

The Guru

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The Guru

He stood in the dusty street of the village. Behind Him rose the flat hills. Before Him lay the still waters of a small inland lake. Around Him was gathered an excited crowd.

He seemed in some ways like the ordinary people around Him. But how extraordinary were His words! He was speaking to the crowd, and in words, which no one could mistake. He said:

“I have come down from heaven to do the will of him who sent me, but not to do my own will.”¹

And the people wondered and some of them murmured. They thought, “Don’t we know this man’s village, his father and mother? How can he say he has come down from heaven?”

Some time afterwards the Guru went up to the chief city of that area which nestled among the low mountains of the south. He was teaching in the court of the temple there, and to the surprise of many of His hearers, He firmly and plainly stated:

“My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God, or whether I speak on my own authority.”²

Some of the people there said to Him, “You have a demon.”

Later in that same city His enemies (who claimed to be God’s people” surrounded Him, spitting out their hatred. He said to them:

“If God were your Father you would love me, for I have come here from God. I did not come on my own, but he sent me.”³

When that dispute was over, they snatched up stones

to throw at Him, but he escaped out of their hands. After some time, though, they managed to seize Him and put Him to death as a blasphemer.

However, that was not the end of the story. For the country where He spoke these words, and lived and taught and died, was Israel. The tie was nearly 2000 years ago. And the person is famous in this country, and throughout the world, as a great Guru. His name, of course, is Jesus Christ.

It is obvious that if the above things He said are true, he is a mighty prophet and teacher of mankind, and we should all listen to Him earnestly and carefully. But if we are sensible people can we believe His words? Are there good reasons why we should listen to Him? The answer to this is, certainly. We shall see some of these reasons as we go on. Jesus did not encourage blind faith, but gave solid evidence for what He taught. He really did come from God, as he said, and His teachings have great significance for the whole human race – yes, even for us who live in this modern scientific age. So in this little book we shall see what He had to say about God and man and the way to God and other matters of great importance.

Great Promises

Jesus made other amazing statements about Himself and great promises to the people.

For example, He reveals that he can give us a deep purpose in life and real satisfaction in living, that he can give us true rest of heart and mind.

He speak of joy that will endure, and peace that does not pass away.

He promises release from the fear and power of death, and eternal life with God, forever removed from sorrow, suffering, decay, and destruction.

He tells us He can liberate us from all bondage, whether of fear, ignorance, or evil, if we will put His Word into practice. Liberation or salvation is not some far-off event that

is attained only by a very few who work hard at it. His promise of liberation is for all who receive it and it is for now.

He declares that He can give us a new heart and nature, and fit us to live in God's presence.

He shows that we can really know God and be brought into perfect harmony with God.

From the distant past even to this present hour the people of India have known a multitude of gurus. They have heard of the necessity of a guru for spiritual enlightenment. They have admired those gurus who seemed to be genuine, and meditated on their teachings.

A Mysterious Universe

We live in a mysterious universe. There are many things, important things, we do not at all understand. If we are honest we will admit that by nature we know very little about either ourselves or God.

Material things can be seen with our physical eyes, handled with our hands, examined through telescopes and microscopes. Even so, they are great mysteries about them, and we see the necessity of teachers who can instruct us in the various sciences, and we study their books.

But the subtler things of the spirit no physical eye can see and no hand can handle. Not telescope, no microscope reveals God. No textbook of science instructs us about things in the spiritual world or shows us the way to God. To learn these things we need a different kind of teacher.

Ideal Guru

In this book we present some of the words of one who has been called an ideal guru. He had all the qualities most admired in spiritual teachers.

Jesus was full of compassion and took upon Himself the responsibility of bringing His disciples into harmony with God. He evidently knew God and the way to bring others

to God. He was a true Mediator, bringing God and man together.

He was completely non-violent. Never once did He injure anyone. On the contrary, He was devoted to the well being of others and his whole life was spent for their good.

He could explain the scriptures and teach, not by word only (important as this is). But by life, by His daily acts, by His holy, loving character.

He was gentle and humble in heart utterly without arrogance.

He was devoid of the love of fame or the desire for self-gain. His whole behavior was pure and good.

Truly His was a beautiful life; a life which flowed with love for God and man; a life of purity, renunciation, unselfishness and sacrifice.

His Brief Life

He was born in the village of Bethlehem, a few miles south of Jerusalem, but grew to manhood in Nazareth, in the hills of Galilee. He was poor and labored with His own hands to earn a living. He never married. Little is known of those quiet early years, but we are told that He 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.'⁴

At the age of 30 He left His home and became a traveling teacher in the villages, towns, and cities of His little country. It seems that He owned no property, for He said of Himself. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay His head."⁵ He rarely crossed the borders of Israel, for He knew that the purpose of His life would be fulfilled there.

In a short time He became famous throughout the land, and multitudes came to hear His words and to see the mighty works which He did.

The religious leaders of what day were not pleased. They thought they saw in Him a threat to their own position. Also they were filled with envy. So they had Him cru-

cified. Crucifixion was one of the most barbaric methods of execution ever devised. The sufferer had his feet and outstretched arms nailed to a wooden cross. The cross was then raised in the air and planted in the ground, and the one being punished died a lingering and painful death. And so the Guru died at the young age of about thirty-three.

Before He died he said He would rise from the dead, and after His death His disciples became sure that he had risen. They reported seeing Him a number of times, until, after forty days, he disappeared from their view.

Such, in brief, is His story.

He said He came down from heaven, that God had sent Him. Then what was the meaning of His short life and His death on the cross? Why did he have to die like that? Could not God who sent Him also protect Him from His enemies? What meaning does His teaching, His life and death, have for us today? Jesus Himself gave us the answers to these questions, and His are the answers we shall look at in this book.

The only record of any fullness we have of His life is found in the Bible, particularly in the four Gospels which begin the New Testament.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all lived at the same time as Jesus. Matthew and John were among His twelve closest disciples. Mark and Luke knew the disciples and had every opportunity to investigate and know the truth. They all knew the facts of Christ's life. They knew what He said and did, and they wrote it down for our understanding.

We should be very glad that we have this record. After all, we can't study the life and teaching of anyone unless we know what he did and said. And if we want to know what kind of life Jesus really lived and what He taught, the only way is to examine the history that is given to us. There are good reasons to believe that the record we have in the Gospels is reliable and gives us a true account of

His deeds and words. This, too, we shall see in due course.

So in the book we shall look at words that fell from the lips of Jesus, and those things He taught His disciples. Quotations from other parts of the Bible are also included, for Jesus taught that the whole is the World of God.

Let us now turn our attention directly to the teachings of the great guru Jesus Christ.

Note : Many quotations from the Gospels and other parts of the Bible are used throughout this book. The references are given at the end of each chapter for those who may wish to look them up.

Reference in this chapter :

- 1 John 6:38
- 2 John 7:16,17
- 3 John 8:42
- 4 Luke 2:52
- 5 Matt 8:20.

2 The Guru Speaks of God

What is God like?

This is the question of the ages. Throughout the history of mankind people in every land have felt this questions in their hearts. Simple children have asked it. Brilliant philosophers have speculated about it. Men of all types have recognized something of the importance of it. But can the question be answered?

If Jesus came from God, as He said, we might expect that He would have something very significant and revealing to say about Him. So let us ask it again, this ancient question – what is the Most High God like? Is it possible to know Him? Can the Supreme Being be described in any way? And asking it, let us look expectantly at the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Once the Guru was sitting by a well and talking to a person who knew very little of God and tried to live without Him. Suddenly the Guru made a clear statement about the Supreme Being that reveals a great deal. Here are His words: "The hour is coming, and has already come, when the true, for the Father seeks such people to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."¹

We will begin with these words and then look at some others also that set forth Christ's teaching about the Divine nature.

First, God exists.

There is no question at all about this. If Jesus is right then all about this. If Jesus is right then all atheism is dead wrong. And I must say we have more reason to believe Jesus than to believe any atheist who ever lived, or all of them put together. Jesus came from God, was in constant communion with God, and did His mighty works in the power of God. He never argued about God's exist-

ence; He stated it and demonstrated it. He Himself is very great evidence, among other evidences, that God exists. The atheist can present no evidence at all the God does not exist. The statement "God does not exist" simply cannot be proved. And the person who insists there is no God is claiming to have knowledge he cannot possibly have. Man is a poor, finite being, standing on this speck called Earth which floats in a vast and unknown universe. His understanding about its present condition is extremely limited, and he can only guess at its origin. It is absurd for him to state dogmatically that it could all come into existence without God, and that God doesn't exist.

In any case, if Jesus is a teacher come from God, the matter is settled once for all. The fact is, He taught that there is a God, and that we can experience God, and that if we are honest and willing we can find out for ourselves. Here are His words. "If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God, or whether I speak on my own authority."² Again He said, "Seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."³ When there are valid experiments like these that may be made and a person will not make them, it is in vain for him to say there is no God. There is no doubt at all – God can be found by those who seek – Him in the right way.

Then let us see something further.

God is a Spirit

God has no material form. He is not like anything we can see with our physical eyes.

According to the Guru. God is a Spirit and not the world itself. And the world is not a part of God. The web a spider makes is from a part of itself. This is not true of God and the world. The world is matter, it is physical. But God is pure spirit, and God and the world are quite separate and distinct. God is not part material, part spiritual.

Of course, no one can imagine what spirit looks like. Who then, can picture in his mind this Supreme Being who is Spirit? Who can represent Him by the works of his hands?

Anything that men may make, whether it is a mental or physical image, to try to express His nature will fall far short of the reality. Actually it will give only a false idea of Him. Oh, the majesty, the infinite greatness of God! Who can declare it? Who can set it forth that we might see it? What is God's likeness? What can be compared to Him?

God the Father

Jesus said also that God is a Spirit who can be called "Father".

"Father" is the word Jesus most often used when speaking of God. And, of course, He had good reasons for this.

One thing at least becomes very clear from His use of this word - God is a living personal Being, not an impersonal force. God is "He", not "It". God knows, feels, and wills, as all persons can. Though He has no physical body at all, He who made the eye can see. He who made the ear can hear. He who make our minds can know. And He who made us persons is Himself personal.

When we say God is personal we must not think of limited, fallen, selfish personality that we see in men. God's knowledge is infinite, His will is almighty, and His heart is wider than the universe. In other words, God is pure, perfect, and unlimited personality.

We may also say that the Guru wished to show too that God is like an ideal father. That is, He is perfectly wise in His treatment of His won people, kind, strong, and faithful. He acts toward His people as a great and good father would act. He provides for them, teaches them, and guides them to the highest and best. There is compassion in God, and mercy and tenderness and unailing love.

Further, Jesus suggests by this word "Father" that God actually has children. Jesus repeatedly referred to God as His own father. He also taught His disciples to pray. "Our Father who is in Heaven."⁴ We will see more fully later on what his means. It is enough to say now that the children of God are born of His Spirit and they know Him. They can

obey and love and honor Him as a son might do an earthly father, only on a far higher level.

Yes, this is the truth the Guru gave us, truth to satisfy heart and mind and soul – behind the hard mystery of this world there is a Father's warm heart!

Christ said also that God is seeking Spirit.

He is a God who loves and seeks those who will love Him in return. He is here unseen on the earth, actively working so that people will turn to Him, trust Him, and give Him their hearts. He is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being. We have our existence because of Him, and He is all around us as the air is around us.

We need not rush here and there searching for Him, for there is no place on earth where He is not. We like to think we are the ones seeking for God. But how rarely does anyone seek Him! Many seek answers to the problems that plague them. Many seek for satisfaction of heart and peace of mind, and sometimes for religious experiences and ecstasies. Many seek for material benefits, for the gifts and blessings God can give. But few seek for the true God Himself.

Generally speaking, men are running away from God. This is proved by the fact that God has to seek for them. And when anyone does seek God, it is only because God has been seeking him first. He seeks us and stirs us up to seek Him and find Him.

God is Love

God does this because He is Love. God wants people to be holy and happy forever. He desires their highest good, and this can be attained only as they come to know Him and honor Him as God, and love and worship Him.

So God in His love is pursuing men, searching them out, and calling them into a right relationship with Himself.

Then, Go is a Spirit who must be worshiped in Spirit and

truth. That is, He must be worshiped according to His nature. No other way could be really pleasing to Him. True worship, the Guru says, is spiritual. It has nothing whatever to do with any physical, material object. If we would worship in spirit and truth we must recognize God's greatness and majesty. As one of the Guru's disciples said, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in temples made by men's hands, and He is not served by human hands, as though He needed anything. He Himself gives to all men life and breath and everything else."⁵

The supreme Being may be worshiped anywhere. For this, one country is no better than another; no city, hill, or river, is better than any other. God may be worshiped at any time, any place. But our worship must be in spirit.

Also it must be in truth. It must be in accordance with the truth He has revealed. And it must be living, real, and sincere, without pretense and self-will. "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."⁶

Let us go on to some further truth about God which Jesus taught. God is a holy and righteous Spirit.

Jesus, in the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, prayer and called God "Holy Father", and "Righteous Father".⁷

God is absolutely pure, just, and perfect in all His works and ways. It is impossible for Him to lie or deceive or to act un-righteously in anything or encourage any kind of wrong in any way. He is completely unspotted by evil of any description. He is splendidly, gloriously holy.

The holiness of God is emphasized everywhere in the Bible, more even than His love and compassion. God says over and over to His people. "You shall be holy, for I am holy."⁸ And He tells us plainly that He is against all evil and will destroy those who practice it. We can truly say that holiness is the supreme attribute of the Supreme Being. This holiness is not simply absence of evil, it is an active hatred of evil.

We can all see much that is evil in the world. But it is a monstrous misstate to think that evil is in God. He did not create it, and He does not approve it.

Someone has tried to explain evil by saying the evil in the world is in God as poison is in a snake. As poison is indeed in the snake but does not affect the snake or bother it in any way, so what we call evil is in God but does not affect Him at all. What we call poison in a snake is only a natural and useful secretion from the snake's point of view. So from God's point of view what men call evil is not necessarily evil at all.

This is a poor attempt to explain a difficult problem – the existence of evil in the world.

We don't know what God's point of view might be unless He tells us. And He has revealed that murder and cruelty, hypocrisy and adultery, and many other ways of men are evil, especially from His point of view.

It is quite impossible that evil should exist in God in any shape or form. "God is light and in him is no darkness at all."⁹ Anyone who understands anything about the holiness of God will see this. This is why Jesus insisted on the untainted character of God.

It is plain that all teaching that comes from a holy God will be utterly pure. It will promote the highest morality and justice and righteousness. Any teacher who is really sent by God into the world will be holy and will seek to make others holy. This will be one sure mark of all God's ways with men.

God is also the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe. Speaking of the human race Jesus said, "In the beginning, at the creation, God made them male and female."¹⁰ Here He was referring to the first chapter of the first book of The Bible. He taught that this book (and all other parts of the Bible) is the Word of God and absolutely trustworthy. The Bible begins with these words:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the

earth." This means that the universe is not eternal and it is not self-creating. It had a beginning and God made it out of nothing. The universe is not eternal, but it is physically real, and not a mere illusion. God Himself is the only eternal Reality, the only self-existing One.

God is absolutely free. He is free to create or destroy as He pleases. And He chose to bring this universe into existence by His almighty power.

So, according to Jesus, God is before the world, separate from the world, and far above it.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or before You had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God."¹¹

God is not only the Creator, He is also the Sustainer and Ruler of the world. Christ's famous Sermon on the Mount is full of the thought of God's rule and providence over the world. God sends sun and rain on the earth.¹² He sees how people give alms and pray and fast, and He gives reward where reward is due. He knows the needs of His children and answers their prayers.¹³ He feeds the birds or the air, and clothes the flowers or the field with beauty; and He care more for His own children than for birds and flowers.¹⁴

The Guru even said that not a sparrow falls to the ground without God, and that the hairs of our head are all numbered.¹⁵ In other words, God looks after even the smallest incidents - how much more the great and important.

God is the mighty King, the great Sovereign of all worlds. All things are beneath His glorious feet and He rules over all.

A Most Important Truth

Now we come to one of the most important truths Jesus taught about God. In fact, we may learn more about God's character from this truth than from anything else.

God is a Spirit who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the skies show the work of His hands. Day after day utters speech, and night after night displays knowledge."¹⁶

But there is a far greater revelation that God has given. The Supreme Being has not hidden Himself; He has come down and shown Himself to men in the person of His Son.

Jesus sometimes spoke words which show He was far more than a teacher or prophet.

Once in a prayer He said, "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory I had with you before the world was made."¹⁷ In other words, the Son of God was in existence before the universe was created.

At other times He said, "I and the Father are one"¹⁸, "He who sees me sees Him who sent me"¹⁹, "He who has seen me has seen the Father".²⁰

These words and others like them declare that though Jesus appeared as a man among men, He was not a mere man. He was saying that he is God. He was born on earth and had a real human nature. But He also shared the Divine nature before He came to earth. He lived in glory with the Father before the earth was made. He says that anyone who saw Him saw God.

I know that both before Jesus and afterwards there have been others who claimed to be God. Still, for anyone to say he himself is God is an enormous claim! So we should be sure that Jesus really meant this.

There are several facts that show us Jesus was claiming to be God, the Creator and Supreme Being. To set forth all the evidence would require a large book. We shall look at just three facts from His own life – His enemies understood Him to teach that He is God, and He let them put Him to death for it. His friends were sure He meant this, and He encouraged them to believe it. And He received worship from others.

His enemies knew He was claiming to be God. When he said "I and my Father are one", some of the Jews took up

stones to stone Him. Jesus asked them, "many good works I have showed you from my Father; for which of these works do you stone me?" They answered, "We do not stone you for a good work but for blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself God."²¹

When Jesus said God was His Father He was not speaking of His human birth on earth of the virgin Mary two thousand years ago. That had to do only with His human nature. He was speaking of a relationship that existed between Himself and God the Father before His birth on earth. He meant that He was the eternal Son of God. God was always the Father, Christ was always the Son. From all eternity they lived in perfect love and oneness.

Can God Have a Son?

We sometimes hear statements like this: "I don't believe Jesus is the Son of God because God doesn't marry and have children." But the person who speaks like this either doesn't understand the meaning of the Bible, or else is deliberately twisting the meaning. What, is the Almighty like a man that he needs a wife to have a Son? Cannot the almighty Spirit have an eternal Son who is also Spirit, quite from the human idea of birth?

Someone says, "We can't understand it!" It is true. But let us not deny a profound truth because we cannot understand it.

In another place we see again that Jesus' enemies knew that He was claiming to be God. "Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I also am working.' Therefore the Jews tried the more to kill Him, because He ... said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."²²

This is the reason they gave for killing Him at last. When the high priest of the Jews asked Him if He was the Son of God, Jesus said, "I am". And the high priest said to the others gathered there, "You have heard his blasphemy. What do you think?" And they all judged Him to be worthy of death.²³

So His enemies had no doubt of His meaning. And they knew the teachings of their religion that any mere man who claims to be God is committing the greatest of sins. They said that Jesus was guilty of this, and Jesus not only let them think so, he allowed them to out Him to death for it without any attempt to correct them.

Christ's friends also knew he claimed to be God incarnate. And Christ did not correct them either. On the contrary, He encouraged them to believe it.

Peter, one of the greatest of Christ's disciples, declared to Him – "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said that God had revealed this to him.²⁴

Thomas, another disciple, seeing Him after He rose from the dead worshiped Him saying, "My Lord and my God." The Guru did not rebuke Thomas for this. Quite the opposite. He said, "Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe."²⁵

John, in the opening verses of his Gospel, calls Jesus the 'Word', and says of Him: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made ... And the Word was made flesh and lived among us, and we saw His glory, that glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."²⁶ Here is the plainest declaration that Jesus was God before he came to earth and on earth was the incarnation of God. The meaning is exactly the same as we find some other verses of the Bible which speak of Christ.

The prophet said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His names shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Father of eternity, the Prince of Peace."²⁷

Paul, the great disciple of Jesus, wrote in clear and brief words, "Our great God and saviour Jesus Christ."²⁸

If the Guru had not been the incarnation of God, He

would not have taught His disciples to think that He was.

Moreover, Jesus showed in another way that He was conscious of His Deity. He received worship from others.

On one occasion a leper worshiped Him,²⁹ On another occasion a ruler worshiped Him.³⁰ Later a certain woman worshiped Him.³¹ And His own disciples worshiped Him. ³²

This may not seem remarkable to people in countries where there are many objects of worship. But we must remember that Jesus lived in Israel. And in that country there was only one proper object of worship – God the Creator. All other worship was absolutely forbidden. Jesus once made a statement that sets forth His teaching on the subject: “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”³³ And many times He upheld the Old Testament as the Word of God; and the Old Testament again and again teaches that men must not worship anything or anyone other than the true and living God.

Never in the Bible do we see any Guru, or prophet, or any godly person accepting worship. For them it was utterly unthinkable, and they would have shrunk from it in horror. But Jesus did not. On the contrary, He accepted worship of Himself as right. This is a sure indication that He knew He was the proper object of worship, that He is God.

So there is no question at all that Jesus claimed to be God in the fullest meaning of the word – that is, the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe. All else is created. He is uncreated and eternal. We are but men; Jesus is the God-man.

What is God Like?

This, very briefly, is what the Guru revealed about God. Certain things can be said of God which are true. The opposites of these things are false. We can put it in one long sentence: God is a holy, righteous, Father-like Spirit, the eternal and infinite Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe, who has revealed himself to mankind in Jesus

Christ and seeks lovingly for men that they might know Him and worship Him in spirit and truth. I don't believe there can be a higher view of God than this.

The New Testament makes three simple statements about God which are full of profound meaning.

God is light. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."³⁴ Not physical light, of course, but pure holiness, truth, and splendor.

God is love. "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."³⁶ Again, not physical love, but complete kindness, tenderness, compassion, and grace; love that seeks the highest good of the universe.

God is eternal life. "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding to know Him who is true. And we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."³⁶ Not the life of plants, animals, and men, but self-existing, conscious, infinite, creating, joyous life that has no beginning and no ending.

One of the simplest and most meaningful statements we can make about God's character is this: God has shown in Jesus Christ exactly what He is like. He is not the unknown God utterly withdrawn and indescribable. According to Christ (who came from God, who is God, and certainly knows therefore what God is like). We can say much more of Him than negative things ("Neti, neti" – not this, not that). We can say more about Him than that He is Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The great Creator of the universe, the Supreme Being beside whom there is no other, has come down. His feet have walked the dusty roads of earth and climbed its hills. His lungs have breathed its air. The Self-luminous One, the immortal, the Highest has revealed Himself in Christ – warm, loving, compassionate, gracious, just, and holy.

A Hindu Vedantin thinking of God the teacher, has a prayer, the meaning of which is as follows: "The Guru that I look for is God the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Ruler

of the universe. The teacher of my ideal is the revelation of God Himself. To such a teacher of my vision I bow down in reverence."

This Guru is Jesus Christ. He is the true Gurudev the infallible teacher, the revelation of God. With what joy we should receive him! With what carefulness and confidence we should examine His teaching!

So this is what the Guru teaches about the Supreme Being. He is a God whom we can know and love. He is a God worthy of our worship, our heart's full surrender and everything we have. But if we wish to profit from His teachings there are deep truths about ourselves also that we need to know. We will turn now to these.

References in this chapter:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 John 4:23,24 | |
| 2 John 7:17 | 20 John 14:9 |
| 3 Matthew 7:7 | 21 John 10:33 |
| 4 Matthew 6:9 | 22 John 5:17,18 |
| 5 Acts 17:24,25 | 23 Mark 14:60-64 |
| 6 Psalm 145: 18 | 24 Matthew 16:16 |
| 7 John 17:11,25 | 25 John 20:28 |
| 8 1 Peter 1:16 | 26 John 1:1-2,14 |
| 9 1 John 1:5 | 27 Isaiah 9:6 |
| 10 Mark 10:6 | 28 Titus 2:13 |
| 11 Psalm 90-: 2 | 29 Matthew 8:2 |
| 12 Matthew 5:45 | 30 Matthew 9:18 |
| 13 Matthew 6:2-18; 7:7-11 | 31 Matthew 15:25 |
| 14 Matthew 6:25-33 | 32 Luke 24:52 |
| 15 Matthew 10:29,30 | 33 Luke 4:8 |
| 16 Psalm 19:1,2 | 34 1 John 1:5 |
| 17 John 17:5 | 35 1 John 4:8 |
| 18 John 10:20 | 36 1 John 5:20 |
| 19 John 12:45 | |

3 The Guru Tells Us What We Are

What a mystery is man! We are mysteries to each other and to ourselves. Science has found out a great deal about us, especially about our physical nature. But still no one can fully answer the question, What is man? Of course many attempts have been made to answer it, for man cannot keep from speculating about himself, and some say man is a mere animal, and some say he is the highest expression of God, and some say almost anything in between these two opinions.

In this chapter we shall not look at what man says of himself, or what science has learned about our body or mind, but we shall see what Jesus Christ taught about the inner nature of man and his condition before God. Considering the greatness of this One who teaches, we should listen earnestly and carefully.

First, man is a created being. This means that there was a time when man did not exist and that if he was to come into existence he had to be made by God. Jesus said, "In the beginning, at the creation, God made them male and female."¹ We have the description of man's creation in the first chapter of the Bible. Here is the record which Jesus taught was the true account of man's beginning:

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; He created them male and female"; "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."²

Since we are creatures made by God it follows that we are not God ourselves, and not a part of God. The Supreme Being is the Creator; man is the created, infinitely below God. If the personal God is an ocean of love, we are not as drops of water, which merge with the ocean of love, we are not as drops of water which merge with the ocean.

