, for it means an escape not only from the body but also from the mind since, according to the *Sāmkhya*, mind has a material origin quite as much as body.

In the West very similar views were held by Plato and the Gnostics, but this had originally been no part of Jewish thinking nor was it accepted by the prophet Zoroaster. For both the Jews and Zoroaster man was a single unfracturable being, and the union of body and soul was essential to his very nature. Thus the idea of the survival of the soul after the death of the body entered very late into the Jewish way of thinking and was almost certainly derived from Zoroastrianism. Zoroaster, however, though he accepted the Jewish view of man, nevertheless believed in the survival of the soul, but he did not believe that this was its final destiny. God, indeed, would judge the soul at death, and the soul would go on to either heaven or hell in accordance with the kind of life it had led on earth, but that was not the end of the story. At the end of time there would be a final conflagration in which all evil would be destroyed and all things made new. There would be a new heaven and a new earth, the bodies of all men would be

resurrected, and the whole human race would enter into life eternal in body and in soul to live forever in eternal bliss.

Thus it will be seen that between Judaism and Zoroastrianism on the one hand and the Indian religions on the other there is the sharpest possible difference of opinion on what constitutes man's good. For the Indians 'liberation' means deliverance from matter and time; for the Jews and Zoroastrians it means deliverance from evil: and for them, evil is most certainly not, as it is for the Indians, identical with matter or with life on this earth.

So it will be seen that there is an absolute gulf fixed between the two great religious traditions: and the reason that this is so is that they are rarely talking about the same thing. For the Jews the one vital fact of life is the Lord God and man's true relation to him; the fate of the individual soul is not thought to be of great consequence in this context because the soul in any case is only one aspect of the whole man, and a man ceases to be a man once soul and body part company. For the Indians the only good worth striving for is the realization here and now of the deathlessness and timelessness of one's own individual soul; whether there is one god or many or none at all is not felt to be important, and what happens to the body and the mind which is dependent on it cannot be of the slightest consequence to the soul.

Basically then there is no point of agreement between the Jewish (and Muhammadan and Zoroastrian) point of view and the Indian. The situation, however, is not quite as hopeless as this rather stark confrontation would suggest. For Indian religion did not stand still.

So far we have laid all our emphasis on the Sāmkhya-Yoga and Buddhist aspects of Indian religion, but there were other developments. We have seen that the sages of the Upanishads were looking not only for the immortal and timeless soul in man but also for the immortal and timeless ground of the whole universe: either through Yoga techniques or quite spontaneously they found the first, and this they then proceeded to identify with the second. *Because* they had been able to realize the eternity of their own souls, they then concluded that this eternal within them must be the same as the changeless Eternal One which they were convinced was the source and origin of all things. Thus because they had *experienced* the soul as eternal, they concluded that it must be *the* Eternal: they concluded that the soul is God, the changeless essence that gives rise to all this world of change. They thus identified what is a purely psychological condition with a metaphysical construction; or, to put it another way, they identified a state of mind in themselves in

which time had been transcended with the Great Being that transcends all things including time. And from this again they concluded that all things in essence are one, and that thus God is All, and since the soul is also identical with God, the soul is also All. So did the pantheistical trend which is so strong in Hinduism begin.

This form of Hindu pantheism is usually known by the name of Vedānta, which is still the predominant philosophy of India. In the last analysis, however, it appears to rest on a confusion of a purely psychological experience with a metaphysical system which really has nothing to do with it. Neither the Buddhists nor the Sāṃkhya-Yogins drew any such conclusion: the Buddhists drew no metaphysical conclusions at all. According to the Sāṃkhya-Yogins, however, all that you could say positively about the experience was that on the achievement of 'liberation' you were conscious only of having passed out of space and time into a condition of absolute peace in total isolation from all things both material *and spiritual*: you were eternally alone in and with your own immortal soul: there is no suggestion of union or fusion with anything else whatever. There can, I think, be no doubt that, as far as the actual experience goes, the 'isolation' of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga is identical with the realization of oneself as the unqualified One of the Vedānta: the Vedānta merely gives the experience a metaphysical interpretation which the psychological facts hardly warrant.

It need hardly be said that the Vedānta does nothing to bridge the gap between the Indian and the Hebraic points of view: on the contrary it widens it, for whereas Buddhism is totally unconcerned with God, the Vedānta re-introduces the idea of God, but not as the personal Lord of the universe but as the impersonal ground of the universe with which the soul is identical. In the religion of the Old Testament there is an unbridgeable gulf between the Creator and the creature, and the creature must approach its Creator in fear and trembling, whereas in the Vedānta creature and creator are one. Such a view is, for a Jew or a Muslim, sheer blasphemy.

The Vedānta, however, is only one aspect of Hinduism and, as far as popular religion is concerned, not the most important. For while these esoteric theories were being evolved, popular religion was developing on very different lines. As we have seen, the old gods gradually lost their importance, and in Buddhism nothing was put in their place. But in popular Hinduism two gods gradually emerged as the one true God for their devotees: these were Siva and Vishnu, personal gods who were, for their worshippers, the supreme source of the universe, accessible to man and willing to help him. Of the two, Vishnu is the more interesting from the

Christian point of view, for he is a god who becomes incarnate in this world 'for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for the establishment of the religious law'.