We are more like fish in the ocean. The ocean can exist without the fish, but the fish cannot exist without the ocean. The ocean was there before the fish. The ocean is not the fish, and the fish are not the ocean. Each is distinct and different. God was perfect and complete without man. There would be no change in God's nature if man did not exist at all. But man could not exist at all without God.

Man's Greatness

But though man was a created being, vastly inferior to God, he was a very high kind of creature. For he was made in the "image of God". This means that in some important ways he was a picture in miniature of his great Creator. Man had a spiritual nature, as God is Spirit. He was a person as God is personal. He had mind. Affections, and will. That is, he was given the amazing gift of thought and understanding; he could experience the deepest desires and emotions; and he could greatly affect his own destiny by the power of choice.

In the beginning, his mind was filled with light and truth. His affections were set on God, desired to please Him in all things, and flowed with love, joy, and peace. And his will was completely in harmony with God's will.

We should understand also that man created for a very high purpose and destiny. This is evident, for a holy and loving God would not create man in His own image to make sport of him, or to appoint him carelessly to a vain and empty existence. He was not made (as someone said) to be like a bird that gathers a few sticks and mud, builds its nest, rears its young, and goes away. Man was appointed to rule over the earth. He was given a place of supreme honor and dignity as God's viceroy, the governor of the world. In the first chapter of the Bible, God said to our first parents:

"Be fruitful and increase in number. Fill the earth and subdue it. And rule over the fish of the sea. And over the birds of the air, and over everything that moves on the earth."³

Man was not created for unhappiness and misery, to grovel in the dust, full of disease and death. He was not created to spend his life in fear of other men, or wild beasts, or evil powers and circumstances. He was not created to be a victim, enslaved by his own desires and his own ignorance. Man was God's chosen representative to govern the world – noble, upright, and free.

In those earliest times, man knew God and enjoyed fellowship with God. There were no barriers at all between them, for sin had not entered the world, and there was nothing to cause God to hid His face. Man was both good and happy, and his relationship to God was one of love, trust, and obedience.

Fallen

This picture of what man was, tells us what men should still be.

But we need to learn another equally important truth that Jesus taught (if we don't know it already) – man is now a fallen creature. Something happened that changed man terribly. Here are the Guru's words to His own disciples:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them who ask Him?"⁴

Notice carefully the words 'being evil'. They were not spoken to the worst of men, but indeed to some of the best men who ever lived. The truth that Jesus wanted them (and us) to understand was that all men are sinners; in the light of God's holiness all men are evil.

This is not a new or strange idea. Here is well-known prayer that has been widely used by Hindus in this country for many centuries:

"I am a sinner by birth and by deeds. My soul is depraved by sin; I am conceived in sin. Lord, save me. Be merciful to me a sinner (papoham, papakarmanam, papatham, papasambhava, pahimam kripaya Deva,

sharanagata vatsala – tasmāt karuṇyab-havena rakṣa... rakṣh...).”

Jesus expressed the truth of man’s sinfulness in very solemn words:

“From within, out of the heart of men, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, thefts, murders, adulteries, coveting, wickedness, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.”⁵

According to this, evil is in the heart, in the innermost part of man. Evil actions come out of him because he is inwardly bad.

We must now look at this matter more closely, because so much the Guru taught is based on this fact. It may be a difficult truth for us to face, this truth that we are sinners. But without this truth we cannot really understand the rest of Christ’s teachings. Especially we cannot understand why He had to die. So let us look carefully at what follows – it is the way to peace with God, liberation, and eternal life. And as we read, let us remember that Christ taught was in love and for our eternal good.

Before we go any further we must answer a question that naturally arises. How is it that man, made in the image of God, perfect and sinless, became evil? The Bible gives a plain and satisfying answer to this. The story of what happened appears in chapters two and three of the first book of the Bible.

How Man Fell

God gave to our ancestors, the first man and woman He had made, all they needed to enjoy a full and happy life. But He allowed them to be tempted. God has a perfect right to allow His creatures to be put to the test if He chooses to, and He did choose to. He gave them a command and warned them that if they disobeyed Him, it would result in death. The command was that they should not eat the fruit of a certain tree. But the meaning would have

been the same if the command had been about something else. That meaning can be expressed in these words: "I am God you are man. It is your privilege and duty to love me supremely, trust me completely, and obey me gladly. If you separate yourselves from me by disobedience, you shall die."

Our first ancestors were tempted to turn from God and act independently; tempted to break the bonds of love, trust and obedience; tempted to set their will above God's will, which was the same as setting themselves above God. Or very simply, the test that came to them was this: would they do what God said, or not? Would they obey God, simply because He is God?

Because man had a mind he could consider the various possibilities, and because he had a will he could choose between them. And the sad fact is, man decided of his own free choice to disobey God's plain command. He decided to act independently, and set his will above God's. In other words, he committed the root of all sins – rebellion against the great Lord of the universe. It was doing what he pleased without considering God's pleasure. It was rejecting God as the King of his life and putting himself in God's place. This is the very essence of sin. The whole account of this is given in Genesis chapter 3.

Man's history was terribly changed at the moment. The first man and his wife became sinners. God had said that if man disobeyed he would die. Death means separation. Physical death means the separation of the spirit from the body. Spiritual death means the separation of man's spirit from God's favor, fellowship, and joy. Sin erects a wall that excludes God, and this is a living death. This is what happened to the first man and his wife. Their minds were no longer filled with light; darkness and wrong thinking took their place. Their wills were no longer in harmony with God's will; they were opposed. Their affections no longer flowed with love, joy and peace in God's presence; fear, sadness, and unrest took possession instead. The relationship of love, trust, and obedience was broken. Man became guilty and separated from God's fellowship.

“But,” I hear someone say, “What is all that to us? It happened a long time ago. We live in a new age of science, education, and civilization”.

Look around you. Corruption, dishonestly, unrighteousness, selfishness, injustice, hatred, violence, misery, and death are everywhere. Science, education, and civilization have not changed the heart of man, or made us good, or overcome sin and death. We have all kinds of evidence that what our first parents began to do, we have continued to do. What they became, we are. Very often, as we all know, men show themselves to be worse than savage beasts. And doubtless there would be much more of this than there is if there were not restraining forces at work. But when restraint is taken away and full opportunity to express himself exists, we see what a sinner man is.

Look above you. See the starry heavens that declare God's glory. Think of His greatness, splendor, holiness, and love. Can we think that the world is all that it should be? Do we really imagine that man is now as God originally created him? It is impossible.

Look within you. Do you not know something of your own heart? Is there not often a restlessness there, a burden on the spirit? Is there not a consciousness, at least at times, that all is not well, that things in your own life are not as they should be? If we can see wrong in others, are we vain enough to think there is no wrong in ourselves? By what standard can we claim that we are better by nature than our fellows? Only the proud, or those ignorant of themselves, can think so.

God's Word

Above all, look at God's word. God tells us in the references below exactly what we are. Let us humbly listen to Him.

“The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all gone astray, and they are all alike

corrupt. There is none that does good, no, not one."⁶ This is what the high and holy God sees when he looks at earth. Not one person on earth is free from evil; in His eyes there is none consistently good, basically good.

"There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins"; "The hearts of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead."⁷ Man is insane when it comes to sin.

"We have all become like an unclean thing, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags, and we fade like a leaf, and our sins, like the wind, take us away."⁸ Even our best works, the deeds we consider righteous, are stained with sin and appear filthy and ragged in God's sight.

"We lie down in our shame, and confusion covers us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day. And we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." ⁹ The real saints know themselves like this.

"My people are foolish. They do not me. They are stupid children and have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil, but they do not know how to do good."¹⁰ This is God speaking to His people.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?"¹¹ All are victims of self-deception.

This is summed up in one New Testament passage: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands, none who seeks after God... Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to them who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be guilty before God ... There is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of God's glory."¹²

This is the truth about man, about you and me, that Jesus the great Guru taught. This is what He meant when He said that even His own disciples were "evil". This is what God, who sees us inwardly and knows us altogether,

declares.

This is man's bad karma, inherited from his parents. Men by nature do not think rightly, or desire rightly, or choose rightly. All that we are has been affected by the fall of man – mind, desires, will, body, soul, and spirit. Man has become self-centered instead of God-centered. He may pray to and think to worship God or gods; but basically he wants God to live for him, not himself for God. He wants God to serve him and give him health, or prosperity, or happiness, or good wife and children, or peace, or satisfaction, or whatever he thinks desirable. Yes, and he can even be quite angry with God when he doesn't get what he wants, even though he is not loving and serving God. In one word, man is a sinner.

We call some men good, and certainly some men seem much better than others. But compared with God's perfect goodness and holiness, no man is good. All fall short of God's standards and he plainly tells us so.

I am not saying that all men commit equally obvious sins. Some cast off all restraint and roll in the mire of sin. Others are very religious sinners who lead respectable lives. Some commit the obvious sins off the flesh. Others try to cleanse their outer lives by some means or other, but remain unclean in their inner lives, Some indulge in adultery, robbery, and murder. Others are guilty of selfishness, self-admiration, self-promotion, self will, self-righteousness. They have the pride that makes them think they are better than others, and the unbelief that will not listen to God who tells them otherwise.

Sin can be shameless and roll in the gutter. But sin can be clever too, and pass itself off as morality and religion.

Not all are sinners in the same ways, but all are sinners in some ways. Sin is not something that is merely outward – it is something inward. It is ingrained in our very nature. It is not simply in what we do – it is in what we are.

I am aware that some people do not admit this. But if Jesus Christ is right, they are wrong. Sin has a way of

deceiving us and blinding us to its presence: "The heart is deceitful above all things". We are much more likely to discover the wrong in others than we are to find it in ourselves. The bible warns us "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."¹³ He who has no understanding of his sin does not have God at work at him.

The quotations from the Bible which we saw above were not written by especially bad men, but some of the greatest saints the world ever saw. They were truly enlightened ones. They knew God and in God's presence they learned themselves. And the more they knew God and more they saw a tendency of evil within, the more they understood how weak and corrupt man is by nature.

This is an essential part of true enlightenment. We must know our sinfulness and God's way of dealing with it and God's remedy for it. This is the way God leads us so that we might obtain peace, joy and liberation.

Jesus illustrated this truth by a parable.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God I thank you that I am not like other men robbers, dishonest, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give a tenth part of all I get'. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat this breasts, and said, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than he other. For everyone who exalts himself with be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."¹⁴

It is not the man who thinks well of himself who really knows God, or who is accepted by God. God accepts the person who knows himself to be sinful and craves God's mercy and forgiveness.

It is the truth that sets us free, and this is an important part of the truth. Sin is bondage. Liberation or salvation is being made free from the penalty and power of sin, and

eventually from its presence. But until the false views produced by sin are dispelled, and we recognize ourselves for what we are, we shall see nothing clearly and we shall not be set free.

The Results

Jesus not only taught that we are all sinners, He revealed in very strong language the results of sinning. He revealed them because they are true, and because He loves us. Love speaks the necessary truth even if it is unpleasant; and it is our wisdom to listen to Christ who speaks in love and declares things as they really are. Sin has terrible consequences and we should all know what these consequences are.

First, because of sin, men have lost the light of God and the knowledge of the truth. Sin has brought darkness and fear and confusion. Restlessness, depression, groping, disagreement, despair, and spiritual ignorance are everywhere. Men do not know themselves, or God, or the way to God, and they do not know how to get rid of their sin. In other words, they are in the dark about the most important things in life.

Also, because men are sinners they are opposed to God. They may not be aware of this, but it is true all the same.

Man's sinful nature and the way it behaves are revealed most clearly at the cross of Christ. Christ was the incarnation of God, holy, kind, loving. He went about doing good, and never harmed anyone. And how did the religious people of the day treat Him? We might imagine that they would gladly have welcomed this One from heaven and received His teachings with joy. Alas, it was quite different. They hated Him, opposed Him, and at last murdered Him in the most cruel manner. They professed to love and serve God but they hated and killed Him when He came as a man among them. Perfect goodness, perfect love was rejected and done to death by very religious men.

This is the illusion produced by sin! This is the deceptive power of evil! This is the fruit of mankind's fall away from

God. People can be very religious, can say and think they are God's servants, and yet be so opposed to the true God that they reject His Son!

This is what Jesus taught. He warned His disciples in words we do well to understand: "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you"; "They have seen and hated both me and my Father."¹⁵

The tragic truth is this: men, once made in the image of God, now in some ways more resemble the devil than they resemble God. And one way they show this is by rejecting Christ.

Then, because men are sinners they are lost, spiritually dead, and perishing.

We have seen what happened to the first man who sinned. It meant separation from God's joy, peace, and communion. This is always the result. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not made short so that it cannot save, nor His ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your evil deeds have caused a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you so that He does not hear."¹⁶

This is the punishment that sin deserves; it perfectly fits the crime. It is reaping exactly what one has sown. Sin is acting independently of God, separating oneself from God and His control to do what one pleases. The sinner who separates himself shall be separated; and if he is not somehow brought to God, he will be separated from Him forever. We shall all be judged at the last by God in accordance with our own choice being made here and now. In a real sense we shall get what we go in for. But it will be terrible indeed if we willfully go on in sin.

Jesus warned us again and again of the danger of God's judgment against our sin. God is love. This is a truth we like to repeat over and over. But God's love will never ignore justice and forsake holiness. He is love, but He hates sin and must punish it. To God sin is an exceedingly hateful thing and His anger burns against it.

"The anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth by their unrighteousness."¹⁷

God has an infinite love for goodness, truth, justice, and righteousness. So the opposite of these things calls forth His anger. If he were not angry at sin, if He did not punish it, He would not be God.

Christ had much to say about God's judgment on sin, and if we are wise we will listen to Him. He said of certain ones that they "shall go away into everlasting punishment."¹⁸ In another place He said, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."¹⁹ He also spoke of the "fire which shall never go out"²⁰, and of "weeping and gnashing of teeth."²¹

These things are at the end of the way of sinners because they are guilty and deserve punishment. And the just Judge of the universe must give the punishment men deserve. Men the world over agree that wrongdoing must be punished. It is written in our hearts. Among all nations there are laws and courts and judges and punishments for breaking laws. We have all sinned against God, we have done as we pleased, we have broken His laws. And a just God cannot and will not overlook all this, and pretend it never happened.

But There is Hope

I cannot close the chapter without saying something more hopeful. Man, though terribly fallen, is still the object of God's love. The Guru said:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."²²

We saw in the last chapter that Christ came and revealed the character of God. But this is far from being only reason why He came into the world. The Guru came to take away man's sin and liberate him fully.

Christ Came Seeking and Saving Man

He said of Himself, "The Sun of man has come to seek and save the lost."²³ The Son of man is a name He often called Himself. It shows His true identification with the human race. When God came into the world, He came seeking lost and fallen men; seeking them, not to destroy them, but to save them and bring them safely to God and heaven. This is the way one of Christ's disciples put it: "It is a trustworthy statement and deserves full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the chief of them."²⁴

Christ Came to Call Sinners

"I have come not to call the righteous but sinners," He said.²⁵ This was spoken to some religious leaders who thought themselves very good and criticized Jesus for associating with people they considered beneath them. Jesus is saying that He came especially for those who knew they were sinners. He came to call them to high privileges, and great changes, and full and eternal salvation – to call them to come back into God's loving presence.

In this way we see something of God's great love and concern for the human race. He does not desire man's ruin just the opposite. He wants us to have truth, and light, and salvation, and eternal life. This means that we can be changed, even though we are sinners by nature and practice. Our sin can be taken away, we can receive a new nature, we can be raised to a higher place in God than the first man lost by falling into sin. This is what brought the Son of God from heaven to earth.

But to accomplish all this He had to suffer and die. Yes, above all other reasons, this is the most important reason why he came. Let us now turn to the next chapter and see why this is so.

Reference in this Chapter :

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Mark 10:6 | 14 Luke 18:9-14 |
| 2 Genesis 1:27; 2:7 | 15 John 15:18,24 |
| 3 Genesis 1:28 | 16 Isaiah 59:1,2 |
| 4 Matthew 7:11 | 17 Romans 1:17 |
| 5 Mark 7:21 – 23 | 18 Matthew 25:46 |
| 6 Psalm 14:2,3 | 19 Matthew 10:28 |
| 7 Ecclesiastes 7:20; 9:3 | 20 Mark 9:43 |
| 8 Isaiah 64:6 | 21 Matthew 22:13 |
| 9 Jeremiah 3:25 | 22 John 3:16 |
| 10 Jeremiah 4:22 | 23 Luke 19:10 |
| 11 Jeremiah 17:9 | 24 1 Timothy 1:15 |
| 12 Romans 3:10-23 | 25 Matthew 9:13 |
| 13 1 John 1:8 | |

4 The Guru Tells Us Why He Died

The death of son of God! Here we surely move into a wonderful and mysterious realm. People sometimes ask, "if Christ is the son of God, the very incarnation of God, why did he have to suffer and die? Couldn't He have saved Himself from that?" None of us understands everything about his death, but the answer to this question is plain. As the incarnation of God no one could have had any power over Him, and he was not forced by others to suffer and die. The truth is, he came for the very purpose of suffering and dying.

Again the question comes – what possible reason could there be for this? The Guru Himself has given us the reason, and the Word of God has much to say about it. In this chapter we shall be occupied with this reason. But first of all, let us see how He died.

Jesus was hated by many of the religious leaders of His day. They were envious of Him. They were angry because He exposed their sin and hypocrisy. They loved their darkness rather than His light. So they determined to put out the light if they could.

At that time the people of Israel were under the rule of the Roman Empire, and did not have the authority to put people to death. So after hiring a traitor to betray Jesus, they laid hold on Him and brought Him to the Roman governor, whose name was Pontius Pilate.

This man saw that Jesus was completely innocent. But to please the Jews he turned Him over to them to be crucified. Soldiers took Him, put a crown of thorns on His head, mocked Him, spit in His face, and beat Him with a terrible whip. Then they lead Him away to be crucified. At the place of crucifixion they nailed Him to a cross. Lifting the cross in the air and planting it in the ground, they left Him to die in agony.

The death of Christ is recorded in all four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. One gives some details and another gives different or further details. Together they give us a full picture of this exceedingly significant and moving event.

Christ's last hours on the cross were like this:

"At twelve o'clock noon darkness covered the whole land and lasted until three in the afternoon. And at three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' This means, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'

"After this, Jesus, knowing that everything had been accomplished, said, 'I am thirsty'-in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. A jar full of wine vinegar was standing there. So they soaked a sponge in the vinegar, put it on a stick made from the hyssop plant, and held it up to His mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, 'It is finished!'

"Then Jesus uttered a loud cry, and said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit'. And having said this He died."¹

This is how Christ, the great Guru, suffered and gave His life. Now we must enquire into the meaning of it. With reverence and awe we must ask why it was so. And we must allow Him to speak for Himself as to the reason of His suffering and death.

Why He Died

Here, then, are His own words:

"The Son of man has come, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many people."²

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."³

Again He said (speaking of the blood He would shed on the cross), "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁴

So Jesus came for a purpose far greater than teaching important as that is. Teaching alone is not enough to liberate us. In simple words, the greater purpose which brought Him to earth is this: He came to suffer and die for sinners.

He did not die as a social reformer. He did not die as a martyr for some high cause, or for His country's freedom. He did not die merely as a noble example of self-sacrifice. He did not die simply to show that God loved men. He did not die simply because His enemies hated Him and put Him to death. He did not have to die, He did not die as other men die, and His death, even at the young age of about 33, was no tragedy, in fact, it was God's way of saving men.

We have already seen that God is holy, and that man is sinful and separated from God. If we are to know a holy God, and have communion with Him now, and live with Him forever, something must be done about our sin. It would have been an easy matter to destroy sinners, but God wished to save them. And this was not the easy matter that some seem to think. It involved nothing less than the incarnation, suffering, and death of the Son of God.

Christ a Sacrifice

All men deserve punishment because they are sinners and guilty. And God, the just and holy judge of the universe, must give the punishment which sin deserves. He cannot overlook sin and act as if it did not exist. If He did, He would not be just or holy, He would not be upholding His own law. If we do not grasp this we cannot fully understand why Christ had to die.

For the wonderful truth is this: the Son of God died as a sacrifice for His people. He took the place of sinners, endured their punishment and died for them. This is the only way God could justly and righteously forgive men.

Christ's death for sinners is emphasized again and again in the bible. Consider the following verses.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, and He was bruised for our sins. The punishment that brings us peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have tried every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the sin of us all."⁵

"God proved His love towards us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."⁶

"For I delivered to you what I received, as of the first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."⁷

"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people."⁸

"This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."⁹

Yes, Christ suffered, shed His blood, and gave His life for sinners. This is what the prophets foretold, the disciples taught, and the Guru Himself stated. Indeed, it is the very heart of the Bible. If anyone believes that Jesus is a great teacher he ought to accept this teaching also. It is a mockery to speak of Jesus as the master teacher if we ignore or deny so important a part of His teaching.

Some people deny that Christ could die for us. They say that every person must pay for his own sin. But even among men suffering for others is no strange and impossible thing.

Illustrations

Think of a boy who has been told repeatedly not to play with the matches. One day while his mother is out somewhere, he finds the match box, deliberately disobeys her orders, begins to strike the matches, and sets their wooden house on fire. Thoroughly frightened he runs here and there, but a wall of leaping flame bars the doorway, and he cannot get out. Just then his mother returns and realizes what he has done. What now? Does she stand outside safely watching, and say, "My son has sinned. Let

him perish in the flames. Everyone must pay for his own sin?" She does not! She rushes into the burning house to save her darling. Quickly she opens a window and shoves him through to safety. But she is too late to save herself. The flames have followed her across the room and catch at her clothing. She is overcome by the heat, smoke, and fire, and falls helpless to the floor. The fire which he started consumes her.

Man has started a fire with his sin that he can never put out, never escape from by his own efforts. Who will come to his rescue? Is God love? Yes, far greater than any mother's love is His infinite love and compassion. Then it would not seem impossible that He Himself would go into the flames to save His own, even though the fault was all theirs.

Man has sinned and deserves suffering and death. But God was willing to endure that suffering and death Himself, and give in their place, life and safety and joy forever. This is what the cross of Christ means.

Think of a man who foolishly falls into debt. His creditor demands payment, but try as he will he is unable to pay. In fact, he cannot even keep up with the interest due and so his debt increases more and more. He feels crushed by the burden of it, and desperately tries every way he can think of to get free from this obligation, but all to no avail. Then a friend who has some money learns of his difficulty and goes and pays the debt in full.

It is not an impossible thing for someone to pay the debt of another, but a simple act of mercy. And cannot God be as merciful as men?

In one way we may say that the sins of men are like the bondage of debt. Justice demanded payment for his sin – that is, suffering and death. How was this enormous debt of fallen man to be paid? How could this mountain of sin be canceled? Who would bear the expense of it so that man might be relieved of the burden? The Son of God came forward, and on the cross paid the debt Himself. But who

can tell all that it cost Him when He thus suffered and died for sinners? It is beyond human calculation. One thing we know – it was sufficient for a whole world of sinners to be saved, if they will believe in Christ.

We should understand that the suffering of Christ were not merely physical. Far from it. His physical sufferings were quite terrible in themselves, but far more terrible were the sufferings of His soul. Remember who He was – the incarnation of the holy God. His pure soul shrank in agony from the touch of sin. But what does the Bible say? On the cross God “made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.”¹⁰ Who can understand what this meant to the Holy One?

If we wish to know what an awful thing sin is, how great the love of God is, and how much it cost Him to save men, we must look with understanding at the cross.

Was it just and right for Christ in this way to bear the sins of men? Of course it was just and right, absolutely so. God never does anything that is not just and right. In fact, this was the only just way He could save men. It would have been unjust and terrible if God had compelled some innocent man to suffer and die like that. But Christ was not compelled, nor was He a mere man. In fact, no mere man by suffering and dying could ever take away the sins of even one other person. But the infinite God could justly suffer for the sins of any number of His creatures. He could bear their punishment, pay their debts, and rescue them at His own expense, if He wanted to.

He did want to. I repeat, this is the very meaning of the coming of Christ. He is God. And of His own free will He came to suffer in man’s place, “I lay down my life that I may take it again,” Jesus said, “No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own free will.”¹¹

Yes, the Son of God Himself suffered in body and spirit, and died for the sins of men. He came in human flesh and offered Himself as the Sacrifice for fallen humanity. The burden of evil that men have done was rolled on His willing, holy soul. Or we might say that he voluntarily took mankind’s bad karma and thoroughly dealt with it.

There is full satisfaction of justice in this, and truly it is glorious beyond man's ability to describe.

And when we believe Christ suffered for us, and turn to Him with all our hearts, what blessing comes! We begin to understand something of His great love, and experience it in our hearts. We begin to see also God's tremendous holiness and justice, and how He can forgive sin without compromising them.

The Fruits of Christ's Death

The death of Christ, the worst crime in human history, is the means of the greatest blessings that can come to men. Yes, so great is the grace and mercy and power and wisdom of God.

Because Christ died we can have forgiveness. Because Christ became a sacrifice for man's sins, God can justly forgive us, if we repent and trust in Him. Cheap forgiveness is not God's way. On His part it cost a tremendous amount to be able to forgive justly. On our part, it will mean a turning from all evil, and surrender to Him in faith. We must turn to God and accept what He has done on the cross. If we reject it, or ignore it, and go on in our sins, we cannot escape the punishment we deserve. If we turn from the cross we only show how deep is our sinfulness and hostility to God. When Christ died the very rocks broke in pieces, and shall our hearts remain unmoved?

Jesus said, "Thus it is written, that Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and the repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all people."¹²

The disciples repeated His teaching:

"In Him we have ... the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."¹³

"If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹⁴

Some believe in reincarnation. We will say something

about this teaching later in the book. Now it is enough to say that even if we had been born countless times on this earth, and lived a wicked life each time, the blood of Jesus Christ could cleanse all that sin away immediately and make us spotless, and fit us for the presence of the holy God. Absolutely full and perfect pardon – this is what God gives us through Christ, pardon for all and every kind of sin.

His one sacrifice on the cross was perfect and complete and effective forever. There is no need of any other sacrifice and God will not accept any other. His desire is that we truly repent and believe what He has done for us and give Him our hearts.

Also because Christ died we can have peace with God. Through His death Christ brings healing to the broken relationship between God and the sinner that came about because of sin. Hear these moving words: “Also Christ suffered for sins once for all, the righteous One for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.”¹⁵

This is repeated elsewhere in different words.

“God was in Christ making peace.”¹⁶

God “made peace by the blood of His cross.”¹⁷

Wonderful truth! The barriers are down, the wall of guilt and sin that kept us from God is completely demolished. The way to harmony with the Supreme Being is open and clear. Friendship and peace, blessed, eternal peace with God, is the fruit of Christ’s cross. Shall we not throw away our arms of rebellion and come to this God of grace through His son Jesus Christ? God Himself, through His servants, pleads with men to do so.

Also through Christ we can have liberation and redemption. The Guru said the He came “to give His life as a ransom.” To ransom or redeem others means to liberate them from captivity by paying a price. Fallen man was in bondage to sin and death. Jesus paid the full price necessary to release him-His suffering and death on the cross. Peter wrote: “You know that you were ransomed from your use-

less ways of living handed down by your forefathers, not with things that perish such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."¹⁸

Now those who turn to Him in faith are God's property, His special treasure, His own beloved people. So God says to them: "Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine."¹⁹

New life

Through Christ we can have a new spiritual life. The death of Christ was for the definite purpose of changing people and the way they live. This is the way the Word of God puts it:

Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness, and to make pure a special people for Himself who are eager to do good works."²⁰

"He died for all so that all who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose for them."²¹

"He Himself carried our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness."²²

All this has to do with far more than ceremonies or religious effort or self-reformation. It means a complete change of heart, and apart from this, we can have no true hope of eternal life. Jesus taught that this change is like a new birth, and He insisted that it is absolutely necessary for salvation.

Here are His words :

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He repeated this twice more. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." DO not be surprised that I said to you, You must be born again."²³

It is settled then. No one can enter God's Kingdom, no one can be liberated from sin and live joyfully in God's

presence, unless he is born anew, born of God's Spirit. Jesus Christ, the teacher come from God, has said so. He is saying as plainly as words can say that religion and ceremonies and human righteousness and morality are not enough. We need new life. We need spiritual birth.

When Christ said we need to be born again, He did not mean we had to be born again and again into this world after we die. He was not teaching reincarnation. The new birth is something we must experience now, during this present life. It is a spiritual birth, not a physical birth; it is being born of "the Spirit" of God. This takes place in those who receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son of God does not have life."²⁴

To be born again means that we are raised from spiritual death. It means that we are made alive towards God, and become a blessed fact the children of God. It means to be given a new mind, a new heart, a new nature. This is the way the Bible expresses it: "If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, and, look, Everything has become new."²⁵ This new creation begins now in this life. It can, and does, take place instantaneously in all kinds of people, even the most wicked, and it changes them wonderfully.

Those who are "born again" begin to live a new life. They begin to count sin an awful thing. Not only do they learn to hate it, and fight against all present tendencies to sin, they want to do what they can to correct the past as well.

So these are some of the fruits of Christ's death. By His sacrifice He won forgiveness for sinners, and peace, and redemption, and a new life. He made it possible for us to be the people to God, to know God and enjoy Him and glorify Him forever. Does not such love with our hearts and move us to give Him our all?

References for this Chapter:

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 See these chapters: | 12 Luke 24:46,47 |
| Matthew 27, | 13 Ephesians 1:7 |
| Mark 14, | 14 1 John 1:9 |
| Luke 23, | 15 1 Peter 3:18 |
| John 19 | 16 2 Corinthians 5:19 |
| 2 Matthew 20:28 | 17 Colossians 1:20 |
| 3 John 10:11 | 18 1 Peter 2:24 |
| 4 Matthew 26:28 | 19 Isaiah 43:1 |
| 5 Isaiah 53:5,6 | 20 Titus 2:14 |
| 6 Romans 5:8 | 21 2 Corinthians 5:15 |
| 7 1 Corinthians 15:3 | 22 1 Peter 2:24 |
| 8 Hebrews 9:28 | 23 John 3:1-7 |
| 9 Hebrews 10:12 | 24 1 John 5:11.12 |
| 10 2 Corinthians 5:21 | 25 2 Corinthians 5:17 |
| 11 John 10:17,18 | |

5 The Guru Reveals The Way

What is the way to eternal joy and peace? How can we find harmony with God? What must we do to gain liberation or salvation? We have already seen something of the answer to these vitally important questions, but now we need to explore the matter more fully.

Many are the answers that men have tried to give to these questions, and their answers have often been in contradiction to each other.

Some say the true way is the way of action and good deeds (karma marg). Others insist the way is the way of devotion (bhakti marg). Still others say the only way is the way of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment (Jnana marg). Some think the right way is the combination of all three, and some say any one of them will do. We hear also of this or that system of yoga, method, discipline, practice of meditation, renunciation, etc.

First, we should point out again what we need to be liberated from. This we saw in a previous chapter. Some people speak of liberation from maya (illusion), or ignorance, or from pain and sorrow. Or they talk of the law of karma, of receiving in this life the fruits of action done in a former life. They think of the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, and long for liberation from that.

Jesus Christ goes right to the heart of our trouble. He says we need to be liberated from sin, its guilt and power. We need forgiveness, a new heart, and harmony with God. If we gain this liberation all will be well, and there will be nothing we have to dread either in time or eternity.

Keeping this in mind, let us now examine some of the ways that are commonly thought to lead to liberation, and see whether they are adequate to take away sin, truly liberate us from its guilt and power, and bring us to God.

The Way of Works

Some will say, "I am satisfied that the answer is the way of action and good works. Surely we can't expect to be liberated without this."

Certainly we should serve God with all our heart, and work for His glory and for the good of our fellow men. Good works in the service of God are very important. But we must learn what true service is and how to do it.

We have already seen what Christ taught about our nature. It is evil. Therefore it follows that we cannot by ourselves bring forth really good works. Even the best we can do has a taint of sin in it.

A thorn tree cannot produce mangoes. If a fountain is bitter at its source, its water will not be sweet. We can not be saved by works because our works are not pure, not holy. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? We could not even if we had an infinite number of lives on this earth to live. In fact, if we lived an infinite number of lives on this earth, the only result would be that we would increase our sin infinitely.

A great saint expressed the truth of man's weakness and sinfulness in these words, "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can want to do what is right, but I cannot do it... I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil is with me"¹ This is really a law of our being as we are in this world, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not.

Moreover, we cannot change ourselves basically. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard its spots?" is the question God asks us, pointing out our utter inability to make ourselves new.² If we can't change a small outward thing like our skin, how, oh how, can we change our whole inner being? Changing one's skin would be child's play compared with changing one's inmost nature. There is no discipline of mind or body, no austerities, duty, or method that can change the evil nature that is in us. No renunciation, no sacrifice, no power of meditation, no sys-

tem of yoga, no performance of what we think are good works, no effort or religious ceremony (Hindu, Christian, or any other) can make us what we should be. We cannot create the smallest speck of life. How then shall we create new and holy natures for ourselves? Certainly no way of works will do it. A bad tree will not become good by producing more and more of its fruit.

Of course we may reform ourselves outwardly. We may break off certain bad habits. We may refrain from the more obvious sins and become religious, pious, and respectable. We may also be able to form a high opinion of our own righteousness. But none of this can really change our hearts or make us good. We may change our habits to some extent, but we cannot change our nature.

Sin is not like a little dirt on the skin that may easily be washed off. It is a terrible inner stain that no man can cleanse away. Sin is not like a little sore on the body that is easily and quickly healed. It is a cancer growing in our vitals that no effort of man can cure. Sin is a great gulf between God and man, and all man's attempts to do good deeds cannot build a bridge across it. In our very efforts to do so our sin increases.

To think we can remove our sinful nature by our efforts is like thinking we can lift ourselves out of a filthy pit by pulling up on our own hair. Or, as someone has expressed it, like trying to build a bridge of butter over a river of fire. Only those blinded by sin could think to be saved by their own efforts. It is impossible for self to raise self out of self's fallen condition.

God Speaks About This Here is what the Word of God says:

"No human being will be justified in God's sight by doing works of the law."³

"He saved us, not by righteous things which we have done, but according to His mercy."⁴

"For you are saved by grace through faith. And this is

not your own doing, it is a gift of God; not by works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”⁵

“Not by works’ - God repeats this over and over again in His Word, because He knows how slow we are to believe it. In the last quotation we see the place of good works in the life of a child of God. We cannot do good works to be liberated, but we are to do good works after we are liberated. Good works are to be done in love and gratitude to God because He has sent His Son to die for us, because He has forgiven us all sin and given us a new nature. But to obtain liberation, karma marg will not do. Not even trying to be a disciple of Christ is enough by itself.

Even if our efforts could be fully successful now, they still could not take away the sin and guilt of the past - and our past alone is enough to condemn us forever, no matter how many good works we may do now. Let it be repeated, there are no religious ceremonies, no works of any law, no human effort of any kind that can really change our nature, take away sin and guilt, and bring us to God. We may mark this down as absolutely sure. I know that much of the world thinks otherwise. But this is because people do not understand the Word of God and the teachings of Christ, or the weakness and sinfulness of their nature.

Think of the cross of Christ. If we could be saved by our own efforts, would God have sent His only Son to suffer and die in our place? To ask the question is to answer it. It is simply unthinkable. ‘If righteousness can come by the law, then Christ has died in vain. The cross of Christ proclaims with voice loud and clear that something far beyond karma marg is needed if man is to be saved.

The Way of Wisdom

‘Yes”, someone says, “that is true. Karma marg will not lead us to freedom. Jnana marg - the way of spiritual knowl-

edge and inner enlightenment - is the way."

Man surely needs spiritual enlightenment. Certainly we need to come to the true knowledge of God and of ourselves. Let us emphasize the words "true knowledge". We must know our selves to be sinners and God to be holy infinite, far above us. Our eyes must be opened to see this and to know this great God personally. This is the wisdom we need. But there is a sort of so-called knowledge and enlightenment which falls far short of this. We must understand that salvation is not simply from ignorance - important as that is; it is from sin that we need to be liberated.

The world with all its wisdom, philosophy, knowledge, enlightenment and experience has not come to the true knowledge of God. "The world by wisdom did not know God."⁷ Even in the very beginning when men did know God by His revelation, knowledge alone did not prove enough. In an earlier chapter we saw that our first ancestors had true knowledge of God. There was no barrier of sin and ignorance between them, no bar to communion. But this did not keep them from falling into sin and ruining themselves, and bringing a bad karma on the whole human race.

The Bible speaks of a time when men knew God: "Even since the creation of the world His invisible nature, even His eternal power and deity, have been clearly perceived by the things that have been made. So men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give Him thanks. Their thinking became vain and their foolish heart was darkened. Although they claimed to be wise they became fools."⁸

Their enlightenment and knowledge of God did not keep them from wickedness. They even cast aside the true knowledge they had and then became puffed up in their human wisdom. They called light darkness and darkness light, and thought they were very wise. And they only added to their foolishness and danger by saying "we see." This is what Jesus said to some very religious people who thought they

were great ones for the truth: "If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now you say 'We see'. Therefore your guilt remains. Are there no such people today?"

Even a true knowledge of ourselves and God would not take away our guilt and sinfulness, or give us a new nature, or make us fit to live in God's holy presence. A sinner may be enlightened to know he is a sinner, and to understand the reality of God. But this alone would not change him - it would only enable him to see that he needed to be changed. Of course, true wisdom is important. It can help us to forsake evil and seek the true God. But it is impossible that it should blot out a single past sin. And one act of sin in the past is enough to keep us from the Holy God until it is taken away.

There is no knowledge, no wisdom, no enlightenment that by itself will change the sinful heart of men. There is none that can give us spiritual life, and take away our sin and guilt.

A man stands in a court of law convicted of a terrible crime. He may know the judge very well, but this will not take away his guilt or release him from punishment if the judge is honest and upholds the law. We all stand before God as sinners and guilty, and God is honest and upholds the law. No knowledge of God can change our guilt or take away a single sin.

A murderer in jail under the sentence of death will not be liberated because he knows the king, if the king is just and upholds the law. We are all bound because of sin, and under sentence of death, and God the great King of the universe is just and will uphold the law. No knowledge by itself, spiritual or otherwise, can liberate us. It can only show us we need to be liberated.

It is plain that something far more than jnana marg is needed. The cross of Christ proves the same thing. Look at His cross and ask again that question which must be asked - if we could be liberated from our sin by knowledge and enlightenment alone, would God have sent His only

Son to suffer and die in our place? No, it is unthinkable. Any wisdom that tries to get away from the cross of Jesus and counts it unnecessary, is not wisdom at all.

The Way of Devotion

There is another way advocated by some: bhakti marg - the way of devotion. Does it rest on a more solid foundation than the other ways? Let us see.

Certainly we need to love the true God and surrender to Him and devote ourselves to His praise and service. This has a very large part in the teaching of the Bible. Someone once asked Christ what God's greatest commandment was. Here is His answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."

But devotion, important as it is, is not enough. In the first place, it is possible to be devoted to the wrong thing. We may try to serve someone or something other than the one holy, eternal Spirit, the true and only God, the Creator of the universe. The object of our devotion is of the utmost importance. Jesus taught that we must devote ourselves to the true God and Him only; "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."¹¹ (If anyone wishes to know the Bible's teaching on this important subject he may look up the following references: Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 8:19; 13:6-11; Judges 2:11,12,17; 1 Chronicles 5:25; Psalm 106:19-21; Isaiah 42:8,17; Jeremiah 10:11; Hosea 4:12; 1 Corinthians 8:5; 10:20; 1 John 5:21; Revelation 9:20,21).

But even if we have tried to worship and serve the true God who made us rather than something else it still would not liberate us from sin. But really it is vain for us to speak of our devotion or to expect anything from it. We have not loved Him as we ought. We have not really lived for His glory. We have not truly praised Him. Poets may write of such things in beautiful language, and people may sing their hymns. But writing or singing is one thing and doing

it from the heart is something else. Remember that God is Spirit and our worship must be altogether in spirit and truth. But by nature we are sinful and fallen. Before we can love the holy Creator and serve Him in spirit and truth, we must be changed, "born again", recreated. We must receive from Him a new spiritual nature.

However, even a strong love for the true God, even if we had it, could not take away our sin and guilt. The convicted criminal may express his love for the judge, may even love him, but this would not release him from punishment. No praise the jailed murderer might make to the king would liberate him from jail -if the judge and the king uphold the law. Even if our praises to God became very fervent, our love overflowing, our devotion complete, this would not take away our past guilt or remove the punishment of a single sin. Sin must be punished, Christ must go to the cross. There is no other way, no other hope. Without this, the sword of God's flaming holiness will forever bar all sin, and therefore all men, from His presence. If we can't see this, it is because we do not understand God's holiness.

This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins."¹² Our poor love is not worthy of mention in the work of liberation. It is God's love that liberates. And He has proved His love by sending His Son to die. There could be no other way. Not bhakti, not jnana, not karma, not any other such way. And not all these three together. Combining these three impossibilities does not make a possibility. Works, wisdom, and devotion are all important and good in their proper place. But none of these, and no other way ever devised by man, will remove sin, give us new life, and make us fit for God's presence.

What, then, is the way? The way Christ taught can be summed up in three words. It is the way of the cross, the way of grace, and the way of faith.

The Cross

The way of the cross is the only way. We have emphasized several times the sufferings and death of the Son of God on the cross. This we can never over-emphasize. It is the heart of Christ's Gospel. It is the method by which God destroyed the sin of His people and opened the way into His holy presence.

Without the death of Christ on the cross there is no salvation or liberation or heaven for anyone. Without the cross all is lost. Paul, a man of great works and knowledge and devotion and spiritual enlightenment and experience, trusted in none of that, but said: "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹³

Grace

The way of grace is one with the way of the cross. Man is a sinner who cannot save himself by works, wisdom, or worship, or by all of them together. No remedy is to be found in any effort he makes. He is spiritually dead, condemned by the justice of God, and worthy of hell. He is without excuse for his sin, he cannot earn life, or pardon. He is helpless, utterly helpless. How, then, can he be saved? The answer is of course this - God must do it.

The Bible reveals God as the God of all grace."¹⁴ He is a God who delights to give, even to the unworthy. He is a God who gives salvation, liberation, forgiveness, eternal life, as a free gift. This is what Christ our Guru taught, and He taught it because He knew it was true. Let us consider some of God's gifts.

What God Freely Gives

God gave His only Son. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹⁵

God gives eternal life. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of my hand."¹⁶ God says, The wages of sin is

death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹⁷

God gives the spirit of wisdom. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."¹⁸

God gives forgiveness of sins. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us."¹⁹

God gives the gift of righteousness. There is no difference; because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and they are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."²⁰

God gives peace and harmony with Himself: "All this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ."²¹

God gives us salvation. "By grace you are saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any one should boast.

God gives all things in Christ. 'He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?'"²³

'Freely by His grace' is the word that applies to all this, and all this God offers freely to all mankind, to you and to me. And we do not deserve any of it. Even if the theory of reincarnation were true and a person had been a terrible sinner in each of his countless births, the grace of God would instantly forgive him every sin and save him forever, if that person would receive Jesus Christ. No karma can stand against such grace.

What does the word "grace" mean? A common definition is 'unmerited favor'. That is, we cannot deserve grace, we can never be worthy of it. No human effort has anything to do with it. Salvation is not partly by grace, partly by works or partly by something else. From start to finish it is altogether of grace.

Grace means God's favor to those who have not, and can never deserve it, or earn it. Grace is God giving all things needed for salvation, even His Son and Himself, to those who have been His enemies by sin and deserved only His anger and punishment.

Suppose some evil man came secretly to your home, stole your little daughter away, then murdered her. The police apprehend him, he is proven guilty and stands before the judge for the sentence. Would you, in such case, say to the judge, "Let this man go free. I myself will bear the punishment for his crime against me. I will suffer and die in his place"?

Men do not act like this. But God did just this for those who sinned against Him. We are healed by the very wounds that we ourselves inflicted on Him. This is grace.

A Parable

There is a man who is a servant of a good and gracious king. This servant does nothing he is supposed to do. Instead of serving the king, he spends all his time on his own affairs. Moreover, he actually cheats the king when he has the opportunity, steals from the palace, and contemptuously tramples underfoot every rule and law of the kingdom. Also he secretly engages in a rebellion, joins himself to the king's worst enemies, and in trying to overthrow the kingdom he kills the king's own son. Even so, the king issues a proclamation offering pardon to all who will throw down their arms of rebellion and come to him. Then the servant, seeing the error of his ways and the goodness of the king, comes and falls before his master and with tears begs forgiveness. The king has compassion on this wicked servant and, instead of putting him to death as he deserves, forgives him completely. Not only so, he adopts him into his own family, counts him as a son, and gives him a high place in the kingdom.

You may think this never happens. But in truth it happens every time a sinner repents and comes to the King of heaven through Jesus Christ. We are all like that evil ser-

vant. This brief account of his activities is the story of mankind. The only thing that can help us, change us, pardon us, save us, is the wonderful grace of God.

Faith

The way of faith - this goes along with the way of the cross and the way of grace. We see what Christ has done for us on the cross, and what God gives to us by grace. Now we must think of how we receive the grace of God and find forgiveness and eternal life. If we cannot earn it by our works, or obtain it by wisdom or devotion, how can we receive it? The answer is, by faith alone. Consider the following statements, some spoken by Christ Himself, some by His disciples.

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who has sent me, has eternal life. He will not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."²⁴

Jesus said. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me has eternal life."²⁵

To Him all the prophets give witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."²⁶

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" - "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your household."²⁷

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."²⁸

"For by grace you are saved through faith. And that is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."²⁹

There are many other such statements in the New Testament and there is no doubt at all that Jesus taught that liberation, and forgiveness, and eternal life with God, come by the way of faith.

But what is faith? How do we exercise it?

Faith is something more than simply believing that God sent Jesus Christ into the world, it is more than giving mental assent to facts about Christ. Of course we should believe the facts, but that alone is not enough. Also it is not enough merely to accept Jesus' teaching about God and ourselves and why He came into the world. It is a very good thing to have right views - His views - about these matters. But faith is more than this. What, then, is faith?

The Bible puts this matter in various ways so that all might understand it.

What is Faith?

Faith is trust in Christ. If we have faith in a person we trust what he tells us, we have confidence in his character, we think we can safely rely on any promise he makes, we feel that he will not deceive or disappoint us, and we expect him to do according to his word. Faith in Christ is the same. We see He is perfectly trustworthy and we rely on Him to do what we can never do for ourselves - that is, save us, and give us eternal life. We forsake our self-confidence and self-righteousness, and trust Him to do what He promises without fear that He will deceive us.

Faith involves coming to Christ. Jesus said, "Everyone that the Father gives me shall come to me; and whoever comes to me I will not cast out."³⁰ Christ is God the Son, and His Spirit is in the world, even though His body is not. He is near us all. He comes to us, seeking us. And we can come to Him wherever we are, just as definitely as if He were here in the flesh.

We must come to Christ just as we are, seeing our need and believing that He is willing and able to meet our need. He has invited us to come to Him, and can He turn us away when we do come? It does not matter what we have done in the past, or how bad we are. If we come to Christ He will receive us. We have His own promise for it.

Faith includes confidently calling to Christ. "For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."³¹

We can call on Christ in prayer. We can ask Him for light and life and salvation. We can ask Him to show us the truth, to forgive us, and to make us the children of God. and will He not do it, since that is exactly what He came to do? He will not, cannot, fail those who believe Him. Let us not doubt Him.

Faith means receiving Christ. "To all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become the children of God."³²

He is at the very door of our hearts. We must open our door to Him. We must receive Him as our Saviour who forgives our sins and liberates us from bondage. We must receive Him as our Lord and King to sit on the throne of our hearts and reign over us. We must receive Him as the Son of God, worthy of our worship, service and praise. He stands knocking on our doors, and will He not enter our hearts if we open them to Him? The answer to this is His own promise: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me."³³

Faith is based on knowledge. We cannot trust a person until we know him, or something about him. So it is with Christ. True faith is not superstition or presumption. It results from a knowledge of the facts about Christ.

Faith in Christ is a moral choice. "God sent His son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not condemned. But he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."³⁴

Faith is not a leap into the dark. On the contrary, it is a leap into the light. Coming to Christ always means a choice for light and holiness and purity and righteousness and justice and morality. And the reason why many reject Him lies in this - they do not want to make such a choice. They

love darkness rather than light.

But if we will not make this moral choice, nothing can help us. No self-effort can save us, no wisdom, no devotion, no karma, no jnana, no bhakti, no philosophy, no doctrine, no religion, no knowledge of what Christ has done. The question of great importance is will we make this choice for the light? Will we by faith receive Christ into our hearts and lives?

Men need a change of direction. When we live as we please, we actually have our backs to God (whether we know it or not), and go on our own way. We need to turn right around fully toward God and move in His direction. Instead of going on in the dark, we turn and face the light of Christ. Instead of walking the broad and easy way that leads to destruction, we turn to take God's way. Instead of going on in sin, we turn to receive the Holy One. Instead of clutching about us the rags of our own righteousness which we loved, we cast them aside as a filthy thing.

Jesus called this change "repentance". It is absolutely essential. God will not give us eternal life apart from this. The path to light and joy and peace and life with God leads through true repentance, and the Guru taught the need of it very emphatically: "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish. And God now "commands all men everywhere to repent."³⁶ Let us, one and all, give ear to God's command.

So all this is involved in faith. By faith we turn from sin, come to Christ, pray to Christ, choose Christ, receive Christ, trust Christ, and take from Christ what is needed.

The Way

So the way Jesus taught is the way of the cross, of grace, and of faith. Truly, Christ Himself is the way, and faith in Him is a personal relationship that liberates us. Christ brings life, and forgiveness, and strength, and wisdom, and power, and love, and the presence of God forever. What more do we need? When we trust in Him, every barrier is broken down and we begin to enjoy the

great salvation God has provided for men, and the peace and communion with God that are a part of it.

Do we have faith? Let us fully exercise it. Is our faith weak, or even non-existent? Let us study the character of Jesus Christ and the promises He makes and the evidence He gives. Let us think of His love and compassion, His death on the cross for sinners, and His glorious resurrection from the dead. Let us turn from evil, confess our sins to Him, and seek His face. Let us read His Word (the Bible) carefully and prayerfully. Let us lift our hearts and prayers to Christ.

No matter what our doubts and fears and sins may be, He will hear us when we sincerely turn to Him. We may go to Him just as we are, even if we are guilty of innumerable sins. He will grant forgiveness and all things necessary for salvation.