The incarnation of Vishnu as Krishna, the charioteer of the mythical hero Arjuna, is the subject of the last and greatest of the Hindu sacred writings, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; and the main message of the *Gītā* seems to be this. The older doctrine of the identity of the human soul with *brahman* is accepted, but the word *brahman* seems to be used in a different sense. In the passages in which the soul is said to become Brahman, *brahman* seems to mean little more than a timeless state of existence. Moreover, Krishna, as the incarnation of Vishnu, claims to be higher than Brahman, he is the personal God beyond the Absolute, and must be worshipped as such. Moreover, worship and mystical experience are not incompatible, as they must be in the Vedānta system, for if you *are* God, there can plainly be no point in worshipping yourself: indeed, according to the classical Vedānta, once you have achieved liberation, you must cease to observe all religious rites because they are now pointless. The theology of the *Gītā* changes all this: to realize oneself as Brahman means no more than to realize the eternity of one's soul, to realize that because it has its being outside time it cannot die. This realization can only be achieved by giving up all the things of this world, by detaching oneself wholly from all that is not eternal: only so can liberation be won. But once it is won, this is not the end: on the contrary, this represents only the initial stage of purification by which the soul is freed from all the dross of this world and is thereby enabled to enter into communion with *the Eternal par excellence* because it is now sufficiently like him to make such communion possible. Man's goal is no longer the total isolation of his own eternal essence, it is the active participation of that essence in the love of God who is other than he and the only true object of worship. How the realization of the eternity of the soul which, before the *Gītā*, had been the almost exclusive concern of Indian religion, is to be brought into relation with the loving worship of a personal God, is brought out in the last chapter of the *Gītā*:

'By giving up self', the *Gītā* says, 'force, pride, lust, anger, and acquisitiveness, with no thought of "mine"', at peace, so is a man fitted to realize his eternal essence (to realize himself as *brahman*). Become eternal, his soul all stilled, he grieves not, nor does he desire. Feeling equanimity towards all creatures, he receives the highest love of me. By his loving devotion he comes to know me, how great I am and who. Then, once he has known me as I am, he forthwith comes to me. . . .

'Think on me, worship me, sacrifice to me, pay me homage: so shalt thou come to me. I promise thee truly, for I love thee well. Give up all things of the law, turn to me only as thy refuge. I will deliver thee from all evil. Have no care.'

So does Krishna, the Incarnate God, summon his devotee to share in his life. This is no longer an arid isolation of the soul within itself, nor is it to delude oneself that one is either God or the 'All', it is an invitation first to realize yourself as you really are, that is, eternal and in that respect *like* God, and having become like God, to love him who is your eternal exemplar and to enter into him.

Thus the Bhagavad-Gītā completely changed the whole orientation of philosophical Hinduism. Much the same was to happen to Buddhism. The Buddha, of course, had made no claims to deity because he had no belief in God: he had merely claimed to be the 'Supremely Enlightened One'. Yet only a few centuries after his death his later disciples had transformed him into a triune God, the source and origin of the universe who yet became incarnate in the sixth century B.C., much as Vishnu had done in Hindu legend, 'for the establishment of the religious law'.

This, however, was not the most important transformation of the original doctrine that the later Mahāyāna brought with it. Despite the ethics of total unselfishness that the earlier forms of Buddhists had taught, the Mahāyānists realized that there was, in fact, something inherently selfish in the earlier ascetic ideal. The goal of every man was his own salvation, his own escape into nirvāna, not his neighbour's, and this, the Mahāyānists thought, was to set at naught the Master's compassion. So in place of the earlier ideal they set that of the Bodhisattvas, those saintly beings who postponed their own nirvāna in order to enable their fellow men to enter it before them: they 'radiate great friendliness and compassion over all beings, and give their attention to them, thinking: "I shall become their saviour, I shall release them from their sufferings".' Or more fully the new faith is expressed in the following words:

'However innumerable beings are, I vow to save them. However inexhaustible the passions are, I vow to extinguish them. However innumerable the *dharma*s are, I vow to master them. However incomparable the Buddha-truth is, I vow to attain it.'

So does the Bodhisattva gladly accept the task of taking upon himself the suffering of the whole world in order that his fellow-men may enter the peace of nirvāna; and it seems strange that once the ideal of the Bodhisattva had been created, the Mahāyāna Buddhists should not have thought that union and communion with

such a being was a more worthwhile goal than the featureless and empty peace of nirvāna.

Yet both the Hindu God Vishnu in his incarnation as Krishna and the Bodhisattva ideal of the Mahāyāna Buddhists prepare the way for the Incarnation of God in Christ. For in Christ the good news brought by Krishna that God loves man and the more tragic self-sacrifice of the Bodhisattvas meet. Thus in the historical person of Christ the hopes of Indian religion which always expresses itself in myth are fulfilled. Christ can be regarded as much as the historical Bodhisattva as the historical Messiah.

For Christianity, rooted as it is in Judaism, is and remains an historical religion. The world process is not conceived of, as it is in India, as being cyclical, it is not an endlessly repeated process of emanation and re-absorption into the Deity: it has a starting point, a middle, and an end. The starting point is the creation of man and his Fall, and the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is not comprehensible at all except against the background of the Fall: and it is important to know just what we mean by the Fall. According to Catholic doctrine the Fall was the result of the disobedience of Adam, who may be taken as representing the whole human race in the legend; and by disobeying God Man asserts his will to live independently of God, he denies his creatureliness and denies that he has need of God. The result of this rebellion not only wrecked the harmony that had previously existed between man and God, it also wrecked the harmony of man's own being. Body and soul were henceforth to be at war, and physical death is therefore seen as being the direct result of original sin: for God is the source of all life, and once man has declared his independence of God, he cuts himself off from the source of his own life. But, according to the legendary account in Genesis, the soul of man is of the breath of God and to that extent divine. The soul, then, cannot die, and must continue to live on after the death of the body: but this does not mean that it thereby returns to God; it does not, because it has rejected God. What then can it do?

Fallen man, separated as he now is from God, looks at himself, and sees that there is something seriously wrong with him: he is not a united whole, he is half immortal and half mortal, half angel and half beast. There is thus no cure for him except to realize himself as wholly angel: he must slay the beast. This is what all mysticism tries to do, and it is the secret of the Buddha's Enlightenment. At his Enlightenment the Buddha realized that he had conquered death, he had freed forever his immortal part from his mortal frame; and this, he thought, must be man's ultimate good; and given the

human condition as he actually found it, he was right. Man, as he now exists, is an unnatural amalgam of an immortal soul and a mortal body, and the highest good he can achieve by his own efforts is to shake off that part of him which is mortal: this the Buddha and other Indian sages did, but the Buddha did not obscure the nature of this liberation with unwarrantable metaphysical claims; he did not claim that the timeless being he enjoyed was the totality of all divine life as the Vedāntins did. He merely confirmed by his own experience what the prophet Zoroaster claimed to know by divine revelation, namely, that man's soul is immortal and timeless, and therefore indestructible. He experienced what Christian doctrine was later to assert, that the soul is as certainly immortal as the body is mortal.

Indian religion takes man as it finds him, a duality: and for this duality there can be no salvation except the final disjunction of the immortal half from the mortal one. Neither Judaism nor Zoroastrianism, however, was prepared to accept this duality as final. The soul and the body, they felt, were mutually independent, the body being the means by which the soul expressed itself. Immortal life could never be complete until the body came to share in it: so, Zoroaster maintained, God would create a new heaven and a new earth in which men would enjoy eternal beatitude in body as well as in soul. The same idea is graphically expressed by St Paul in the Epistle to the Romans: 'For we know', he says, 'that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

Thus, seen against the background of both Indian religion and of the message of Zoroaster, the purpose of Christ's Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection becomes a little more clear. God, by becoming man, confirms the Judaeo-Zoroastrian view that the body has a dignity of its own, and by dying and rising from the dead as man he demonstrates that man's ultimate destiny is immortality in body and in soul. The final climax of the Incarnation, however, is not the Resurrection but the Ascension; and this represents the final healing of the breach between man and God: man is taken up into heaven 'and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty'. In other words the link between man and God, broken by original sin, is restored, and it is possible for the old love-affair between the two to be resumed. Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension, however, is only the 'firstfruits', the certain promise that at the end of time all men will rise from the dead. Seen against the background

of Indian religion, however, Christ's resurrection and ascension have another significance. In Biblical terminology the crucifixion represents the slaying of the 'old Adam' and the resurrection represents the birth of the 'new Adam', in Indian terminology it is the destruction of the lower soul and the realization of the timeless, immortal soul; but at the same time it is more than this, for as the Mahāyān Buddhists realized, the realization of one's own immortality is not enough, there is still a remnant of selfishness even in nirvāna, and this too must be crucified: only then, as the Bhagavad-Gītā teaches, can the grace of God flow in. The isolation of the immortal soul is indeed the furthest point man can reach by his own unaided efforts; he cannot proceed beyond this without the grace of God, and this further leap into the divine is enacted in the Ascension of Jesus Christ, the Man-God to the Father. Thus salvation, for the Christian, does not mean 'isolation' within an immortal essence as it does for the Sāmkhya-Yogin, but a close union and communion with God in a mutual outpouring of love, and not only with God, but with all other souls. This is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.

Thus it would seem that all the highest insights of the more ancient religions meet in Christianity. By dying for his friends Christ demonstrates the total quality of God's love for man as foreshadowed in the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Bodhisattva doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism; by ascending to the Father he shows that the destiny of the human soul, now that the rift between God and man has been healed, is no longer to be sought in isolation but in loving communion with God; and by the whole drama of the Incarnation and Resurrection he confirms the prophecy of Zoroaster, that, in the last days, man will be resurrected in body as well as in soul, and that he will live, as it was God's intention that he should, a harmonious whole within the greater whole of the totality of God's universe, communing for ever with his Maker, God.