There is hope for the worst of men (and even for the best) through the way of Christ. Let him who feels he is the worst and weakest person on earth, who feels most unworthy, who experiences most a sense of condemnation and evil within, let him come to Jesus Christ, and he will find mercy and kindness, and perfect grace.

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- | | | | |
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| 2 | Jeremiah 13:23 | 22 | Ephesians 2:8,9 |
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| 4 | Titus 3:5 | 24 | John 5:24 |
| 5 | Ephesians 2:8-10 | 25 | John 6:47 |
| 6 | Galatians 2:21 | 26 | Acts 10:43 |
| 7 | 1 Corinthians 1:21 | 27 | Acts 16:30,31 |
| 8 | Romans 1:20-23 | 28 | Romans 1:16 |
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| 10 | Matthew 22:37 | 30 | John 6:37 |
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| 12 | 1 John 4:10 | 32 | John 1:12,13 |
| 13 | Galatians 6:14 | 33 | Revelation 3:20 |
| 14 | 1 Peter 5:10 | 34 | John 3:17-19 |

15 John 3:16
16 John 10:27,28
17 Romans 3:23,24

35 Luke 13:3
36 Acts 17:30

6 The Guru Gives Us Evidence

We have looked at some of the teachings of Jesus Christ, teachings recognized as wise, powerful, and great by people everywhere in the world. Now we must ask where these teachings came from and why we should believe them.

Once the Guru was speaking about His teaching and about God, and He said,

“I have not spoken on my own authority. The Father who sent me has Himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak ... Whatever I speak, therefore, I speak as the Father has told me.”¹

In one of His prayers He spoke of His disciples to God the Father and said,

“I have given them the words you gave me, and they have received them and know for certain that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”²

So Jesus kept making these tremendous statements. He said that He did not invent the things He taught, that they were not at all His opinions about religious matters. Quite the contrary. He declared that God had given Him the very words He spoke, and that God had sent Him into the world to speak them.

Let's think about this. It is very important. For if this part of Christ's teaching is true, then the other things He taught are also true, and come directly from God. In that case, we should all receive all His teaching with the utmost trust and humility.

The Need for Evidence

Now no doubt it is possible for someone to make statements about himself similar to the ones Christ made, even if they were not true. And certainly people can say they have received messages from God, even if, in fact, they

have not. And there have been others who claimed to be the Son of God or God Himself in human form. So I think it is time to ask some questions.

Why were His disciples certain that Jesus Christ had come from God? What evidence, if any, did He show them? do we have anything more than His own word that God sent Him?

Jesus told the people of His day that they should not believe Him if they could not see any evidence apart from His own words. He said, "If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me."³

The mere fact that Jesus Christ, or anyone else, claims to be teacher sent by God, or the Son of God, proves nothing. A person who makes such large claims ought to be able to produce some evidence to support what he says.

So Christ said people should not believe Him without good reasons. In this world there is such a thing as blind faith, but this is not the kind of faith Jesus wanted people to have in Him. When He was on earth He pointed them to the evidence which showed He had come from God. This evidence convinced many people then. It still convinces many people now. There were very good reasons why the disciples believed Jesus Christ came from God, and we should know what they are.

Christ's Mighty Works

First, the works He did were strong evidence that He came from God. This is what He Himself pointed out - The works which the Father has given me to do, these very works which I am doing, are a witness that the Father has sent me."⁴

What works were these Jesus spoke of? They were works that revealed two things perfectly - power and compassion. They were works done in the power of God and with the love of God.

Think of the power of Christ.

He opened blind eyes with the touch of His hand. He made the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. He cured diseases that were incurable by all the devices of men. He even raised the dead to life again.

By these works He convinced a great many people that God had sent Him. One of the leaders of Israel once said to Him what many were thinking. "We know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these miracles that you are doing unless God is with him."⁵

One of the disciples of Jesus, Peter by name, could say to all the people of Israel, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know.

So Jesus and His disciples could point to these mighty works as evidence that God had sent Him.

These were not stories of miracles seen (or imagined by) one person and then told to others. The fact is, Jesus did some of His miracles in the presence of large crowds of people. Friends and enemies alike were there, and none of them could deny that He did them, though His keen-eyed enemies would have done so gladly if they could have. Instead, they had to admit it even when they were plotting to kill Him. "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man does many miracles. If we let him go on like this everyone will believe in Him.'⁷

The miracles which He did were supernatural. They could not be explained in any other way. They were not mere tricks of some kind, or produced by hypnosis or by magic arts or sleight of hand. For example. He actually walked on water. He gave immediate sight to a man born blind. He completely healed some who had leprosy.¹⁰ He raised a man from the grave who had been dead four days, so that his sister said, when Jesus went to the tomb to raise him, "Lord, by this time there will be a bad smell, for he has been dead four days."¹¹

We know that magicians, using some trick or other, have done and are doing what seem to be miracles. But no one can walk on water by some kind of trick, or open blind eyes, or heal leprosy by sleight of hand, or hypnotize a dead man to life! The Guru did these things by the power of God.

Some people are bold enough to say that all miracles are impossible. Of course, they do not prove miracles are impossible, they only state it. These people do not take God into their consideration of this subject. If there is a personal Supreme Being who created this vast Universe and made man, would He have any difficulty at all in healing the sick and raising the dead? A God who made the world surely has the power to act in it as He pleases. And if this God is a God of love who sent Jesus Christ to bless and teach mankind, is it not possible, even probable, that He would do miracles of grace and power through Him? is it not reasonable to think that He would give this strong evidence that He had sent Christ?

Jesus Himself never argued about the possibility of doing miracles. He just did them. And the people who were there and saw them didn't argue about it either. They knew that He did them. And when He who did these miracles, and they who were there and saw them, state plainly that He did them, it is quite in vain for anyone who was not there to say that He did not do them.

But Christ's mighty works were more than works of mere power. They were also works of compassion. This leads us to the next reason why we can believe Him.

Christ's Character

Christ's character is strong evidence that He came from God. If He were a bad man, we should not believe He came from God, even if He did miracles. I am convinced it is possible to do what men would call miracles by means other than God's power. Even an ungodly person or a false prophet might have strange powers and do, or at least seem to do, certain amazing things. And if he did, it cer-

tainly would not prove he came from God. So when considering the miracles of Christ - or of anyone - we do well to ask what kind of person it was who did them.

In Christ's case this is very clear. The Gospels reveal plainly what kind of person Jesus was. His works were just the sort we would expect a great and good person to perform if he could. He was filled with sympathy for people in need of every sort. He was willing to sacrifice His time. His comforts, even His life to help and save them. He loved all men, even the most miserable, poor, helpless, and fallen. His miracles were called forth by the need of people; they resulted from the kindness and concern that continuously flowed from His heart.

When two blind men came to Him for healing "Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes. Immediately their eyes received sight."¹²

When He saw a woman taking her dead son to be buried, He had compassion on her, and said to her, "Do not weep", and then raised the boy to life.¹³

And whenever He saw the multitudes, "He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."¹⁴

As we read the record we see that He never sought the applause or honor or favor of men. He never acted from pride or envy or greed. He never lived for self, or pleasure, or worldly gain. He never did one unjust or immoral thing. Even those who reject Him are forced to admit that His life is model of goodness and crystal purity.

Holiness was the mark of all He did and said, and He could challenge His enemies with these words, "Which one of you can prove I am guilty of sin?"¹⁵ Not a breath of scandal or suspicion of wrongdoing can cleave to Him, and none of His followers have to make excuses for anything He ever did, or try to hide anything He ever said.

The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who examined Him and reluctantly delivered Him to the Jews to be crucified,

had to say "I find no fault in Him".¹⁶ No, Pilate did not and no one else can. For He lived a life of perfect unselfishness and love and purity for the glory of God and for the good of men.

Well, let us pause here and think a moment. This strong and gentle, pure and compassionate person, this splendid Man, this perfect One, said that God had sent Him from heaven to teach men the truth, and that he was the Son of God. He was neither a lunatic nor a liar. It follows then that He spoke the truth. He really was sent by God into the world. He really was the incarnation of God.

But we have more evidence for this than even His miracles and His perfect character.

Fulfilled Prophecy

The prophecies of the Old Testament of the Bible are also strong evidence that Christ came from God. The Old Testament (also called the Scriptures) was written over a period of 1,000 years beginning about 1,400 years before Jesus was born. Once Jesus made a very important statement to the leaders of Israel who were questioning Him: "You search the Scriptures," He said, 'because you think you have eternal life in them. And it is they that witness about me."¹⁷

God knows all things even before they happen, and He can reveal these things to men. Again and again God foretold the future through His prophets. A large part of the Old Testament is a foretelling of future events. There are prophecies there concerning the nation Israel, many of which have been fulfilled in the past, some of which have been fulfilled in recent times, and some of which await fulfillment at the return of Christ. There are prophecies about individuals and peoples and cities and nations. And throughout this body of prophecy, like bright stars in the expanse of the heavens, are sprinkled predictions about one particular person.

The people of Israel called this person the Messiah, the One anointed by God. For long centuries they expected

Him to come into the world as the Redeemer of His people, the Saviour, the King. He was also to be a great prophet and teacher.

Some of the prophecies concerning this one were very detailed and plain. The place of His birth was named - Bethlehem. The manner of His birth was foretold - of a virgin. His rejection by His people Israel, His betrayal by a friend, a description of His sufferings and death on the cross. His resurrection from the dead - these and other details of His person. His life and death, were revealed in these ancient writings.¹⁸

Then about 400 years after the Old Testament was completed, Jesus Christ appeared in the midst of the people of Israel and declared that these writings spoke of Him. He meant that these old descriptions of the coming Messiah and the prophecies concerning Him were being fulfilled then. And they obviously were.

When this fact is understood it appears as very powerful evidence for Jesus. There is really nothing like it in all the literature of the world. The possibility that the prophets could prophesy as they did, or that Christ could fulfill their prophecies as He did, apart from God, is so remote as to be practically impossible. So I repeat - fulfilled prophecy about Christ is a very strong reason why we should believe He came from God. Our next reason is similar to this.

Christ's Own Words

Christ's own predictions and promises are strong evidence that He came from God. The teachings of Christ contain many statements of this nature. He said any number of things that can be examined and tested. If they prove false, He is no teacher come from God. If they prove true, it is solid evidence that He is. The fact that no one can successfully contradict is this: His statements do prove true. Consider the following prophecies He made.

He plainly foretold the destruction of Israel's temple.¹⁹ Forty years later it happened exactly as He said, and the

temple has never been rebuilt.

He also said that before the end of this age His Gospel would be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.²⁰ He predicted this when as yet His followers were a tiny group, and hardly anyone outside of the little country of Israel knew anything about Him. Yet He knew that His Gospel would spread throughout the whole world, as it is doing in our day.

Jesus also prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, and the scattering of the people Israel throughout the whole earth.²¹ Again this was fulfilled literally. In the same verse He indicated that Jerusalem would be retaken by the Jews sometime toward the end of the age. Only in our day has this happened - and the end of this age may be very near.

Jesus also foretold other events, including the manner of His own death, and the fact that He would rise from the dead.²² And He was always right.

The Test of Experience

In the same way, His promises are unailing. For example, He promises rest to those who come to Him and trust Him and submit to Him. He promises it and He gives it. He promises freedom from the bondage of sin to those who continue in His Word. He promises it and He gives it. He promises that God will hear us and receive us, if we go to Him through Jesus Christ. This, too, we can prove true.

He made many other promises that can be tested. And literally millions of people throughout the centuries since He made them, and all over the world, have tested them and found them true.

This is the evidence of experience, and this too is strong evidence that Christ came from God. The disciples not only saw the power of God at work in Christ as they followed Him they experienced this power themselves. God opened their understanding to see who Christ really was; they came to know God; they drank of the fullness of that ocean

of love; they learned at last that He had come to live in them.

But we do not need to leave these matters to the testimony of others. We can, and we should, prove Jesus Christ for ourselves. He is alive and answers those who seek Him, and He always does according to His Word. As we do what He says we come to know it is true. Countless examples of this could be given if space allowed. But let us seek Him and find out for ourselves. The reason people have doubts about Christ is that they lack an experience with Him. When we meet Christ in our experience we shall lose our doubts about Him and see that the things He taught are the absolute truth. Really experiencing God through Him is the thing that can satisfy both heart and mind. Without this, all our study will be in vain.

God Himself Witnesses

We come now to the last reason we shall look at in this chapter. The witness of God Himself concerning Christ is strong evidence that He came from God. Jesus declared this: The Father Himself who sent me, has given witness concerning me."²³

Part of God's witness concerning Christ is the mighty works He gave Christ to do which we have already thought about. But there is another powerful way in which God witnessed about Christ. This is the miracle of the resurrection. To some people it may sound strange and unlikely, but on the third day after the death of Jesus, God raised Him to life again. This miracle is so important that we will take it up in the next chapter. Through the resurrection of Christ God is saying something very clearly to all the world: "This is my Son. Listen to Him. He will guided you into all truth."

So we have seen a bare outline of these evidences God has been pleased to give. A great deal could be said about each of them, indeed, large books have been written about them. God gives every kind of evidence possible to give, a combination of evidences. The works and character of

Christ, the prophecies about Him and those He made Himself, His promises which can be proved in experience, the witness of God the Father to Him in various ways including His resurrection from the dead, and yes, the witness of God now in our hearts when we trust and follow Him - these are reasons enough to believe Him.

Men believe many great matters for far less reason. Did any other guru, teacher, or founder of a faith, ever come with such evidence? Are there better reasons to believe someone else? Really, is there anything like it in the whole history of mankind?

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|----|-----------------|----|--------------------|
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| 2 | John 17:8 | 17 | John 5:39 |
| 3 | John 10:37 | 18 | See Micah 5:2; |
| 4 | John 5:36 | | Isaiah 7:14; |
| 5 | John 3:2 | | Isaiah chapter 53; |
| 6 | Acts 2:22 | | Psalms 22; |
| 7 | John 11:47,48 | | Ps 41:9; |
| 8 | John 6:16-19 | | Ps 16:9,10; etc. |
| 9 | John chapter 9 | 19 | Matthew 24:1-2 |
| 10 | Mark 1:40-42 | 20 | Matthew 24:14 |
| 11 | John chapter 11 | 21 | Luke 21:24 |
| 12 | Matthew 20:34 | 22 | Matthew 16:21; |
| 13 | Luke 7:13-15 | | Mark 8:31; |
| 14 | Matthew 9:36 | | John 12:32,33 |
| 15 | John 8:46 | 23 | John 5:37. |

7 The Guru- Dead And Alive Again

Before the Guru died He said of Himself The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And He will be raised on the third day".¹

This is recorded several times in the Gospels, and it is just as much a part of His teaching as anything else.

The resurrection of Christ was the great, final demonstration that He is the Son of God. He was "declared to be the Son of God in power... by His resurrection from the dead."²

So let us think of this very important teaching that fell from the Guru's lips, and see how it was fulfilled.

Dead and Sealed in a Tomb

Before Jesus was crucified He was mocked, spat on, and fearfully beaten with a terrible whip. This whip had sharp metal pieces fixed in the tips of the thongs (such was the whip with which the Romans scourged their prisoners).

This whipping left His back torn and bleeding. Under such punishment others before Him had died. Then at the place of crucifixion He was nailed to the cross and lifted up in the air to die an extremely painful and humiliating death.

At the end of six hours on the cross He said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And having said this He gave up His spirit and died.³

Then soldiers came to break the legs of Jesus and those who had been crucified at the same time. Then the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man, then of the other which had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out

blood and water."⁴ John and other disciples were there and saw all this with their own eyes.

Later that same day some friends got permission from the Roman governor and took the dead body of Jesus down from the cross, and laid it in a tomb carved out of the rock in a hillside. The body was bound with grave clothes, according to the custom of the times. And a large stone was rolled over the entrance of the tomb.

The enemies of Jesus had gone to Pilate, the governor, and asked him to post a guard at the tomb, "Lest his disciples come by night and steal him away." Pilate said, "You may have a guard of soldiers. Go your way and make it as secure as you can." So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting a guard.⁵

Jesus was dead. There is no doubt at all about that. His friends knew it and mourned. His enemies knew it and rejoiced. The soldiers knew it and were satisfied. The Roman governor knew it and was both relieved and troubled. The whole city knew it and wondered. The Guru was dead and sealed in a tomb, and that tomb was watched day and night by an armed guard. Apparently there was no way whatever for His body to get out of the tomb.

The Tomb Became Empty

But on the third day after the crucifixion some followers of Christ came to visit the tomb and found it empty. Here is the record Matthew gives:

'Now after the day of rest, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his garments were white as snow, and for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. And the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. Then go quickly

and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead’.”⁶

His disciples also came to the tomb and began to understand. The dead body of Jesus Christ, which had been so severely wounded by the beating and the nails and the spear thrust in His side, came forth from the tomb perfectly whole. That body which had given up the spirit and died, received the spirit again, was restored to life, and left the tomb completely transformed.

This is the record we have in the Bible. It was written by people who lived at the time and knew all the facts. But if we are sensible, thoughtful people, can we really believe it?

Yes, of course we can. Sensible, thoughtful people are the very ones who should believe it. In truth, the evidence is so strong that we make a big mistake if we don't believe it.

Some of the Evidence

First, as we have seen, we have the word of Jesus Christ Himself. Before He was crucified He plainly taught His disciples that He would rise from the dead. And after He rose He rebuked them for being so slow to believe it, and gave them abundant evidence that He had indeed risen.⁷

Second, His disciples were sure that Jesus rose from the dead. Here are their words. Peter charged the leaders of Israel with the murder of Christ, and said that they had killed the “prince of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.”⁸ And again, “We are witnesses to all that He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem ... God raised Him on the third day and showed Him openly - not to all the people, but to witnesses whom God chose, even to us, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.”⁹

The other disciples also taught the same thing with tremendous assurance - “With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”¹⁰

Paul summed up the matter in these words: "I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and that He was seen by Cephas (Peter), then by the twelve. After that He was seen by more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, He was seen by me also."¹¹

Many Infallible Proofs

After Jesus rose He showed Himself alive to His disciples "by many infallible proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God".¹² His disciples saw Him, touched Him, talked with Him, and ate with Him. Sometimes He appeared to individuals, sometimes to groups. As many as 500 people at one time saw Him.

Objections

Now someone may object and say, "Jesus didn't really rise from the dead. Perhaps His disciples stole His body away. Or maybe they only made up those stories." But for several good reasons we can see that this is hardly possible.

It would have been very difficult to steal the body. The Roman soldiers had their orders, and certainly they were not on the side of the disciples. But even if it had been physically possible to overcome that armed guard and steal the body, there is no evidence whatever which points to that. And we should not believe such a thing without evidence. In fact, all the evidence is against it.

These men, judging from all we know of them, were among the most godly men who ever lived. A study of what we know of them does not at all suggest that they were deceivers. Their writings contain the highest code of ethics that can be found, and even their enemies could not deny that they lived in accordance with their teaching.

They warned that all lying and deception was hateful to God and actually deserved punishment in hell.

Moreover, all of them were cruelly persecuted for their teaching about Christ, and most of them were put to death. James died by the sword of king Herod. John was punished by banishment to a barren, rocky island. Paul was beheaded. The others, according to accounts that have come down to us, fared no better. But they endured the scorn, the beatings, the torture, the imprisonments, and death itself, with peace and joy. They were happy to suffer for Christ. Now men do not joyfully suffer and die for something they know is a lie. If these men had not known Jesus rose from the dead would they have suffered and died for teaching He had? Is it not absurd to think so?

And then, these men were transformed from a group of fearful men, hiding from their enemies, into bold and courageous witnesses who turned the world upside down. In the place of doubt and fear they found power and joy and overcoming faith and courage. It was plain that God's Spirit was working in them mightily. Now the thing that had much to do with transforming them was just this conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead.

So nothing is more clear than that the disciples believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. I have written more fully on this in the last chapter of this book.

Someone else may say, "Well, they didn't deliberately lie about it, but they were deceived. They thought they saw Jesus but really they did not."

This objection is no more reasonable than any other. For it they were deceived, who or what deceived them? Jesus certainly would not have tried to. The disciples saw that the tomb was empty. No doubt about that. Then they talked with one who said He was their Lord Jesus. They ate with Him, touched Him, saw the marks of the wounds in His hands, feet, and side. They were with Him for forty days after the resurrection and had every opportunity to satisfy themselves as to who He was.

No, they were not deceived. They knew that Jesus Christ had indeed risen from the dead. And we should listen to them. After all, the testimony of so large a number of eye-witnesses about anything would carry great weight in any law court in the country. Two or three witnesses, or even one, can establish a point in court. And in the case of Christ's resurrection we have far more than two or three witnesses. And they are witnesses who have never been shown to be false in anything, and who were willing to lay down their lives for their witness.

We can't get around the facts - the disciples, who were in a position to know, were positive that Jesus had died, and risen again.

Other Reasons

Third, many thousands of people in Jerusalem believed Jesus rose again. When Peter at first preached that Christ had risen from the dead, 3,000 people believed him the same day.¹³ A little later others also believed: "Many of them which heard the word believed. And the number of the men was five thousand."¹⁴ Still later, "More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."¹⁵

Even many of the priests who had been among those who had opposed Jesus, repented and believed - "The Word of God spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly, and a large number of the priests became obedient to the faith."¹⁶

So there were many thousands who became believers in a very short time in Jerusalem alone, and these included some of the former enemies of Jesus who had been glad to see Him put out of the way. Now the point is this - all these people were in Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified and buried. In a few minutes they could have walked to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. No doubt many of them did so. And they knew the tomb was empty. Remember also that 500 people saw Jesus after He had risen. These people could be talked with and questioned.

Moreover, all these believers had opportunity to observe very closely the original disciples of Jesus. They could see that they were holy men of God, not liars and deceivers. They saw their great power and peace and joy. They saw the Spirit of God working with them. And they became utterly convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Lastly, we should see that the enemies of Jesus could not bring forth any evidence that He had not risen. How gladly they would have done so if it had been possible. They hated Christ and had Him killed. They thought they had gained the victory over this troublesome Guru. Now the disciples insisted that He had risen from the dead. Still most of them would not repent, and if possible, they would have liked to destroy both the disciples and their teaching. So much do hatred and prejudice and unbelief blind the mind! But they could not disprove what the disciples taught.

If the tomb of Jesus still contained His body, all they had to do was to take people there and prove it. Or if the body was somewhere else, all they had to do was produce it. But they, too, knew the tomb was empty, and as for Jesus, they did not know what had happened to Him. And they could not answer the argument and the witness of the disciples. All they could do was rage and threaten and persecute them. But persecution does not answer any argument, or get rid of any fact.

The Facts

So, according to all the facts we have, Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead. One famous historian dared to say that Christ's resurrection was "the best proved fact of ancient history." Christ then went into the unseen presence of God and sat down in the place of highest glory and honor. After this He sent the Spirit of God in mighty power to His disciples who then taught the truth to the people. The Spirit of God is still in the world convincing men of the truth and bringing them to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The resurrection is the strongest evidence that God could give that He had sent Christ into the world and that Christ is the Son of God. It was also the great, final test of whether Jesus was really a teacher come from God. And He passed the test. His resurrection shows that we can trust Him in everything else He taught, whether it was about God or Himself or ourselves or the way to God. He did not merely appear on the scene, teach certain things, and then die as other men and disappear. He backed up His teaching with strong evidence while He lived; He presented even stronger evidence when He died and rose from the dead.

A Question

We have now looked at the basic truths of the Gospel of Christ. It is time to ask a very important question. The question is this: what will you do with Christ? He is the Son of God, the true Gurudev. His teachings are absolutely true and authoritative. They are also beautiful and holy. He has given solid evidence that He has come from God and spoke the truth. He wants to liberate you from all bondage. He can forgive all your sins now. He can make you a child of God forever.

What will you do with Him? He stands before you crucified for your sins and risen from the dead. He seeks your highest good. Will you give Him your heart? Will you trust Him and receive Him as your Lord and Saviour?

Go directly to him. We have already given many of His promises in this book. Believe these promises and plead them in the presence of God. Call on Him and He will hear. Seek Him and He will be found.

May God enable you to do so for your own great good, and His own great glory.

References for the chapter :

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----|----------------------|
| 1 | Matthew 17:23 | 9 | Acts 10:38-41 |
| 2 | Romans 1:4 | 10 | 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 |
| 3 | Luke 23:46 | 12 | Acts 1:3 |
| 4 | John 19:32-34 | 13 | Acts2:41 |
| 5 | Matthew 27:63-66 | 14 | Acts 4:4 |
| 6 | Matthew 28:1-7 | 15 | Acts 5:14 |
| 7 | Luke 24.25-48, etc | 16 | Acts 6:7 |
| 8 | Acts 3:15 | | |

8 The Guru Warns Of A Danger

We have an enemy who is fierce and powerful, and he is determined to ruin us. He is an enemy who conceals himself so cleverly that some men deny his existence. He is an enemy so cunning in his ways that men even side with him as with a friend.

Evil entered our world by the deliberate sin of the first man. "Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men have sinned."¹ But behind the sin of man was the sin of another who first brought sin into the universe. He was an angel who, like man, was created perfect and upright. But he too, by a deliberate choice, sinned against God.

He began to wish to be on an equality with God. His sin was the sin of a king described in these words in the Old Testament: "How you are fallen from heaven. O Lucifer, son of the dawn! How you are cast down to the ground, you who had laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne on high, above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High!'"²

Satan and his Method

Now he is called Satan, and the devil, and that old serpent. That one sin which he permitted to rise in his heart completely corrupted him. His desire to exalt himself like God was his utter ruin. This creature rebelled against God the Creator, and lost his place in God's kingdom. Filled with deadly hatred for God and for God's creation on earth, he came to the first man and woman and succeeded in corrupting them as he had himself. He said, "You shall be as gods", and persuaded them to disobey God. From that time this powerful evil spirit has been in the world working against God.

Jesus Christ taught that the devil indeed exists, and

revealed many things about him. Satan's character and method are laid bare by one statement Christ made to some wicked religious leaders: "You belong to your father the devil, and you will do what your father wants. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies".³

This is very strong language indeed to use to those who thought they were children of God. But Jesus always spoke the truth and told men what they needed to know.

The devil is a murderer and a liar. He brings death to people by keeping them from God. He ruins them in body soul and spirit, and ruins them forever. And his principal method is deceit. He leads people to destruction by telling them lies. It is the truth that sets people free. Lies enslave and destroy. So he lies to us about God so that we will have a false idea of what He is like. He also lies to us about ourselves, and about himself. He tells lies about Christ and the way of salvation. Very often his lies are mixed with a measure of truth so that all he says will appear to be the truth.

Satan's method is very powerful and very successful. According to the Bible he is "that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world".⁴ The deceiver of the whole world" - this must mean that, generally speaking, the whole of mankind, in every age and in every country of the world, has been (and still is) deceived by the devil. Only a comparative few have been delivered from his deceit. God tells us this that we might understand our danger.

Satan succeeds so well because he comes in attractive forms and tells pleasing lies. "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."⁵ The devil does not always appear with hideous countenance, breathing out fire. When it pleases him he can come as an angel of light - shining, brilliant, godlike.

He is called the god of this world: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."⁶ He is a god who works evil in men's hearts and produces darkness in their minds.

Satan is the great magician. He is the supreme deceiver. He can pretend to be an atheist when that suits him, and encourage the denial of God. He can also speak of God and encourage religion when that suits him. He wants to ruin men in any way he can, so religion and atheism are both the same to him if he can use them for his purpose. So he often comes in the robes of religion and seems as pious as anyone could ever be. Failure to understand this leaves us open to terrible deception. After all, can you think of a better way to deceive people about God and the way to God than entering the realm of religion and working there? No, you cannot, and neither can Satan.

Particularly, he blinds men about the Gospel of Christ so that they will not see its truth, beauty, and glory. He knows full well that it is Christ's Gospel which can overthrow his rule in men's hearts.

The god of This World

Satan is the "god of this world", who turns people from the true God, the Creator of the universe. What is his deadly purpose in this? Perhaps he has many, but one purpose certainly is the purpose of any who wish to be a god. There is no doubt at all that Satan seeks to be worshiped. It is written that he tried to get even Christ to worship him: The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And he said to Him, 'All these I will give you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me'. Then said Jesus to him, 'Get away, Satan! For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve'.

"Fall down and worship me" - Satan tried with Jesus and failed. He does not fail with everyone. Some people worship him knowing more or less what they do. But many

worship him who, no doubt, are not aware of what they do - they may think they are worshiping God.

“Nonsense”, someone will say, “there is no devil. The whole idea is absurd. It’s pure superstition”. Ah, but how do you know that? If Satan really does exist and really does blind people’s minds, he can also blind them to his own existence, if he wishes. In such case, the person who says there is no devil has simply been blinded by the devil he denies. As for myself, I am fully convinced of Satan’s existence because of the plain teaching of Jesus Christ. There are other things that should cause us to suspect, at least, that he exists (after all, there is a large amount of strange devilishness in the world). But Christ’s teaching alone should be enough to convince us. He knows all about the world of spirits, as He does the world of men, and He has told us that Satan exists. And in the light of His word the opinion that he doesn’t exist carries no weight whatever. I might add that Christ’s teaching concerning the devil explains a great deal that goes on in the world which is hard to explain in any other way.

Satan’s Helpers

Satan has a host of helpers called demons or evil spirits. Jesus cast many of them out of people whom they had possessed: That evening they brought to Him many who were possessed of demons; and He cast out the spirits with a word.⁸ This is one way in which Jesus showed His mighty power. No evil spirit, not even Satan himself, could stand before Him. At His word they tremble and flee. Jesus gave this same power to His disciples: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons”, was His command to them.⁹

These evil spirits are fallen beings who, like Satan, were originally created pure and upright, but who fell into sin like him by deliberate choice. According to the Bible, they too desire to be worshiped. It is written that the people of Israel in olden days sometimes worshiped them. They sacrificed to demons.¹⁰ They did so, according to the Bible, when they made offerings to the gods they had made

rather than to God, the great Maker of the universe.

These wicked spirits are everywhere in the world, deceiving people and trying to steal the worship that belongs only to God. (How dangerous then is the doctrine of *ishta devata* - choose the god you like).

Such is the teaching of our great Guru about Satan and his helpers. He did not fully explain why God permits them to work as they do. But some things we can know from the Bible.

First, God did not ever create anything evil. Satan and his followers made themselves evil after their creation. They willfully exalted themselves and rebelled against God.

Moreover, we may say that they could have no power to work at all if God did not permit it. God is absolutely sovereign. He could immediately remove the devil and all evil spirits from earth to hell, if He thought it best to do so. There are not two supreme powers, one good and the other evil. Satan is stronger than we are, but he is much weaker than God the Almighty.

It should also be clear that God has wise purposes in permitting evil spirits to work as they do. These purposes He knows perfectly, but we see them dimly or not at all. One purpose may be the testing of men.¹¹ But even if we don't know God's purposes, one thing we may be sure of. God always does the best and wisest possible thing.

We should also understand that the only power that Satan can exercise over men has been gained because mankind rebelled against God, as the devil did. If men had always refused Satan's suggestions, he would have no authority at all to harm them. He has power in our world because men have submitted to him and obeyed his voice. He is able to deceive men so completely because they want to be deceived.

But the thing that should most concern us is how to be liberated from the power and deception of the devil. And here is the good news: this is just what Jesus Christ came

to do. "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, to destroy the works of the devil."¹² Jesus not only liberates us from sin, but from the power of Satan as well. Now if we will turn to Him and trust Him, we can gain the victory over Satan. The day is coming when God's purposes in allowing the devil to work will be fulfilled. Then God will remove him completely from the world and Christ alone will reign. Eventually Satan will be cast into a lake of fire where he shall be tormented forever. And all those who have followed him here will have to follow him there. They too shall be thrown into the lake of fire. This is what the Bible teaches, what the Guru Himself taught. In this way God will purify His world and separate from it all evil doers. In the meantime, the devil is still permitted to work on the earth.

Other Helpers

Satan has many helpers also among men. See above what Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day - "You are of your father, the devil". They boasted that they were the children of God and they professed to be leaders and teachers serving God. But it was not so. Alas, they really served Satan their father.

Very often this is true - not in Christ's day only, but in every day. The Bible warns us again and again to be on our guard against false teachers.

Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, said, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."¹³ On another occasion. He said, "Many shall come in my name, saying, 'I am Christ', and will lead many astray"; "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray even the chosen ones of God, if it were possible."¹⁴

The Guru's disciples, learning these things from Him, were also careful to warn us.

"Beware that no one takes you captive by philosophy and vain deceit, according to human tradition ... and not

according to Christ.”¹⁵

“False prophets also arose among the people, just as there shall be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive false teachings.”¹⁶

“Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”¹⁷

False Teachers

So it is plain that many who are called religious leaders, priests, and gurus, are not true servants of God. They care nothing for the spiritual good of the people, or the glory of God. They are out only to fill their own bellies, or to gain a name for themselves, or to establish their own righteousness, or to gain some other object they have in mind. They teach according to the desires of the devil. This is true even though the people who follow them may not have the least idea that it is true. Sometimes the leaders themselves may not know it - they may be completely deceived themselves.

These false teachers raised up by Satan may come with shining faces. They may seem very pious, respectable, and religious. They may be refined and educated men. ‘Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not a strange thing that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.’¹⁸ This reference is speaking of “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. “But it also applies to many who never heard of Christ. Satan’s method is the same everywhere; he wants to get people to accept his servants as servants of God.

Notice carefully this fact - though they are Satan’s servants they seem to be “servants of righteousness”. They may be admired and applauded as teachers of the truth (while the true servants of God may be rejected and despised). But their teaching comes from Satan, whether they know it or not, and it ruins men’s souls. But how eagerly the crowds sometimes run after them! How many are at-

tracted to their false light and plunge into error and destruction! This is the danger that the Guru revealed to us. If we are wise we shall listen to him.

Does not a question begin to burn in our minds? Surely we must ask it. How can we distinguish false teachers from the true? How can we be sure whether a particular teaching is good or bad, from God or from Satan? Or, to put it more briefly, how can we know the truth?

This is a life and death question - eternal life and eternal death are involved in it. We will attempt to answer it in the next chapter.

References for this chapter:

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|------------------------|
| 1 | Romans 5:12 | 10 | Deuteronomy 32:17 |
| 2 | Isaiah 14:12-14 | 11 | Luke 22:31,32 |
| 3 | John 8:44 | 12 | Uohn 3:8 |
| 4 | Revelation 12:9 | 13 | Matthew 7:15 |
| 5 | 2 Corinthians 11:14 | 14 | Matthew 24:5,24 |
| 6 | 2 Corinthians 4:4 | 15 | Colossians 2:8 |
| 7 | Matthew 4:8-14 | 16 | 2 Peter 2:1 |
| 8 | Matthew 8:16 | 17 | 2 John 4:1 |
| 9 | Matthew 10:8 | 18 | 2 Corinthians 11:14,15 |

9 How Can We Know The Truth?

We have been thinking about God and man and the way to God - matters of vast significance indeed. There is a great variety of opinions and teachings about these subjects and we all believe something or other about them. But what good reason do we have to think that what we believe is right? How can we know whether it is true?

Before we look directly at this exceedingly important question, let us think of some reasons why people believe what they do. And let us consider whether they are good reasons.

Many believe what the people around them believe. They have no higher reason than this. They are willing to follow the crowd without troubling themselves about these things. More or less, they go along with what their group or sect or party or caste thinks is true.

But believing something merely because one's group believes it is hardly a good reason. It surely is not good enough for the person who is hungry for the truth. For the opinion of one's group is anything but certain. Opinion in some groups tends to atheism. In another group there is a strong belief in God. In one group there is a hearty attempt to follow Jesus Christ. Another group feels that rejection of Christ and persecution of Christ's followers is best. Somewhere some group believes the exact opposite of ours, and how do we really know which is right?

If it is the truth we are after, we cannot thoughtlessly adopt the opinions of others. The majority is often wrong, and it is possible that every single person you know may have false views of God and the way to God. How can you tell?

Many people follow tradition. The old ways are good enough for them and they want nothing different. They believe what their fathers believed. This is the only rea-

son why many are called Buddhists or Muslims or Hindus or Christians. They believe certain things and practice certain customs only because they were born in families that do so. And those customs and beliefs have been handed down from generation to generation, perhaps from olden times.

But is this good enough for person hungry for truth? Perhaps these traditional beliefs are wrong. Perhaps these customs are useless and vain. How can we be sure they are good? Perhaps they were in error to begin with and those who have followed them generation after generation have simply been following error. Is it wise to hold to beliefs and practices simply because they are old? Surely, we realize that others may believe the exact opposite of our cherished beliefs, because of equally old traditions. By what standard can we judge which is right?

What the poet Kalidasa said about poetry is true of religion as well - 'All is not good because it is old.' Age alone is not proof of the truth. There are very old errors in the world as well as old truths. How can we distinguish between them?

Many believe what their priest, or guru teaches them. They may reason like this: "If my priest, my guru, does not know the truth about God, who does? That is his calling, his field of knowledge.* This may sound reasonable, but is it? In the previous chapter we saw the warning Jesus Christ gave about false teachers. They are not empty warnings. If we listen to Jesus we will know that accepting the teaching of just any priest or guru is dangerous folly. By thoughtlessly following some teacher or other, we may plunge into deadly error. Anyone may set himself up as some great one and start teaching, even if he does not have the truth to teach.

A person may be a famous guru, or philosopher, or founder of a religious sect, or he may be someone who claims to be a mighty prophet, or the Saviour of the world, or even God incarnate. But we must learn to ask at least one question about such a person - do we have anything

more than his own word for it that he speaks the truth? Is there any solid evidence that supports his teaching and that should cause us to believe him? Is there any proof such as Christ showed?

Simply because a man is called a priest or guru, does not make him a teacher of the truth. He may be teaching falsehood. And if he is, he may lead us to hell instead of heaven. How can we tell? Someone else's guru may be teaching the exact opposite of ours. Who is right and how can we know?

Many believe what pleases them. They may not know why it pleases them - it just does. If they hear something on religion or read religious books, they may say, 'I like this', or 'I don't like that.' And they suppose that if they like something, if something satisfies them, it must be true. In other words, they believe what is appealing or agreeable to them. This is their standard. They get comfort from certain religious ideas and refuse to give them up, even when there is no evidence for their truthfulness.

It is easy to see that this is certainly not a good reason for believing something. For one may get comfort and satisfaction from a lie, and find it far more pleasing and agreeable than the plain truth. A sweet delusion may comfort us more than disagreeable facts.

He who is hungry for truth should ask himself, what is my real desire? Do I want teaching that merely pleases me? Or do I want the truth, whatever it may be, and even if it is unpleasant to me?

Some say they will believe only what is proved by science. But has science proved that we should believe only what is proved by science? Absolutely not. Actually, science doesn't prove anything about God, or any number of other important matters. And it would be a foolish mistake to think that science can pronounce the final word on God or on spiritual experience. It would be an equally big mistake to assume that there is no other kind of truth than scientific truth, and no other kind of evidence than that

which can be found in a laboratory. There are many vitally important truths completely outside the scope of science.

Some say their conscience will guide them to the truth. They may say, "That which is contrary to my sense of right cannot be true. My moral sense is my standard." This sounds good, and certainly an enlightened sense of right and wrong is a very fine thing.

We know that God has given to all men a conscience. We are not like the lower animals, but are far above them and have a moral sense. But we must understand too that even conscience is imperfect and may be deceived. It is not an infallible guide to the truth. It is like a judge within us who views the evidence and gives judgment. But it may not have all the evidence, and actually it may misunderstand the evidence it has. It may also be strangled and silenced like a judge on the outside.

Jesus once warned His disciples: The hour is coming when someone who kills you will think he is doing a service for God")¹

Some people say it is right to worship idols and that their conscience is not offended by it. Others are shocked and horrified by all idolatry. In the early days of Christianity many Romans worshiped the god Jupiter as the Supreme Deity, even though he was an immoral god, an adulterer, according to their own stories about him. Their conscience did not seem to be offended by that, and they did not seem to consider that such an impure being could not possibly be God. But when Christians refused to worship him, they were offended. On the other hand, some of them evidently thought it was no great wrong to persecute or even kill those Christians who refused to worship Jupiter or their other gods!

People may get all twisted up about this matter of right and wrong. They may believe and do the wrong thinking it is right, and reject the right, thinking it is wrong.

No. Conscience is not infallible and can't at all teach us what we need to know about God and salvation. We need

a better guide to show us infallibly what is truth and what is error.

Human Reason

Someone will say, "You are right. None of these things is sufficient. We need something more than the opinions of others, traditions, gurus, pleasing ideas, science, or conscience. This higher standard we need is reason. I will believe what is reasonable and reject what is foolish.*

This, too, may sound good. But is it really? Can reason find out the truth about God and man and the way to God?

The ability to reason, a mind that can understand - this is one of God's greatest gifts to man. But reason too is limited, and some things simply can't be discovered by it, for they are far above it.

God says, through one of His prophets, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."²

About many things, we can hardly tell whether they are contrary to reason or agreeable to it. In any case, if we look at man's history, one glaring fact stands out - reason alone is not enough to give us assurance of the truth about spiritual things. Like conscience, man's mind is something, but it is far from being everything. We are fallen and sinful people and our minds can easily make absurd mistakes. The more truly wise we are, the more humble we should be also.

Brilliant Philosophers

Through the centuries India has had profound thinkers and philosophers - as brilliant as any who ever lived anywhere. They have diligently applied their minds to the deep questions of God and man and the relationship between them. And what has been the result? To speak the truth plainly, the result has been disagreement, contradiction,

and confusion. What has seemed most reasonable to one has seemed most unreasonable to someone else. This is true also of Western philosophy and all philosophy since men began to speculate.

The various schools of Indian philosophy and thought have strikingly shown us the limitations of reason. We don't have to know very much about them to see this. Let us look very briefly at the various answers they have given about God, the world, man, and liberation. Of course much of what they taught was based on their reasonings about, and interpretations of, certain scriptures.

About God

1. The theory of God is completely unnecessary to explain the existence to the world (Purva Mimamsa).
2. There is kind of God, but He is limited and not the absolute Creator and Preserver of the universe (Yoga).
3. There is no God at all (classical Sankhya).
4. The highest Reality is an impersonal Brahman, and not the personal God (who is only an appearance of Brahman). It is "pure consciousness," and completely without attributes - Nirguna (Shankara's Advaita).
5. There is no such thing as "pure consciousness" without attributes. Pure consciousness is pure nothing. The highest Reality is a personal God, Vishnu, who alone is to be worshiped. The world is a manifestation of Him. There are many incarnations of God. Shiva is a lesser deity (Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita).
6. God is not impersonal and He has attributes. There cannot possibly be anything that is utterly without attributes. But the world is not a manifestation of God (Madhva's Dvaita).
7. Shiva is the supreme deity and Vishnu is a lesser deity (Shaiva Siddhanta).
8. K.M. Sen says that the idea of incarnation is not in

the Upanishads and that the Vedas would have rejected it.

About The World

1. Only the world is real (Charvaka).
2. The world is only an appearance and is unreal (Gaudapada)
3. The world is quite real, a product of an eternal God working with eternal atoms (Vaisheshika and Nyaya).
4. The world is neither real, nor unreal, nor both. It is the product of Maya or Avidya (Illusion or Ignorance), and is indescribable and false (Shankara's Advaita).
5. Shankara's interpretation of Maya is sheer nonsense. The world is real, the body of God (Ramanuja).
6. The world is quite real, but it is not the body of God, being completely separate from Him (Madhva).

The Relationship Of Man's Soul To God

1. There is no soul and no God, and so no relationship (Charvaka).
2. There are individual souls, but no God (Purva Mimamsa and classical Sankhya).
3. There is a God, but souls are mere substance, essentially unconscious and innumerable as atoms (Vaisheshika).
4. The souls of all men and Soul of the universe are one and the same. Paramatman and Jivatman, Brahman and Atman are identical. To think anything else is a result of Maya or ignorance (Shankara).
5. The souls of men are completely and eternally different and separate from God. It is ignorance to think that they are the same (Madhva).
6. Men's souls and God's are neither altogether the same nor altogether different (Ramanuja).

About Liberation Or Salvation

1. There is nothing to be liberated from (Charvaka).
2. Liberation cannot be attained by actions. Karma, good or bad or indifferent, leads to bondage and not to liberation (Sankhya).
3. Efforts to attain perfection by a thorough control of the body, the senses, and the mind, are aids to liberation (Yoga).
4. The soul fully liberated is free from all consciousness and activity - knowing nothing, feeling nothing, doing nothing. To get rid of bondage the soul must stop all actions (Vaishe- sika).
5. Liberation can be achieved only by dharma, which is contained in the commands of the Vedas. Action is the final meaning of the Vedas, which command us to perform certain acts and avoid other acts (Purva Mimamsa).
6. Liberation comes through knowledge. Everything else is secondary. Even the action the Vedas command can be done, misdome, or left undone. Knowledge and action are opposed like light and darkness (Shankara).
7. Liberation comes only by devotion to God (bhakti), and God is pleased only by it. All else is secondary. Action is an aid to bhakti (Madhva and others).
8. Liberation may come by separate paths, or by a combination of action, knowledge, and devotion (author of the Bhagavadgita and others).
9. There is no destruction, no creation, no one in bondage, no one striving for release, no one desiring liberation, no one liberated. This is the absolute truth (Gaudapada).

Some Questions

After studying all this very carefully, the earnest person, hungry for truth, is bound to ask some questions. Is this all that reason can do? Just what is the truth anyway? Is there a God or not? If there is, is He a personal God or an impersonal It? If personal, does He have incarnations or not? Is man's spirit one with God's or not? Is salvation by action alone? Knowledge alone? Devotion alone? Or by all three? Or by none of them? We must even ask, is it worthwhile even thinking about these matters? Can the truth about any of them be known at all?

It is vain to say that all these systems of thought are true. They are full of profound contradictions. We need no great light to see that if one thing is true, its opposite is not true. If the statement 'God exists' is true, the statement 'God doesn't exist' is false, and this applies to every one of the above statements. The spirit in man either is or is not the same as God's Spirit, etc. The truth is not somewhere in the middle - 'God may exist', or 'God half exists.' The truth is one or the other. But what is the truth about all these matters, and how can we know?

Men love to speculate. But all philosophy the world over shares the same fate - uncertainty. The most powerful intellects have only succeeded in contradicting one another, making statements which cannot be proved, and attacking the ideas of others. All of them are dealing with things they do not know, things too high for them.

What is the ordinary man to believe? And why should he believe it? Any teaching he might choose to accept has been rejected by someone else wiser than he is.

There is an old saying that the mind of man is like a monkey drunk on toddy and stung by a scorpion. This suggests man's unaided reason thrashes about wildly, trying to escape its pain; that much of its speculations, no matter how brilliant, is only brilliant ignorance.

I repeat what I said before - that the mind is one of God's great gifts to mankind. But it is extreme folly to make

a god of the mind and worship our intellect. We should not despise reason, but we ought to recognize it has bounds and limitations. By itself reason will certainly not arrive at the full truth about God and the way to God. We need a higher standard than this.

Some one says we can depend on enlightened reason. But whose reason is enlightened? Perhaps another's "enlightened" reason teaches him the exact opposite of yours. The fact is that anyone who exalts reason as the way of arriving at spiritual truth is really depending on himself alone, and is in real trouble. He is making his own thoughts the standard of truth. And he will never find the truth until he humbles himself and falls before God, repenting of all the foolish things he has said. Jesus once said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to babies; yes, Father, for so it pleased you."³

Six Blind Men

We all know the story of the six blind men who had a heated discussion about the nature of an elephant. They finally decided the only way to settle the argument was to go to the zoo and feel an elephant. This they did.

The first blind man approached the elephant and took hold of one of its legs. "I see", he said, "that an elephant is like a tree".

Another grabbed the elephant's tail and cried, "Tree? Impossible. An elephant is like a rope." The third blind man felt the side of the elephant and said, "Strangest rope I ever saw. The elephant is obviously like a wall." The fourth laid hold of the elephant's trunk. "What foolish fellows you are," said he. "An elephant is like a big snake." The fifth put his hand on one of the tusks, and asked. "Is a snake so hard and sharp? I perceive that an elephant is like a spear." The sixth grasped one of the elephant's ears. "You are all blind," he exclaimed. "An elephant is like a large leaf." And so they went away arguing more fiercely than when they came. For to each one, his own description seemed per-

fectly reasonable and all the others unreasonable.

Now in the case of an elephant even a blind man might feel here and there all over the body and get a good idea of its shape. But with God and spiritual things it is otherwise. These subjects are too difficult for man's groping reason alone.

Men by nature are spiritually blind. There is a terrible defect in us that prevents us from grasping the truth. Sin has put a veil between us and God. So much so that a person may say and believe that he is searching for the truth, and yet reject the truth when it is before him.

Spiritual Experience

"Well," someone says, "what we need is to have our spiritual eyes opened. If blind men would somehow receive their sight they could all see what an elephant is like and the argument would be over. What we need is spiritual experience, the eyes of the soul being enlightened to perceive Reality. This is how we can know the truth."

There is great truth in this. We certainly need the right kind of spiritual experience. But there are dangers and difficulties here too. One may think he has his spiritual eyes open and yet be more blind than before. To say we are enlightened ones is not necessarily the same as being enlightened ones.

Some people in all religions have various spiritual or mystical experiences. But such experiences in themselves do not give us the truth about God and the soul. They show us only one thing - that people have mystical experiences. The origin, the cause of these experiences is clouded. And men's varied religious experiences are like their reasonings and philosophies. They contradict one another.

One man says his eyes are opened and that his spiritual experience teaches him that the souls of all men and the Soul of the Universe are one and the same. Another insists that through his spiritual experience he sees the exact opposite. One has what he calls enlightenment and

says, "I am Brahman; I am God." Another has his experience and says; "My enlightenment has proved to me that I am a poor creature, infinitely beneath God. and not worthy to lift my eyes to Him."

One says his experience tells him he is good by nature. Another knows that he is wretched sinner, totally depraved. One man gets a mystical experience engaged in the worship of an idol. Another is repulsed by that idol and every idol, and is sure from his enlightenment that its worship is sin.

And if experience alone is our guide, who can prove positively what is truth and what is error in matters like these? But such experiences are not only contradictory, they may also be deceiving and dangerous.

Possibilities of Deception

There are three very deceitful powers in the world - Satan, sin, and one's own self. Here is what the Bible says about each:

'Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.'⁴ The deceitfulness of sin.'⁵

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.'⁶

If the devil can deceive the whole world, he won't have much trouble deceiving individuals like us. When this great deceiver Satan uses the deceitfulness of sin and works in our poor, deceitful hearts, what limit is there to the possibilities of deception? One may have an utterly false religious experience and think it is genuine.

Do we admit the existence of Satan at all? We must, if we believe the teachings of Jesus Christ. Then 'religious' experience by itself becomes a very doubtful thing. It is surely possible that Satan may give us all kinds of experiences, thrills, visions, and voices. He may take us into what seems to be another world. We may be fully convinced we are enlightened, and yet be only terribly deceived, and strongly confirmed in a wrong path. It is very dangerous

to open oneself to every so-called 'divine' experience.

Even if the devil did not exist, religious experiences would not necessarily be of God. The drug LSD can give experiences that some have insisted are 'religious.' Other drugs, ancient and modern, have done the same - quite apart from God. Also it is always possible to create a god in our own deceitful minds according to our fallen desires. We may worship that god and get satisfaction out of worshipping it. Many people who never bow down to a god of wood and stone made by human hands, bow down to false images of God made by human thought. Since man is fallen, his treatment of God will be sinful and fallen. And he could do all this, I suppose, quite apart from Satan's influences.

What some people pride themselves on as inner spiritual enlightenment may be something else altogether. They may be deceived and confound a lie with the truth. That which some think is Maya may be Reality, and that which they think is Reality may be Maya. And there is no way for them to be sure which is which. How arrogant and foolish and dangerous it is for any mere man to make himself, his thoughts, or his experiences the standard of truth! We need a higher standard than this.

The Higher Standard

But what is this higher standard? What is higher and more certain than the opinions of others, tradition, priests and gurus, pleasing ideas, conscience, science, reason, and religious experience?

The answer should be evident. It is the Word of God. It should be plain by now that if we really are to know the truth about God, man, and the way to God, God Himself must reveal it. God's revelation must be the absolute standard of truth.

Jesus Christ has taught us that God is love. He is like a Father tremendously concerned with mankind. He wants us to know the truth and He has been pleased to reveal it in a book. This written revelation is the Bible. As we have

seen, this is in accordance with the teaching of Jesus the great Guru. He taught that the whole Bible is the word of God. (Those who are interested in checking this may look up the following references: Matthew 5: 17,18; Luke 16: 17; John 10: 35; Matthew 4: 4; Mark 13: 31; John 14: 26; 16: 13; Luke 24: 25-27).

It is obvious that anyone may write a book and say God inspired him to do so. He may really be inspired of God. On the other hand, he may not at all be inspired of God. How can we know?

If we are wise we will seek the truth with an open mind and a humble heart. We will try to lay aside all prejudice and ask God to teach us. And we will examine the evidence.

Any book that really comes from God must come with very great evidence indeed. It is not enough for its authors to be great poets, or philosophers, or respected teachers, or ascetics. It is not enough for them to claim divine inspiration. There must be very good reasons why we should believe them. If we believe them without good reasons we may be completely deceived.

It is one of the great tragedies of mankind that so many people will believe almost anything if it comes in the name of religion, or on the authority of some religious book or teacher. And they demand no real evidence. The man who wants the truth must not be like this. Let him fearlessly face facts. Let the evidence, or lack of it, speak for itself.

As we have seen in chapters 6 and 7, we have some very good reasons why we should all believe Jesus Christ. This evidence is unique among all the religious books of the world. There is simply nothing like it outside the Bible. This evidence can be examined and grasped by the understanding. It should move us to seek for Christ, and to trust in Him, and receive every truth He revealed. When we receive Christ, and follow Him, we will know the truth by experience. He will enlighten us and enable us to understand the truths of the Bible.

The Infallible Rule

Here, then, is an infallible test of every religious idea. If it agrees with the teachings of Jesus Christ, it is true; if it contradicts Christ, it is false. For His words are the very words of God. Jesus said, "I am the truth". If He is the truth, then, quite plainly, anything that is contrary to His teachings is false. Jesus also said, 'If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? He who belongs to God hears the words of God.'⁷ Everyone who is on the side of truth will receive Christ's words, everyone. If we do not receive His words and believe them, it shows that we are not of God.

Everything - tradition, opinion, conscience, science, reason, experience - must be submitted to the test of God's revelation in Christ. Tradition must be tested by it. Reason must learn to see in it a higher wisdom. Experience must be interpreted by it. In other words, the total man must submit to God and to the authority and truth of His revelation in the Bible.

There are other reasons besides those given in chapters 6 and 7 that indicate the Bible is from God. But Jesus Christ Himself is the chief reason, and if a person will not believe the evidence about Him, he will not accept any other reasons. Christ is the great revelation of God and He came with the greatest evidence. As we trust Him, follow Him, and love Him, our consciences are enlightened, our reason finds its proper home, and our spiritual experience is true, rich and deep. He is the whole truth for the whole man. In Him we have the surest history to take the place of mere tradition, the highest standards of right and morality and holiness to teach the conscience, the most profound wisdom to satisfy the mind, and the highest experience to satisfy the spirit.

Christ's bodily presence is no longer in the world. But His Spirit is here to lead us to the truth, and His teachings are here to be read, studied, believed, and obeyed. They answer with absolute authority the ancient questions

about God, man, and the way to God. They can free us from all bondage and from useless, unsatisfying, and dangerous speculations. For these teachings have come from the heart of the perfect Guru, from the mind and heart of the all-wise God.

The Answer

So we have an answer to the question which is the title of this chapter - an answer that fully satisfies those who believe the evidence and receive Christ. How can we know the truth of God? Not by the opinions of our group - they may be often wrong. Not by tradition - it is too uncertain. Not by what pleases us - we are too sinful. Not by science - it cannot teach us God. Not by conscience alone - it is too weak. Not by reason alone - it is small and may err. Not by religious experience alone - it may deceive. Not by all these things working together - this may multiply errors.

How, then, can we know the truth? By understanding the revelation of the truth which is the Holy Bible. More particularly, by knowing Jesus Christ who is Himself the truth, by opening our hearts and lives to Him, by receiving Him as our Master and Teacher and Lord and Saviour, and by believing and obeying His Word. "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.⁸ "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself."⁹

References for this chapter:

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|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 John 16:2 | 6 Jeremiah 17:9 |
| 2 Isaiah 55:8,9 | 7 John 8:46,47 |
| 3 Matthew 11:25 | 8 John 8:32 |
| 4 Revelation 12:9 | 9 John 7:17 |
| 5 Hebrews 3:13 | |

10

Are All Ways
The Same?

'All religious teach more or less the same things and all are more or less true'; "There are many ways to God"; "It doesn't matter which way a person takes because they all end at the same goal"; "Jesus Christ is a great teacher come from God. This is true. But there are others just as great, and they have taught more or less the same things that He taught".

These statements express widely-held opinions. And these opinions seem, on the surface at least, very tolerant and very reasonable.

Tolerance

They sound tolerant, and real tolerance is certainly a desirable thing, just as religious persecution is a hateful thing. To despise or abuse or injure others merely because their religion is different from ours is wicked. But real tolerance does not need to say that all ways lead to God. Real tolerance says, why not let others freely study the facts and decide for themselves what they should believe? The important thing is truth, and force or fear or undue pressure should not be used to try to convince others that one thing is true, or another thing is false. Ideas should be carefully and calmly examined without prejudice and hatred. And there must be a lifting up of the heart to God to teach us.

So let us with open minds and seeking hearts look at the statements that open this chapter, and see if they are true. If they are true we should know it; if they are not true we should know it. And we should not be turned from seeking the truth by any mere talk of tolerance. The biggest question we can ask is not, what do men think is tolerant? but, what is true?

The statements at the beginning of the chapter also sound reasonable. There are many ways of getting to New

Delhi from Hyderabad', someone may say. "One may go by air, or by car. One may even go by ox-cart if one wants to, or walk. One may go via Nagpur, or Bombay, or avoid those places altogether. It is up to the individual and he may go as he pleases. One way may be shorter or better than another, but all ways will get one there. So it is with religion. All ways eventually reach God."

Now as far as New Delhi is concerned this is perfectly true -unless one puts his back to the north and heads for Cape Comorin, in which case one may fall into the ocean and be drowned. But New Delhi is not heaven. It was made by men, and the ways to it were devised by men, and they can do more or less what they like about all that.

Let us think of something out of this world - the moon. If we want to reach that, we can't go via Nagpur or Bombay; there is no train service, no airplane flights, no road, no ox-cart trail, no footpath. In fact, there is only one way to reach the moon, and that is by rocket. And the rocket must be powerful enough to break free from earth's gravity, and guided accurately enough so that it won't be lost in space.

God's heaven is not of this world, not of the material universe at all. By nature men do not know what it is, or where it is, or how to get there. In fact, men have their backs to it and the farther they proceed on the ways they have chosen, the farther they get from it. 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.'¹ And one's own way will never lead to God; we may be certain of that. How can a sinful man press on his own way and arrive in the presence of the absolutely holy God? If we want to reach God we must go His way. It is not left to men to devise ways. Heaven was made by the Supreme Being and it is up to Him to say what way or ways, if any. He has devised to lead there.

There are four possible views about the many religious ways we see in the world. First, no way leads to God. Second, all ways lead to God. Third, some ways lead to God, some don't. Fourth, only one way leads to God.

How is it possible to decide which of these views is the right one? Reason cannot reach into the unseen world, into God's mind, and tell us what God may think about it.

The answer is - and it must be repeated again and again - if we would know the truth about this, God must reveal it.

In religious matters we need revelation. God must speak. And our whole aim should be to discover through whom He has spoken and what He has said. If there is only one way to God we should be very careful indeed to find that one way. And we should pray to God and beg Him to show us the way so we may not be deceived.

We know that Jesus Christ is a teacher come from God. All the evidence points to this. We have in Him a tremendous revelation. But someone will say. "God has spoken through others also, and He has revealed the same way through all the great religious teachers and scriptures. The Bible, the Koran, the Bhagavadgita, etc. have some slight and unimportant differences, no doubt, but basically they are all the same." This opinion is held by many people. But just because an opinion is widely held does not make it true.

All the Same?

In the interest of truth we must not pass superficially over an opinion like this, but look closely at it.

Now it is obvious that in some things all religious books are similar. They all speak of some kind of God, of good and evil, of some kind of salvation or liberation. They all have some code of ethics. Sometimes, of course, the language in all these books will be very similar, as we might expect, when they are speaking about similar things.

But it would be a huge mistake to say that because they are similar in some respects they present the same picture of God, or the same way of salvation.

In chapter 9 we saw that the various schools of thought in India disagree radically on some very basic matters.

When we compare the religious books of the world the differences are just as basic and striking.

It is easy to give examples of this, and we should see some of these if we want to be clear in our thinking. What follows is not my personal opinion about things. I am simply setting forth what these books themselves plainly teach about some very important subjects.

Bible and Koran

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. This the Koran flatly denies.

Mohammed taught very plainly that Christ is not the Son of God. He asked how God could have a Son when He has no female companion (from the Chapter of Cattle). He said that Christians lie when they say Christ is the Son of God, and cried out that God should fight against them (from the Chapter of Repentance). He says that Jesus is only a prophet (from the Chapter of the Table).

So the Koran teaches the exact opposite of the Bible on this matter that is at the heart of Christianity. The Bible says over and over again that Christ is the Son of God; the Koran insists over and over again that He is not. Did God reveal one thing in the Bible and its exact opposite in the Koran? Did He who sent Christ saying He is the Son of God, send Mohammed to say He is not? What kind of God would this be?

We see the same contradiction when it comes to the crucifixion of Christ. According to the Bible the cross brings great glory to God. It is God's one way of destroying the sin that keeps men from Him, the only hope for any of us. The Koran not only makes nothing of the cross, it actually seems to cast doubt on whether Christ died on the cross, and many Muslims believe that He did not. For the Chapter of Women in the Koran seems to say that they did not kill Jesus, they did not crucify Him. Even if this can be interpreted so as to admit Christ's death on the cross, the fact remains that the Koran certainly does not glory in the cross or hold it out as mankind's one hope, as the Bible does.

Quite the opposite.

There are many other basic contradictions between the Bible and the Koran - contradictions on some of the most important subjects in religion.

The way of salvation in the Koran is the way of Mohammed. One must believe in Allah alone and in Mohammed as the Apostle of Allah, and do good works, to be saved. The Koran says that those who believe as he taught and do good works shall enter Paradise (from the Chapter of Women).

But the teaching of the Bible is that we cannot at all enter heaven by doing good works, nor by believing someone who denies that Christ is the Son of God. Our salvation required the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross, and is a matter of free grace.

So in many basic matters the Bible and the Koran stand at opposite poles, and to really believe one we must reject the other. Christ either is, or is not, the Son of God. He either did, or did not, die on the cross for our sins. His death either is, or is not, important. Good works either do, or do not, contribute to salvation.

We must be tolerant, yes, and kind and loving too. But tolerance should not pretend that differences like these do not exist. Jesus taught us to be kind - but not to be blind.

Bible, Bhagavadgita. and Upanishads

Very basic contradictions are found also when we compare the Bible with the Bhagavadgita or the Upanishads. Let us see what each says about some very significant matters.

God - according to the Bible, God is a personal Being, the Creator the universe, and men are creatures made by God. God is far above creation, and separate from it. The life of creatures and the spirit of man, are not the same as God's Spirit. But the Bhagavadgita and Upanishads teach otherwise.

Krishna in the Bhagavadgita says that prakriti (nature) is without beginning (13:19); that he is the Atman or Self that dwells in the heart of every creature, even in the wicked (10:20; 15:7; 16:18; 17:6; 18:61); and he insists again and again that our aim should be to realize this (for example, 13:28,30).

The Upanishads also speak of God being in everything. Katha says that the Immortal Self is in all men and in the gods. Isha says that the Lord is the one life shining forth from every creature.

According to the Bible there is only one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfectly united in One. All other gods are false and must be rejected, and idolatry is a fearful sin. The very first commandments of the law of God are these: "You shall have no other gods besides me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them."²

This is repeated again throughout the Bible in very strong language.

"You shall worship no other god."³

"If you at all forget the Lord your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you will surely perish."⁴

"You shall make no idol nor image ... to bow down to it."⁵

"Cursed be the man who makes any image, an abomination to the Lord."⁶

"Keep yourselves from idols."⁷

"What the nations sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God."⁸

God forbade the people to worship any gods, or idols, or the sun, or moon, or stars, or anything except Himself. He calls the worship of these an "evil thing," and an "abomi-

nation."⁹ According to the Bible there cannot be any excuse whatever for any kind of idolatry, and idolatry is shown to be a hateful thing to God and the ruin of a country that practices it.

God says that men forsake Him when they worship other gods, and that He will judge them for it: "I will pronounce my judgments upon them, because of their evil, for they have forsaken me, have offered sacrifices to other gods, and have prostrated themselves before the works of their own hands."¹⁰

God, in very fact, links the worship of gods or idols with the very worst sins that men can do and says that it will be punished in the world to come. The cowardly, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and adulterers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*¹ "Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers ... shall inherit the kingdom of God."¹²

Paul explained how this worship of other gods came about and how God hates it. "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made like mortal man or birds or four-footed beasts or creeping things ... They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever"¹³

So then, beyond any question whatever, any teaching or any teacher who encourages or even permits idolatry or the worship of many gods, or the worship of creatures or creation, is flatly opposed to the Bible and cannot possibly be one with it.

Now in the Bhagavadgita, Krishna teaches that even if a person worships other gods he gives faith to that person and grants his desires (7:21,22); that even those who worship other gods and make sacrifices to them are really worshipping Krishna, though not in the best way (9:23). He says he is the origin or source of the gods (10:2), and he

suggests that the gods are only his innumerable faces (9:15). He pictures the Lord of creation as saying men should honor and please the gods and thus obtain good (3:10-12). He says that those who worship the gods go to the gods, that is, the heaven of the gods. But according to the Bible, there is no kind of heaven for anyone who worships any god other than the one supreme and everlasting God before whom all must stand in judgment.

In chapter 10 Krishna says not only that he is in everything, but giving various examples tries to show that everything is a manifestation of himself. He speaks of various gods, of the sun and moon, of the king of the rakshasas, of certain men, of the king of beasts, of certain fish, of the gambling of the fraudulent, of the chief of the serpents, of death itself. Indeed he says he is all these things, and that they are only samples of his endless manifestations. In chapter 11 Arjuna says he sees all gods within Krishna. We should note that if God is everything, and everything is a manifestation of God, this necessarily includes all evil beings and evil deeds, as well as the good. Then what becomes of God's holiness?

We should also see that the whole picture of God and His relationship to men, to creation, and to those called gods, is entirely different in the Bible and in the Bhagavadgita. In fact, nothing more is required to show that these books clash on one of the most important of subjects - the nature of God and His worship. It is plain that Christ of the Bible and Krishna of the Gita cannot possibly be the same or have come from the same God. If God inspired both books and revealed His truth in both, would He absolutely forbid the worship of other gods (on pain of eternal punishment) in the Bible, and then contradict Himself, and permit it in the Bhagavadgita? It is unthinkable.

The Upanishads agree with the Bhagavadgita in this. The Taittiriya says that those who worship food as Brahman gain all material objects, that the person who worships intellect as Brahman does not err. The Brihadarayanaka says that it is not for the sake of the

gods that the gods are worshiped, but for the sake of the Self (the Supreme Brahman). The writers of the Vedas also offered praise and worship to a multitude of gods.

The Lord Jesus Christ will have none of it. He says as plainly as words can say, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve."¹⁴

The Way of Salvation

We see the same basic contradictions when these books speak of liberation or salvation also. The New Testament teaches the way of grace through faith alone, and insists that it is impossible to be saved by doing one's duty, by good works, or ceremonies, or self-effort of any kind.

But Krishna in the Bhagavadgita taught that one may obtain liberation in various ways. To him karma, jnana, and bhakti (the way of action and good deeds, the way of knowledge or spiritual enlightenment, the way of devotion) would all lead to the goal. In fact, he teaches that no matter what path men take it leads at last to him (4:11).

According to him, there is a heaven for doers of good deeds - but not a permanent one (6:40,41; 9:20,21). He teaches that a man reaches the Supreme by doing his duty without attachment (3:19); that by the right practice of yoga one may obtain final liberation (8:8-14); that both renunciation and action are good paths to liberation (5:2).

He teaches that a person may be purified through right action, worship, and meditation, and such like. He says that through worship and offerings one may find Brahman (4:31,32); that the heart becomes pure if a person practices meditation in the right way of yoga (6:10-12); and that by striving for perfection the yogi at last will attain it though it may take many lives on this earth (6:45). This would be salvation by working or evolving upward through many reincarnations, (a thing completely contrary to the Bible's teaching). He says that people can attain perfection by working (12:10); that each person can attain it if he worships and follows his (caste) duty (18:42-46); and that

if he does so, he cannot be sinning (18:47).

In all this there is the exact opposite of the Bible, and the teaching of Christ. According to Krishna there is cleansing from sin without the sacrifice of Christ, and there is the attaining of perfection by doing one's duty in the right way. The Bible teaches that human sin and depravity are so great that all man's attempts at purity and perfection end in nothing. It insists that man can be liberated by no law, no self-effort, no dharma, no practice of yoga, or anything like these. We may be sure that any teaching that leaves out the necessity of the cross of Christ, and overlooks man's basic and terrible sinfulness, does not come from the God of the Bible.

Is man God?

There is still further evidence that not all religions teach the same thing. That which has been called the 'great saying' of the Upanishads is 'Thou art that' (Chandogya). This is interpreted to mean that man's spirit and God's Spirit are the same; that man, in essence, is God.

This is stated in other words in the Upanishads. The Taittiriya describes with approval a sage who declared that he was life; that his glory was like the mountain peak; that he was Brahman himself, self-luminous, the brightest treasure; that he was endowed with wisdom and was immortal and imperishable. The Brihadarayanaka teaches that whoever realizes Brahman knows that he himself is the Self in every creature. The Kaivalya teaches that each person can say "I am Brahman," and that if we really know this we can break all bondage. The Mundaka states that he who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. The Bhagavadgita uses similar language (13:30, etc).

Is it necessary to point out again that the Bible teaches the opposite of this? In fact, we must say that the highest teaching of the Upanishads is regarded as the most deadly sin and blasphemy in the Bible. For according to the Bible, man is a sinful worm, a finite creature, and evil has affected him in every part of his being, body, soul and spirit.

But God is the Creator, holy, majestic, glorious, higher than all. For any created being to exalt himself like God, or to try to be equal with God, or to think he is God, or any such thing, is both extremely foolish and extremely wicked, according to the Bible. This was very like the sin of Satan for which he was cast out of heaven.

Let's Face The Facts

So the plain fact of the matter is, all religions do not teach the same things even in the most basic matters. Absolutely not.

If we say that God has revealed the things written in all these books, we are saying that He contradicts Himself and deliberately causes confusion. It is to say that He has no real regard for the truth. And this is utterly unthinkable and impossible.

The person who says that all these books teach more or less the same things goes astray in one of three ways. Perhaps he has not really studied all of them, and knows only the most superficial things. Or, if he has studied more deeply, he has either ignored the differences for the most part, or has not understood them. Or if he has understood them, he is not being honest when he says all are more or less the same. For rejecting Christ as the Son of God can never be the same as receiving Him. Trying to be saved without His sacrifice on the cross can never be the same as relying on that sacrifice alone. The worship of gods which the God of the Bible forbids can never be the same as the worship of the God of the Bible. The teaching that man's spirit and God's Spirit are one can never be the same as the teaching that they are not one. No. The various religious books teach different things about God and man and the way of salvation and we must recognize this.

"All right," you may say, that seems to be so. Then I won't accept any of these books. They are all a mass of contradictions and no one can make any sense out of them, I reject the whole lot.'

But this would not be wise. What if one of them is truly

the revelation of God? You would be rejecting this revelation. It is far wiser to pray to God that He might show us the truth, and consider the evidence, or lack of it, for each book.

Someone else may say, "I know what I will do, I will choose the best things out of each religious book and reject the rest."

But this may be the worst position of all - and the most arrogant. For this is to set oneself above all these books. It is to make a god of one's own thoughts. Who are you, who am I, that we can decide what is "best" in each religious book? What seems best to me might seem worst to you. and again the question comes, what if only one of them is the true revelation of God, what then? Would it be wise or safe to tear God's revelation apart, chose what pleases us, and reject the rest? And if there is only one true revelation, who are we to mix up parts of this true revelation with parts of other books which would not be God's revelation at all?

What Did Christ Teach?

It is time to ask what Christ, the teacher sent by God and the Son of God, taught about the way to God. According to Him are there many ways to God, or only one? There is no doubt at all about what He taught. Here are His own words:

'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.'¹⁵ He spoke even more plainly than this, if possible: Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not listen to them.'¹⁶

His disciples understood Him perfectly and cried out to the people of their day: There is no salvation in any one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'¹⁷

So the word of Christ and His disciples rule out all other ways, all other names, all other saviours. Jesus is saying

there is only one answer to the problem of man's sin, only one Mediator between God and man, only one way to God's presence. And that way is Himself.

People sometimes say, "It doesn't matter which name a person uses in his worship of God. You may use one name, we another; but all of us mean the same God." But this simply is not true. Of course there are many names for water; we may call it aqua, jal, pani, etc, and drink it and quench our thirst by whatever name. But we must make sure it is water. If we hear someone call acid or poison "Water," and drink it, the results will be quite different I

Names do have importance. They are words which distinguish; they separate between one thing and another, one idea and another, one person and another.

In the Bible God teaches that names make a great difference. He commanded His people in the Old Testament - "Make no mention of the names of other gods, and do not let such be heard out of your mouth."¹⁸ When He sent the nation of Israel into Canaan He said of the gods of the people there. "You shall tear down their altars . . . you shall break down the graven images of their gods, and destroy their name out of that place."¹⁹ Later God said that He Himself "will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they will be remembered no more."²⁰ Again God says "I am the Lord (Jehovah), that is my name; and I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to graven images."²¹

If names do not matter, why did the Most High God speak like this?

According to the New Testament, as we have seen, salvation is in one name only, the name of Jesus Christ. When He sent His disciples forth. He said that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached to all nations "in His name. God will not forgive sins in any other name, through any other person.

The name, Jesus Christ, means something. It represents all He is and all He has done. It includes, among other

things. His incarnation. His life on earth, His teachings. His death for sinners. His resurrection from the dead, and His present work at the right hand of God the Father. In this way. His name distinguishes Him from all others. What's in a name? A very great deal. Because Jesus laid aside His glory and came to earth and was obedient to the death of the cross God has "highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."²³

So the God of the Bible declares that in this name only there is salvation, and no other name will do. Jesus who died for sinners will have the honor of saving everyone who shall be saved. Will God forbid making mention of the names of other gods and then save or liberate people in those names? He says He will not.

When Jesus said He was the only way to God, He was not saying simply that the way is the spiritual way which He taught. He spoke these words as the historical person, the real incarnation of God, who lived, and died for our sins, and rose again. It is through this person, this Christ who lived in history, and who now lives at God's right hand, that we must come to God.

People may or may not like this teaching. But neither liking it nor disliking it can change the teaching. People may object that it is intolerant for Jesus to speak so. But they should remember that their quarrel is with the son of God, not with any man, and that they are being intolerant of Him, if they reject His words.

The idea that all religions teach the same thing and that all ways lead to God is opposed to one of the most basic teachings of Christ.

Why did the Guru insist that He was the only way to God? Not because He was proud and arrogant or intolerant. He said it because He was certain it was true. "I am the truth." He said. He who is the truth said "I am the way."

Only if we can prove He is not the truth should we think of denying that He is the way.

Think of the Cross

Christ is the truth and knows that only the truth can set men free. And He was willing to do more than talk about it or give discourses on the subject. He was willing to die in agony bearing our sins. His way was the way of the cross because He knew this was the only way to liberate men, the only way to bring a holy God and sinful men together.

We should ask all our questions in the light of the cross. The cross of Christ is an unanswerable argument against the common idea that all religions are the same. If there had been any other possible way to save men do you think God would have sent His own Son to the cross bearing the sins of the world? "If it is possible," Jesus cried the night before His crucifixion, "let this cup pass from me."²⁴ But it was not possible. There was no other way.

Jesus insisted He is the only way for another very important reason - He wants us to take this way. And it is evident that we may not, if we think there are other ways. He knows very well that we may reject the way of the cross which cuts across our pride and selfishness and sin, if we think other ways are good and true.

So it is not true that the number of paths to the Infinite One must be infinite. The truth is, the path must be what the Infinite One appoints and reveals. And this one revealed way is Jesus Christ.

The Way

We should be very clear what the way is and how to take it.

The way is not self-effort. It is not in simply exchanging religions, or keeping laws and ceremonies, etc. Actually there is no salvation in any religion, Christian or any other. The way is not a religion at all - it is a person; a person to know, receive, submit to, love, trust, and follow. The way is a living way, the Son of God Himself. When we trust Him

He comes into us and we into Him.

Where is the way? Where does it begin? Wherever Christ's Spirit is. And that means everywhere. We do not need to make long pilgrimages to find Him. He does not dwell in temples made with hands. He is not to be found merely here or there, in this sacred place or that. The way begins where each of us is; the way is at the very door of our hearts.

Where does this way lead? Not to some cold, impersonal deity, not to some cruel, vindictive god, not to some blank mystery, not to some unknowable fate, not to some inexorable judgment, not to an ocean of unconsciousness, not to extinction of being. No. The way leads to the Father. "No one comes to the Father but by me." To the home, the heart, the glory, the eternal presence, the everlasting kingdom of God, the Father -that is where the way leads, this way which is Christ Himself.

Will we take this way? God in provided this way. Will you take it?

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| 9 | Deuteronomy 17:2-5 | 21 | Isaiah 42:8 |
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| 11 | Revelation 21:8 | 23 | Philippians 2:9-11 |
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11

True Disciples

Jesus Christ is the Son of God sent by the Father into the world, the true Guru who shows the way of salvation. And, of course, He wants true followers.

During the days of His ministry on earth He called together a group of disciples to follow Him and to learn from Him. At the end of those days He gave His life as a sacrifice for sin and was buried. He then rose from the dead, and after 40 days, re-entered the unseen spiritual world. But He continues the work He began to do before He died.

Now we do not see His human form, we cannot behold Him in the body as the first disciples did. But His Spirit is in the world and He is still calling disciples to Himself, teaching them and preparing them to live for God. When He calls us to turn to Him and believe His Gospel, He is calling us to discipleship, and real faith in Christ now makes us disciples just as truly as it did when He taught in Israel nearly 2000 years ago.

A disciple, of course, is one who trusts in Christ as Lord and Saviour, takes Christ as Guru, follows His directions and learns from Him what the truth is and how to practice it. If we reject Christ we shall certainly perish forever, as He plainly taught. But if we truly receive Him and so become His disciples, we shall gain very great benefits, both in this world and in the world to come. Some of these have been mentioned earlier in this book, but they bear repeating.

First, we shall experience rest. Here are the Guru's own words: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'¹

What a word this is for those who are weary in the struggle of life and can find no rest anywhere! In this rest-

less world the hearts of Christ's disciples find rest in Him.

Then, if we are true disciples of Jesus, we shall know the truth. There is a word of the Guru which we have seen before, but which we do well to look at again and again: "If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."²

What truth is this that disciples shall know? The truth about God, and Christ, and ourselves, and the way of salvation. Christ's disciples do not need to speculate about what the truth may be, or run here and there trying to find it. As we believe His Word and do what He says, we come to place of real knowledge and sweet assurance concerning these matters. And as His disciples, we can know that our sins are completely forgiven, that we have eternal life, and that we have the truth. In a world of darkness and uncertainty this is tremendous knowledge indeed.

Also, as disciples, we shall have the Spirit of God living in us. Jesus repeatedly promised His disciples this. He said that He would send them the Spirit of truth* whom the world cannot receive, that this Holy Spirit would be their 'Comforter*' or "Helper", that He would teach them and guide them into all truth, and that He would be in them, and stay with them forever.³

This is the gift of all gifts Christ gives. And it is a gift experienced only by Christ's disciples among all the people of the earth. According to the Bible no one else has the Spirit of God living them, for the Spirit is given to them who receive Christ and to them alone.

Also, we can have peace and joy. When He was about to leave this world, Jesus said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you"; These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full;" "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have trouble. But be courageous. I have overcome the world."⁴

Peace and joy - these are what many people are grop-

ing for and cannot find. But faithful disciples find them in Christ. These are but two of His precious gifts to His faithful followers. I do not mean to say they are never sad or cast down, for they sometimes are. But even then they can experience what Paul wrote - "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Also, if we are disciples, we shall have other great blessings in this life, and at the end of this life, a blessed eternity in God's presence. The Guru said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel, but will receive a hundred times as much now in this life, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life."

This is not a promise of material wealth. Rather it speaks of spiritual wealth, of treasures of love and true friendship, of oneness with the people of God, of being eternally a member of His great family.

But in the above references we should notice the words "persecutions," and "In the world you shall have trouble." The world will be opposed to the true disciples of Christ (though it may not always seem to be), and there will be troubles at the hands of those who do not love Him. The world that crucified Christ will not embrace His people with joy. Jesus often warned His disciples that they would face difficulties, opposition, and suffering. He never made the way seem easy. He never promised comfort and ease, but He assured His disciples that even in the midst of troubles and tribulations, they would know God's embrace and God's peace.

In spite of any trial or persecution that may come, there is nothing better on earth than to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are blessings too numerous to record here, as we follow this all-powerful and compassionate and faithful Guru. For truly, as disciples of Christ, God is ours and every possible spiritual blessing. And in love He is calling men to this - yes, even the weakest and worst of men.

But if we wish to be His disciples we must do more than consider the blessings He gives. There are also conditions for disciples we need to understand. The above blessings are experienced by a certain class of people only. To have them we must be true disciples, not careless followers who do not know that they are doing.

Conditions

If we would be His disciples we must, as He Himself said, take His yoke and learn from Him. What does this mean? Bondage and weary labor without rest? No, just the opposite. As we saw above, it means rest and true freedom.

To take His yoke is to identify ourselves willingly with him. It is to choose to unite our wills and lives and hearts with His. It is to join ourselves to Him in the deepest and most personal way. It is to yield to Him, and move with Him, and serve Him, and rejoice with Him, and rest with Him.

Also, as disciples we must give Him absolutely the first place in our hearts. We must love Him more than anyone else, even the dearest members of our families. The Guru said. "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."⁶ In another place He indicated that if we do not love Him above all others, we cannot be His disciples.⁷

Moreover, we must renounce ourselves. He said again, "If any man would come after me, let Him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me";⁸ "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."⁹

The cross speaks of death. We must not exalt self as though it were God. On the contrary, we must renounce self, count ourselves worthy of death, understand that we deserve to be on a cross because of our sins. We must be willing to die to the old life, the selfish ways, the things that please only ourselves, and we must choose a new

life with Christ as our Master.

Then, we must have the right attitude to worldly possessions. The Guru said, 'None of you can be my disciple who will not give up all that he has.'¹⁰

Does this mean that all Christ's disciples must leave their homes and possessions and wander about the land begging for food? Certainly not. The Bible nowhere teaches such a thing. It does teach that we should renounce our possessions in our hearts. We must not live for them, we must not consider what we have as our own to do with as we please. As disciples we are to recognize that all we have belongs to God and that we are only stewards of it. If God tells us to retain it and use it for Christ's glory we should do that. But we must be willing to literally give away everything for His sake if it becomes plain that we should do so. Many people ruin their lives because of a lust for possessions and wealth. As disciples we must not live for the things of this world, but for Him who died for us and rose again.

Such are some of the chief conditions for discipleship which Christ revealed. Our attitude toward Him, toward others, toward ourselves, and toward worldly possessions must be right. Otherwise we cannot be His disciples. Do these conditions seem exceedingly difficult, or even unreasonable and impossible? Only if we do not believe Him and love Him. If we see who He really is and the value of the salvation He gives, if God is at work in us to bring us to repentance and faith, none of these things will keep us from receiving and following Christ. In fact, we will begin to see how reasonable and necessary they are. Sin is a radical disease and requires a radical cure.

Duties and Privileges

Just as there are certain conditions for those who wish to be disciples of Jesus, so there are duties and privileges for those of us who have become disciples. Let us look briefly at some of these.

We are to study His Word. Jesus said, as we have seen.

'If you continue in my Word you are truly my disciples." We should make great effort to know exactly what He said and receive it as the utter truth of God. We are not to quarrel with it, or doubt it, or neglect it, or shrink back from it. If we do not have a Bible we should by all means obtain one and use it. It is the Word of God and the proper food for our spiritual life and growth. 'Like newborn babies, long for the unadulterated milk of the Word, that you may grow by it."¹¹

We should set apart a time each day for Bible reading. It is probably best for beginners to start with the Gospels, in which we have recorded the words of Christ on earth. Then the rest of the New Testament and the Old Testament should be studied. The whole Bible is exceedingly valuable for our spiritual lives.

Then, we should obey the Word of Christ. Mere study is not enough. We must not read the Bible simply for the sake of information. Christ has given us His Word that we might put it into practice. He said, 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me."¹² And He asked, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"¹³ One of His disciples put it very truly and plainly, "He who says 'I have come to know Him', and does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him."¹⁴

It is vain to acclaim Jesus as a great teacher unless we are willing to follow Him and do what He teaches. He does not want our flattery; He demands our obedience.

We must continue in His Word. That is, we must go on studying and believing and obeying it, no matter what difficulties or troubles may come. Satan will do all in his power to cause us to turn back and give up faith in Christ, and discouragements will come to all of us from various sources. But we can, and we must, conquer them all through Him who loves us. One of the very big things in the life of a disciple is simply to go on with Christ, regardless of any trials and temptations he or she may have to face.

We must learn to pray. Jesus said that men should always pray and not faint. As believers we have the tremendous privilege of coming into the presence of God in the name of Jesus Christ and of knowing that He hears us. We should pray for others, for God's work in the world, and for ourselves. Men are always in need of God's grace and strength and help, and prayer is the means God has appointed to obtain them. Jesus said, 'Ask and it shall be given to you: seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.'¹⁶

As we study the Bible we shall learn what things to ask for in prayer, and how to praise God for His gifts and blessings. God hears and answers prayer and we should make it a daily practice to lift our hearts to Him and make our requests known with thanksgiving. It is good to have appointed times of prayer in conjunction with our Bible reading, but we may also pray any time, any place, and know that He bends down His ear to listen.

We must openly confess Christ before others. Jesus said, "Every one who confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."¹⁷ And Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes, which results in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, which results in salvation."¹⁸

The Bible never encourages anyone to try to be a secret believer, and we certainly should not attempt it.. If we are ashamed, fearful, and silent, we should not think we have really believed in Christ. Disciples are to be witnesses to their fellow men. They too need the truth of the Gospel of Christ, and it is our duty and privilege to tell them.

Disciples should be baptized in water. Jesus said to His followers, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"¹⁹ and, "He who believes and is baptized

shall be saved; but he who does not believe shall be condemned."²⁰

Baptism is an open identification of the believer with Christ and His people. It is a symbol of death to the old life and a resurrection to a new life in Christ. If we say we believe in Christ and yet shrink back and refuse to be baptized, we should question whether we have really believed at all.

We should have fellowship with other believers in Christ. We should go regularly to meetings where the Bible is taught and join ourselves to the true followers of Christ. We should be careful and prayerful in this, for not everyone who says he is a follower of Christ is really so, and not every church that professes to teach the truth really does so. But other real believers can be found, and their friendship and fellowship can be a great help in our life of discipleship. The Guru never intended His followers to face the battle of life all alone.

We must learn to give ourselves and our means to Christ's service. As disciples we are not to live for ourselves or use our time, money, and strength as we please without reference to Christ. All that we are and have are His, and we should live in the light of this."

We are to love all men, even those who may hate and injure us. We should desire their welfare, pray for them, and work for their salvation. Jesus said, "love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to them which hate you and pray for them which persecute you."²¹

We are to have a special affection for fellow believers in Christ, no matter what their social, financial, or educational standards may be. The Guru said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."²²

Christ's way is the way of love, and true disciples must walk in His footsteps. Doing so, we find ourselves in a great worldwide brotherhood of believers where, according to the Bible, there is no distinction of race or caste or color.

We must renounce all evil and follow after holiness of life. God says repeatedly in His Word. "You shall be holy, for I am holy"; and He tells us plainly, "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."²³

Our aim must be purity in everything, separation from all that is corrupt and wrong and false. There is no other way to please a holy God. And without following holiness we shall not inherit eternal life, regardless of what we may think we believe.

We should keep on trusting in Christ no matter what may happen. We shall meet trials. Things will happen in the world and in our own lives which we will not be able to understand. We shall sometimes be perplexed at God's dealing with us, and at times everything may seem dark as midnight. But the promises of Christ will not fail, and He will bring us safely through every trial and difficulty as we go on trusting Him.

Such are some of the duties and privileges of the disciples of Jesus. From one point of view they are all privileges and very high privileges at that. If a person has no mind to do these things, let him not vainly imagine that he knows God, or that he has believed in Christ. He has not believed as he should believe and is only deceived if he thinks otherwise. When God works in us His great salvation and new life in Christ, we inevitably have a mind to follow Christ and obey His words. We will not be made perfect on this earth, and no doubt all of us have reason to mourn the smallness of our love and faith and obedience, even after we have trusted in Christ. Even as disciples, it is possible for us to fail in many ways and bring dishonor to Christ. But by His grace we are made different people with changed desires and aims and outlook and destiny.

Of course, if we are really to obey Christ and live for God's glory, our own strength and wisdom are not enough. But, as we have seen, Christ gives us His own Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, to live in us. He is our help, our strength,

our life. Through Him alone we can conquer and live a true life of discipleship.

Finally, it is a source of great comfort and strength to know that Christ will never leave us, never forsake us. As His disciples, we can count on His presence to the end. He is ours and we are His forever and ever. Jesus said of His disciples, "I give eternal life to them; and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand."²⁴ And one of the last things He said to His disciples was just this:

"I am with you always, even to the end of the world."²⁵

References in this Chapter

- | | |
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| 3 John 14:16,17,26;16:13 | 16 Matthew 7:7 |
| 4 John 14:27; 15:11;16:33 | 17 Matthew 10:32,33 |
| 5 Mark 10:29,30 | 18 Romans 10:9,10 |
| 6 Matthew 10:37 | 19 Matthew 28:19 ³ |
| 7 Luke 14:26 | 20 Mark 16:16 |
| 8 Matthew 16:24 | 21 Matthew 5:44 |
| 9 Luke 14:27 | 22 John 15:12 |
| 10 Luke 14:33 | 23 1 Peter 1:16; |
| 11 1 Peter 2:2 | Hebrews! 2:14 |
| 12 John 14:21 | 24 John 10:28 |
| 13 Luke 6:46 | 25 Matthew 28:20 |

12 Questions, Objections And Answers

From time to time one hears or reads objections raised against the teaching of Christ, or questions about it. Some of them are very foolish and show that the person stating the objection or question doesn't really understand Christ's teaching. Others give evidence of some thought behind them.

The truth has nothing to fear. It does not have to try to escape from examination. Error may be afraid of the light, but truth never is. Certainly Christ never turned any sincere questioner away, and His followers also should not. So here we include certain objections and questions that we may meet with, and the answers that have occurred to me.

Objection: 'Christ's Gospel is only for the outcaste, the poor, and the ignorant.'

Answer: We must allow Christ Himself to tell us who His Gospel is for. And He tells us very plainly: The World' - 'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son'¹; 'All nations' - 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nations.'² "Whoever" - "Whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."³ These are His own words and they tell us clearly who the Gospel is for.

People of every nation, and kind, and caste, and race, and every financial and educational achievement have believed the Gospel and received Christ as Lord and Saviour. According to Jesus, all men everywhere are sinners, and all need a Saviour. Pride of caste or race or nationality or color or language will get us nowhere with God. In truth, God hates all that. If people neglect the Gospel of Christ because of these things they should not be surprised if the poor and humble receive Him and gain liberation, salvation and heaven.

Question: "Isn't Christianity a Western religion? Why should any Indian accept it?"

Answer: Jesus Christ was born, and lived and died and rose again, in Asia. Christ's Gospel came to India when many of the peoples of Europe and the Americas were rude savages who had never heard of Christ. But we have seen above that His Gospel is for men everywhere, and that certainly includes Indians. Indeed, what country on earth should receive Christ as gladly and as fully as India? He proved Himself a perfect Guru, the incarnation of God, the Liberator of those in bondage, the Conqueror of death.

We must not confuse the Gospel of Christ with western culture. There is much in western culture we may object to. But we may reject all that and still receive and follow Christ. Christ is really above all cultures, and nationalities, and races. He Himself said, "I am the light of the world"⁴ - "the world" and not one part of it only. And we should be asking, what is this light, what is true? and not be worrying about what may be Western or Eastern.

Question: "If the nations of the West are Christian, how is it they have so many wars, so much crime and violence?"

Answer: The nations of the West, of course, are not Christian. In fact, there is no nation on earth, and there has never been one, fully Christian. Some nations have been more influenced by Christ's teachings than others. But in every country true Christians are in a minority.

As for crime, violence, and war - it is not surprising that wherever sinful men are these things should occur. And they do occur in every nation. East or West. But they do not occur anywhere because people follow Christ's teaching, but because they do not. If the whole world followed His teaching there would be no war at all, anywhere, and no crime and violence. The Hindu founder of the Brahma Samaj, Raja Rammohan Roy, said, "The consequence of my long and uninterrupted researches into religious truth has been that I have found the doctrine of Christ more conducive to moral principles and better adapted for the

use of rational beings than any others which have come to my knowledge.”

Question: “If Christ’s Gospel is so good, why are many Christians so bad?”

Answer: We might ask the same question about any religion in the world. Christianity has no monopoly on bad characters. Unfortunately, it is true that many who have Christian names and call themselves Christians, are not true Christians at all, but Christians in name only. And some, even though they are true Christians, may fail in some things very badly. Such people may bring great dishonor to the Gospel of Christ.

However, we would make a big mistake if we condemned a teaching because of those who do not follow it, or judged a group by the worst and weakest people in it.

I will not attempt to defend all that is done in the name of Christianity, or all people who claim to be Christians. But we should not confuse all that with Christ. It is Christ we need, it is Christ whom we must receive and follow, regardless of what anyone else may do. And Christ can, and does, transform those who will trust Him. This has been demonstrated in literally millions of cases through the centuries, and in our own time.

Objection: “Christianity is a new religion compared with some of the religions of the East. Why should anyone leave an ancient system of belief and practice for something more modern?”

Answer: The most ancient worship on earth was the worship of the one true God, the God of the Bible. When the nations turned away from this, God chose the nation Israel to carry on this worship. The worship of true Christians in spirit and in truth is a continuation of this worship of the one God, the God who revealed Himself from the beginning; and so this worship is the oldest on earth. There is no writing in the world in any religious books we have that has been proved to be older than parts of the Old Testament. (I know some say that some books are older.

But saying it is one thing, proving it is another.) There is no revelation, no worship taught by God as old as that inherited by believers in Christ. In any case, arguments about comparative age are without value and great age alone is not evidence for the truth.

Question: "Why bother with religious doctrines and creeds and teaching? 'Deeds, not creeds' is the best motto; 'Experience, not doctrine' is the most satisfying way."

Answer: This may sound good but there is a serious flaw in it. We can point this out by asking some questions of our own. Why not have trains without tracks? And cars without roads? And moon rockets without flight plans? Why not have government without laws, and hockey and football without rules? Let us have trains and cars and government, and hockey and football too, and even moon rockets if we must. But to avoid disaster, let us also have tracks and roads and laws and rules and flight plans, and let us make them the best ones we can. It is not a question of either the one or the other. We need both.

In religion also this is true. We need deeds. We need experiences. But we also need objective standards to guide, check, and judge our deeds and experiences. To avoid disaster we need the best teaching we can get to keep us on the right track. We need to know what God wants us to do and to experience. Of course, mere man-made creeds or doctrines are not the thing we need, but the truth of the Word of God. If we are too subjective, if we make our own desires and experiences and doings the standard by which we judge everything, we shall go astray as certainly as a moon rocket shot of into the sky without plan and without being directed.

Someone will say, "We don't need anyone to teach us in religion. We will put aside all teachers and experiment ourselves and find the truth directly." This would be like some one going into a chemist's shop, with no knowledge of drugs and tasting and experimenting with what he finds. No doubt he will discover which compounds are poisonous, but it will be too late to do him any good! Wouldn't it

be better for such a person to study the subject of drugs before experimenting, or at least to follow some reasonable advice?

The person playing with dynamite, and knowing nothing about explosives, will certainly have an experience) But if he lives, he will probably change his motto from 'Deeds, not creeds*' to something else. It is amazing how people can be so sensible in many things, and then so foolish in the vital matter of religion. It is also amazing how many people who say we should throw out all doctrines and creeds in religion, are themselves frequently making very dogmatic statements which deny the truth Christ taught. Is dogma good only when they utter it?

To talk of truth without teachings and doctrines is to talk nonsense. The truth is, in Jesus Christ we have the infallible standard we need to test our doings and experiences. In Him we see what is right and what is wrong, what is wise and what is foolish, what we should do and what we should experience. Trusting Him, believing His Word and doing what He says, we cannot go astray. But if we ignore His teaching, we are bound to be in trouble. See what He Himself said about this at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:24-29).

Question: "Why is history important? Why can't we experience God for ourselves now, without bothering our heads about what happened to Jesus 2000 years ago?"

Answer: Of course we can experience God without knowing much history. But don't we care to know anything more about the God we have experienced than the little we learned at first? And don't we want to make sure it is God we have experienced rather than something else?

The important thing about Bible history is that it gives a record of God's dealings with men, and His message to mankind. In Christ particularly we have God speaking to men directly, and dying for men and rising again, and showing the way of salvation. Don't we need to know these things?

Now it seems to me that the best possible way God could have given this message to mankind was to have it carried along in real history. In this way it can come with solid evidence and be examined and carefully weighed by thinking people who want the truth. History can record prophecy, and miracles, and the lives of people and their deeds. In other words, it gives us just the kind of evidence we need, to be assured of the truth of Christ.

Of course God could have written a list of doctrines and dropped it from above. But how could we know it was God who dropped it? God could write across the sky "Christ died for you." but who would be able to tell what it meant? History is by far the best way and I must add, the most interesting and helpful way too. I mean history as we have it in the Bible, written by honest people, inspired by God, who were either eye-witnesses of the things they wrote, or else knew the facts in some other way, and who were willing to live and die for the truth they recorded.

Objection: "Some say that we no longer have what the disciples of Jesus wrote, that later Christians greatly corrupted the text. Perhaps this is true."

Answer: All the evidence we have shows that this is false.

- a. Ancient manuscripts have been found, dating back to the early centuries of this era, which show the texts of the New Testament in use then were like the ones we now use. We have far more manuscripts and far older manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other book in the world of comparable age. These manuscripts show that not one important teaching of the New Testament has been changed through the centuries.
- b. After the New Testament was completed Christian writers began to quote from it. We have some of their writings which date back to the second and even the first century. The references and quotations from these men indicate that the New Testament then was substantially the same as it is now.
- c. In any case, Christians would never have desired to

change or corrupt the New Testament. They regarded it as the very Word of God, the only truth that can save men. Even if a few foolish ones had tried to mutilate the Word of God the rest would not have accepted what they did.

Of course in centuries of copying and distributing these writings minor errors could creep in and slight variations in the text. But a great scholar of the ancient manuscripts, the late Sir Frederic Kenyon, spoke nothing but the truth when he wrote, "The last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."

Objection: 'Most of the evidence for Christ is in a book written long ago. There are many old books in the world - books of real history, it is true, but books also of imagination, poetry, fiction, and legends. Maybe the disciples invented the whole story of Christ and passed it off as true.'

Answer: In spite of the great evidence for Christ there are always a few who try to deny it all. They try to maintain that He was not a true historical figure and that the disciples created out of their own imagination His life, teachings, death, and resurrection.

Facts are always the best arguments, and the facts of the case are absolutely against this absurd theory.

One fact is this: multitudes of people who lived in the same generation that Jesus lived in, and in the same country, as well as in many other countries, believed the teaching of the disciples. Now if Jesus was not a real, historical person, how did the disciples get people to believe He was?

Suppose a poet in our day should invent some character and write a beautiful story about him. He speaks of him as a real person who has lived in our generation. He writes that this person has performed many miracles, that he taught many very profound things, even the deep things

of God, that he fulfilled many ancient recorded prophecies, that he was the only Son of God, that he died on the cross for the sins of the world and that he rose from the dead. But no one has ever seen this person who is supposed to have lived in our day; no one has heard him teach, or knows anything about him, and there are no witnesses to his resurrection or to anything else he did. And when enquiry is made, no one can find out a single fact about him. Will the poet get the world to believe that what he has written is real history and solid truth? Of course not.

A Real Person

Now the disciples were not writing about someone who they said lived long before them in some dim age of the past, or in some far distant place. Jesus was of their generation and country, and the evidence that He had lived and died and rose again must have been very great. For the disciples were able to get a great many people to believe that what they taught was literal facts. Multitudes of people in their own country, and in many other countries, were willing to forsake their own religious views (and we know this is not an easy thing), and receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and to live and endure persecution for Him. Is it likely that the disciples could have accomplished this if what they taught was a wild story they had made up which could not supported with any kind of proof? The swift and powerful advance of Christ's Gospel in the first century cannot be explained by supposing the story of Christ was a fiction.

There is no question at all that there was a powerful religious awakening in the first century. This little band of disciples turned much of the world upside down, and solidly established the way of Christ in city after city, country after country. And did they do all this with an invented Christ? It is very unlikely indeed.

It is incredible to have a reform without a reformer, followers without a leader, disciples without a guru, and Christians without a historical Christ. It is even more incredible

than to say that India gained its independence from Great Britain without the efforts of Gandhi and Nehru, and that these men never lived. It is transparently clear that the disciples really believed in the reality of Jesus Christ.

Here is another fact- neither early Jewish writers who rejected Christ as Lord and Saviour, nor writers of other nations, denied that Jesus was a true historical figure. On the contrary, Jesus is mentioned in some of their writings as having really lived. The Romans, Pliny (61-114 AD), Tacitus (55-118? AD), and Suetonius (69-140? AD), the Samaritan Thallus (Writing about 52 AD), and the Jew Josephus (37-100? AD), all refer to Him. Tacitus, the famous Roman historian, was certainly no Christian, but writing about Christians he said. The name Christian comes to them from Christ, who was executed in the reign of Tiberius by the governor Pontius Pilate."

We should consider another fact. From all we know of the disciples, they were men who had been changed by the power of God. Certainly their writings contain a very high moral standard. Indeed it is unsurpassed anywhere. They insisted again and again that God hates all lying and deception and will punish it most severely. They taught the people to be honest and to believe, speak, and live the truth. Their writings are altogether elevated, ethical, and spiritual. There is no doubt that they promote holiness. Nor is there any reason whatever to think that the disciples did not live in accordance with their own teaching. Is it then likely that such men invented the whole story of Jesus and passed it off as literal history? To think so is to suppose they were such a band of hypocrites as the world never saw, before or since. And this is simply absurd. Writers reveal the kind of people they are in the things they write, and the way they write, and writing, to some extent, speaks for itself. The writings of the Bible ring with sincerity, and strength, and reality. There is light in what they wrote, and power, and the breath of God. It is not the work of hypocrites - most emphatically not. There is no reason to think these men were not just what they appear to be - as earnest and sincere as any men who

ever lived.

Suffering and Death

Then there is this other fact. The disciples were willing to suffer and die for the things they taught about Christ. If they invented the whole thing what was their reward? What did they earn by their efforts? Hatred, rejection, scorn, reproaches, mockery, threats, blows, beatings, curses, poverty, pains, persecutions, tribulations, imprisonments, tortures, and death. All too often this was the story of the first three centuries of this era. Here is what the historian Severus wrote concerning the persecution in the days of the Roman emperor Nero (Who reigned 54-68 AD):

‘In the meantime, the number of Christians being now very large, it happened that Rome was destroyed by fire, while Nero was stationed at Antium. But the opinion of everyone cast the blame of causing the fire upon the emperor, and he was believed in this way to have sought for the glory of building a new city. And, in fact, Nero could not, by any means he tried, escape from the charge that the fire had been caused by his orders. Therefore, he turned the accusation against the Christians, and the most cruel tortures were then inflicted on the innocent. Yes, even new kinds of death were invented, so that being covered in the skins of wild beasts, they perished by being devoured by dogs. Many were crucified, or slain by fire, and not a few were set apart for this purpose, that, when the day came to a close, they should be burned to serve for light during the night.” Tacitus wrote substantially the same thing.

Paul once spoke of his well-known sufferings in these words:

“In far more labors, in far more imprisonments, with beatings vastly worse, and often at the point of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I have been shipwrecked, and a night and a day I drifted in the water. I have been on fre-

quent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own countrymen, dangers from those of other countries, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brothers. I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Very attractive rewards indeed these disciples received for their teaching! But no one forced them to go through all that. They could have escaped it quite easily. All they had to do was to deny their teaching about Christ, and say that they had invented the whole thing. Then, no doubt, the world, instead of beating them, would have embraced them, garlanded them, applauded their genius as writers and actors, and rewarded them with well-paying jobs in the field of literature or the theater! But they could not deny Christ and they could not even keep quiet about Him. Why not? The only believable answer is that they were absolutely convinced of the truth of their message, that God had sent them to tell it, and that it was really the one hope of the world.

Men may indeed endure many difficulties when they know their cause is true and just. But will they do so when they know that what they teach is all a wild story? It is extremely unlikely.

But someone may say, 'Christ's disciples are not the only ones who have suffered for their teaching. Others who even opposed Christ's teaching have done the same. Suffering is not proof of the truth.'

No one doubts this. Of course men may suffer much for an idea even if it is utterly false - atheistic communism, for example. But we should not forget that those who suffer to establish communism (or other false ideas) do so because they believe it is true. And this is the whole point here. Suffering such as Christ's disciples endured does not by itself prove that what they taught is true. But it shows that they really believed it, and did not simply fabricate it. Why they believed it is this: Christ presented tre-

mendous evidence for it - His character, miracles, resurrection, etc, as we saw in chapters 6 and 7. And this is the kind of evidence that neither communists nor any one else can bring forward.

Lastly, the things they wrote prove to be true today. We referred before to the predictions and promises of Christ and the test of experience. This, too, is a fact which cannot be successfully denied. The power of God still works with the Gospel. These writings have a tremendous power to transform lives. Many have found in them a new life, they have been changed completely for the better. Even drunkards, dope addicts, those bound by immorality and theft and gambling and every vice, have been set free when they trusted in Christ. The truth is, Jesus Christ, right here and right now, lives, and can be known and experienced.

The Facts

So the facts stand like this:

It is very improbable that the disciples could have invented the sublime story of Jesus Christ, His life, teachings, death, and resurrection. It was intellectually, religiously, and morally, extremely unlikely.

Moreover, even if they had been able to invent the whole thing, it is very improbable that they could have been able to convince multitudes of their own countrymen and others that what they wrote was true and literal facts.

Moreover, even if they could have invented it and convinced so many people that it was true, it is very improbable that they would have been willing to endure suffering, persecution, and death for what they knew was a fable.

Moreover, even if all that had been possible, it is extremely unlikely, no, it is impossible, that the power of God would have worked with their teaching and used it for a mighty force for righteousness in the earth.

Moreover, if they invented it, how is it that individuals

today can prove it true in their experience?

Here are several extremely unlikely things. Put them all together and we have something practically impossible. The whole theory that the disciples could invent such a character as Jesus, bring in a tremendous religious awakening, shake the whole of the Roman Empire, and change the history of the world, is simply incredible. The truth is they wrote what they knew to be the facts: Jesus Christ really did live His wonderful life, and taught His profound truths, and died for sinners, and rose from the dead. And this truth is in accordance with logic, history, and experience.

And if they wrote the truth, then Jesus really is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. And if Jesus is the Son of God, then all He taught is true. And if all He taught is true then everyone of us should believe it and surrender to Him.

Historical Evidence

What more evidence could God possibly give in a book than He has given in the Bible? There we have prophecy and its fulfillment, historical events that always prove accurate when they can be checked, the testimony of many eye-witnesses to signs and miracles done by God's power, a character of supreme moral beauty, teachings that free men from their sins, and promises which can now be experienced. What more can we demand from a book? If this does not satisfy, what else could be added to make it more satisfying? Actually, the historical evidence for the truth of Christ is quite valid, and we do not need anything further. But let me make a few comments on this evidence.

Written evidence and living experience must go together. The historical evidence for Christ, strong as it is, may not be entirely convincing to the person who refuses to submit to Christ. Written evidence could never be of such a kind that if forced people to believe if they didn't want to. It does not give what we call mathematical proof. It could never be such that it could not be doubted or denied.

The written evidence points to Christ as the truth. It does not compel us to go to Him. The evidence shows that in all probability the record the disciples wrote is true. As we follow the evidence and come to Christ and experience Him, we find that the evidence which pointed to Him is absolutely true; we see that the Bible is what it claims to be - the Word of the living God. The evidence is convincing to those who experience Christ and follow Him.

It has been proved countless times in the history of the human race, that God works with the writings of the Bible. He opens the understanding of people and inwardly convinces them by His Holy Spirit of the truth of Christ. This is what men need. This is what we may have if we will turn to Him with all our hearts.

Objection: "No doubt Christ is a true historical character. But some today say that Christ never died on the cross and never rose from the dead. Perhaps they are right."

Answer: They are most certainly wrong. I know this wild theory that some put forward to deny Christ's death and resurrection. They say that Jesus was nailed to the cross, but did not die. The pain and loss of blood caused Him to faint. He appeared to be dead, so they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in the tomb. In the cool, restful tomb He revived and came forth and showed Himself to His disciples. Somehow He was able to convince them that He had risen from the dead. Some even say that He then traveled all the way to Kashmir and died there and was finally buried in Srinagar!

This theory is as full of holes as a moth-eaten rag. There are overwhelming objections to it.

- a. Jesus Himself said several times to His disciples that He would both die and rise again. And after He rose He told them that He had.
- b. All those concerned in the case would have made sure He was dead. The Roman governor Pilate would never have given the body of Jesus for burial if he had not been sure. He wanted an end to this embarrassing case.

The Jews who had Him killed were also quite satisfied that He was dead and let Him be buried. This they never would have done if there was the slightest chance that He was still alive. And the soldiers who were at the cross, whose business it was to kill Him, were sure He was dead, but one of them plunged a spear into His side anyway. This, no doubt, would have been enough to kill Him even if He had not been dead before.

- c. A person so terribly wounded as Jesus was could never have gotten out of the tomb even if He had been alive. Grave cloths were wrapped about Him as tightly as bandages (such was the custom). A very heavy stone was rolled over the mouth of the tomb, and Roman guards watched it day and night. Who would have overcome the guards, rolled the stone away, and freed Jesus from the grave clothes?
- d. A person so terribly wounded, even if he were alive and managed to escape from the tomb, never could have convinced the disciples that he was risen from the dead, the triumphant Lord of life and Son of God. For in such case, He would have been half-dead, and in desperate need of medical attention.
- e. Anyway, Jesus would never have tried to deceive His disciples in this way, or in any way. He was not that kind of person. This senseless theory that attacks the resurrection of Christ makes Jesus a wretched deceiver, and His disciples stupid beyond belief.
- f. There is no evidence whatever for this theory. It is pure speculation, an attempt to re-write history many centuries after the events. These false historians do this, not because they have proved the history of Christ recorded in the Gospels is wrong in any point, but because they simply don't like that history and want to change it. But what should we believe - the many eye-witness reports of godly men who knew the facts? or the inventions of some enemies of Christ who came hundreds of years later and could not possibly know the facts as the disciples did?

No, this theory is not true and it should be branded for what it is - wretched nonsense. Jesus did rise from the dead and proved Himself a teacher come from God and the Son of God. There is no reason why we should not believe this. All the evidence points this way. And there is something holy, magnificent, and compelling about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The heart prepared by God to want the truth will surely recognize this and believe.

Question: 'If there is so much evidence that Christ is the Truth, why do so many educated and brilliant men reject Him?'

Answer: The question can be turned around. If the evidence is so poor, why do so many educated and brilliant men believe in Christ? And there are many. My reason for saying this is to point out that there are other factors involved besides intelligence in the matter of rejecting or receiving Christ. Brilliant people may reject Christ for the name reasons that others, not so brilliant, reject Him. The Bible itself gives these reasons.

- a. It may be misunderstanding. Men who are geniuses in science or in some other field of learning may be woefully ignorant when it comes to spiritual things. "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."⁶ Some very intelligent and educated people simply do not know what the Gospel of Christ is all about or what the evidence is for it. They reject something they do not understand.
- b. It may be a love for one's own opinions in religion or philosophy. This may create a prejudice in the mind against anything that is different or contrary. Prejudice can be a powerful hindrance to seeing the truth.
- c. It may be too much dependence on one's own powers of reason. And no one's reason is infallible, as we have seen, and it may lead us into tragic errors.

- d. It may be seeking honor from other men. If we are after the good opinion of others, if we want to be popular with our fellows, if we want the world to praise us, we shall hardly find the truth. Jesus said to some people who would not believe Him, "How can you believe when you seek honor from one another and not the honor that comes from God only?"⁷
- e. It may be pride. The Gospel of Christ humbles us in the dust before God, which is where all of us belong, but not everyone likes to be there. We must admit we are sinners so bad that it took the death of God's Son to save us. We must admit that we are spiritually ignorant and helpless and completely dependent on God's grace and mercy. The proud can hardly endure this, and many would rather reject Christ altogether than be humbled in this way - in spite of the evidence. Yes, with some it is pride more than anything else.
- f. It may be a love of independence. That is, some people want to live their lives without interference from anyone - including God. They want to do what pleases them and they realize to some extent that Christ will change all that. So they refuse Him.
- g. It may be for moral reasons. Some people may reject Christ because they are sinning in some way that is very pleasing or profitable to them, and they do not want to choose Christ, for this would mean giving up their sin and choosing purity and righteousness. They love darkness rather than light, and the amount of evidence for Christ has nothing to do with their choice.
- h. It is certainly, in some measure, hostility to the true God. All men are sinners and this brings them into opposition to God.

The sinful mind is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot."⁸ Men may not be conscious of this, but it is certainly there, and it is revealed when they ignore or reject God's Son who has come into the world to die for men.

Now if the grace of God has not delivered a person from the above things, he may use his intelligence to fight against the truth and try to get rid of the evidence for Christ. But this is not because the fault is in the evidence - the fault is in the person who fights it. And the amount of brains one has really does not have anything to do with it. The decision one makes about God lies deeper than the intellect. It comes out of the deep and secret places of the heart.

Objection: There is no deep philosophy in Christ's teaching. Perhaps this is the reason why many brilliant people reject it."

Answer: Christ's Gospel, of course, is not merely for philosophers, but for all. So that common people may understand it, the message is expressed in simple language. But beneath the simplicity of statement there is very profound meaning.

Philosophy is man's thinking and no doubt men like to believe it is very deep. The Bible is the revelation of God's truth.

Some systems of philosophy are brilliant, no doubt. But one can admire the genius of those who devised them without accepting much of what they say. One may admire a juggler and the way he keeps so many objects moving in the air without dropping any of them. Philosophers juggle with ideas and may keep them flying very skillfully. But the important question is, does any philosophy apart from God's revelation in the Bible give an adequate view of God, man, and the way to God? And the plain answer is, 'no'. Philosophy may have certain uses, but finding out God's thoughts is not one of them. When it comes to these matters, philosophy is not as profound as some would like to think.

If philosophers knew the truth, they would not need to speculate about what the truth may be. Philosophers never bring us to real assurance about anything; they never prove anything. They hardly ever agree with other phi-

losophers, and the history of philosophy, interesting as it may be, is full of contradiction and uncertainty. There is not a single philosophy of man that rests on a solid foundation.

The depths of Christ's teaching can't be determined by looking at the surface. The depth is discovered only by plunging in. There are depths in Christ that have satisfied some of the world's most intelligent people. Here is what the brilliant Paul (who well knew the religions and philosophies of the day) wrote to other believers in Christ: "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, which are according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ."⁹ Christ's teachings are deep, not in speculation or mere philosophy, but in truth.

Question: There are other prophets besides the prophets of the Bible. Aren't they also inspired of God?"

Answer: There have always been, and still are, those who make predictions about the future. They use the stars, or a crystal ball, or the palm of one's hand, or contact with the spirit world, or some other means to make their prophecies. And sometimes they may be right, but often they are wrong. There are at least four differences, it seems to me, between this kind of foretelling the future and Bible prophecy.

- a. Prophets in the Bible were never wrong. From the stand point of this present time, some of the prophecies of the Bible relate to the past, some of them relate to the future. Of all those prophecies that can be checked in history we can see that the prophets were never wrong. Again and again their words were completely and literally fulfilled.
- b. Prophets in the Bible were also specific, often very particular and detailed in foretelling the future. Outside the Bible very often those who claim to prophesy use the most vague and general language in their predictions,

so that they can always escape if the thing doesn't happen.

- c. Also the prophets in the Bible glorified God, not themselves. They never tried to present themselves as some great ones. They were humble, godly men who very often suffered persecution and death because of the truth they spoke, and never made worldly gain of it.
- d. Lastly, the prophets of the Bible never used methods of foretelling which God forbids. God said to His people very strongly and plainly: There must not be found among you . . . any one who practices divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a user of charms, or a sorcerer, or a medium, or one who tries to consult the spirits of the dead. For all that do such things are an abomination to the Lord.¹⁰ The prophets of the Bible received their prophecies directly from the true God.

God announced through one of them, 'I am God, and I alone am God. There is no other like me who announces the end from the beginning and declares from ancient times things that have not yet taken place.'¹¹ He said this and He did it. Especially, He foretold through the prophets many things about Christ that were fulfilled centuries later. And this is strong evidence that Christ is the Son of God, as He Himself said.

Question: "Christians say that Christ is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Are there three Gods?"

Answer: The Bible teaches that there is only one true God. The Lord our God is one God; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and all your might."¹²

The idea of three Gods is an absurdity Jesus does not teach. But He did reveal that in this one God there are three centers of consciousness, three persons who from all eternity are united in one Divine essence and nature. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. Yet there are not three Gods, but one only. There is unity as perfect as Sat, Chit, and Ananda united in one God (Sat - Being or

Reality; Chit - Intelligence or Consciousness; Ananda - Bliss or Joy). There is no jealousy or rivalry between these three and no struggle for supremacy (for how could God fight against Himself). But there is eternal and absolute love and oneness. Truly the Name of God is full of wonder !

The Father could send the Son into the world, the Son could pray to the Father and the Holy Spirit could come from the Father and Son, because they are Three in One and One in Three.

Of course this is a profound mystery. But let no one deny this truth because it is mysterious. God is above our poor power of description and understanding. Can a tea-cup hold the whole ocean? No more can our puny minds hold all the mystery of God. There are wonders in God about which we know nothing.

It is our wisdom to humbly receive from Him the revelation He has given of Himself through His Son Whom He has sent into the world.

All life is mysterious. Even the most simple forms of life are beyond the full understanding of the most brilliant scientists. The higher the form of life, the more complex it is. A monkey is more complex than a worm, and a man is deeper and harder to understand than a monkey. God is eternal, infinite, spiritual life, and the most complex and mysterious of all life.

So is not surprising that we can't understand the whole truth of the Three in One. Truly we should recognize that its very mysteriousness and difficulty, instead of being an argument against it, may be an argument for it.

Objection: "We live in an age of science. We can no longer believe in God or Christ or the Bible."

Answer: Why not? Many scientists in this modern age believe in God, Christ, and the Bible. For example, space physicist Dr Lambert Dolphin writes: "As a scientist, I have repeatedly put the Bible to the test in the laboratory of life, and I am fully convinced that this remarkable docu-

ment is precisely what it claims to be: the inerrant, infallible Word of God.'

The brilliant Dr Wernher von Braun, who, more than any other scientist, was behind man's successful trip to the moon, has said, "We must learn to consider God as Creator of the universe and Master of everything." At the countdown of Apollo 11 for the first moon landing, he prayed the prayer Jesus taught His disciples.

These are only two examples of many that could be given. Here is another. Dr Andrew Conway Ivy, Ph.D., M.D., D.Sc., LL.D., F.A.C.P., famous physiologist, asked the question "Is there a God?", and answered it with a resounding "Yes!" He said he is as certain there is a God as he is of his own existence.

Even Dr Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the century, was not so foolish as to deny the existence of God.

The idea that people with educated and scientific minds cannot receive Christ as Lord and Saviour is complete nonsense. People in every field of scientific investigation have become real Christians. The trouble is that many scientists will not put the promises of Christ to the rest.

Certain scientific speculations or theories have denied some of the teaching of the Bible, but no really established scientific truth contradicts any clear teaching of the Bible. I say this with confidence, in spite of much that has been written or said to the contrary - including considerable nonsense written by some who should know better.

Objection: 'God could not create the world out of nothing, because God is unchangeable. When there was no creation God would not change His mind and decide to create. Therefore the universe must be eternal.'

Answer: Who are we to say what God can or cannot do? It is arrogance to try. In the Bible God has revealed both that He is unchangeable and that He did create, so both are true. For all we know the knowledge of what He would

do in creation, the purpose to create, and the moment when He should begin to create, may have been in God from all eternity. If so, there would be no change in Him if He created - the change would have come only if He had not created! Also, for all we know, God may have created other things before He created this world. A joyous mind to create may have been expressed throughout eternity past in many ways unguessed at by us. In any case, the God of perfect freedom will not be bound by any objections from men. If action changes Him then it would be impossible for Him to do anything.

We should understand also that what is really unchangeable about God is His essence. His nature. His moral character. He can never be other than God, other than absolutely personal, holy, true, just, wise, and good. Neither creating nor not creating would change any of this.

Question: 'Some say that all religious or spiritual experience is 'true' and 'valid', that it proves itself, and that we don't need any objective standard to test it by. Isn't this idea a true one?'

Answer: It must be very convenient to have a philosophy or a religion that requires no proof! However, there is really no such thing on this earth. The idea is false and dangerous. We see in chapter 9 of this book that, according to the Bible, there are three very deceitful powers in the world - Satan, sin, and our own hearts. Each of these can have a large part in religious experience, and so we may have religious experiences that take us away from God rather than toward Him. There is nothing in us by nature that can infallibly recognize what is true and what is false. Since this is so, what becomes of "self-proved* religious experience?"

Question: "But can't we have a direct vision of Reality or God, and actually see the truth for ourselves?"

Answer: Ideally we could all directly perceive the truth, we could all know Reality. But we are not in an ideal condition. As I have pointed out, we must take into account the

fact of sin, Satan, and our inner corruption and blinded spiritual sense. Avidya (ignorance) is terribly at work in us, and there are huge possibilities of deception both from without and from within.

In our fallen condition, surrounded by deceptive powers, we need an objective standard, we must have an infallible teacher to open our eyes and guide us into the truth. There is certainly such a thing as having our spiritual eyes opened and our blindness and ignorance taken away. Then we will begin to see the truth. But this truth we see will always be along the lines laid down by Christ, who is the Truth and the light of the world, and the One who opens our spiritual eyes.

Question: "You say Jesus Christ is an incarnation of God; but have there not been many incarnations, many avatars?"

Answer: Of course not. What was the need of them? It is true that many men have been filled with God's Spirit and taught His message. But God came only once as a man, and in Jesus Christ did all that was required to save men forever, if they will turn to Him and trust in Christ. And He has clearly revealed all the truth that is required about Himself, about man, and about the way to God. We do not need any other incarnation. And, according to His own Word, God has not sent any, and will not send any. Why would God do what neither He nor we have any use for?

Question: 'Isn't it arrogant and intolerant to claim that one's own religion is the only true one?'

Answer: It depends on the circumstances. It could be arrogant and intolerant. And if one's religion is not the true one, it would be false and foolish as well. But to say Christ spoke the truth is not arrogant and intolerant. It would be arrogant and intolerant to say He did not - arrogant and intolerant about the truth God Himself gave us in Christ.

It is Christ who said that He was the only way to God. This is not an invention of His followers. All they should do is to believe what their Master taught and humbly present

it to others. Suppose there really is only one way to God and that God had unmistakably revealed it, and some people knew this. Would it be arrogant and intolerant for them to tell others this truth? Of course not; it would be their plain duty. Believers in Christ must teach this - or else betray Him, and withhold from their fellow men an important part of His teaching. Someone has put it very clearly in these words: 'If God has really done something in Christ on which the salvation of the world depends, and if He has made it known, then it is a Christian duty to be intolerant of everything which ignores, denies, or explains it away.'

Question: 'How about the doctrine of reincarnation? Isn't it true?'

Answer: There is no good reason for believing it is true, and we should not believe anything without a good reason.

- a. Jesus never used the word 'reincarnation', but His teachings are contrary to it. All that He taught indicates that men live but once and die but once. In the story Christ taught of the rich man and Lazarus, we see plainly that people do not come back to earth to be born again after they die.¹³
- b. The idea of karma, when rightly understood, is not without truth. There is penalty for one's wrongdoing that must be paid, there is reaping for what one sows. However, according to Jesus, most of the reaping is done in the other world, and not on this earth. Eternal separation from God, not reincarnation, is the penalty for sin. A person may say, "I prefer rebirth to that". But our preference has nothing to do with it. The proper question always is, what is true? We should realize what the real danger is, not what we might prefer it to be. According to Jesus Christ, sin is so terrible that nothing less than eternal or infinite punishment is the fitting penalty for it. Rebirth would not meet the demands of justice.

Good News

But the joyful news is this: we don't have to face either rebirth or eternal punishment, if we will repent and trust in Jesus Christ. If we do this we will know that the infinite God has come and suffered for our sins and blotted them out forever. Christ, the Son of God, sacrificed Himself for us, and swallowed up the results of sin that we might be free.

A great servant of God put it like this: The Lord God laid on Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, all the weight of human sin ... I think I must have read in scores of books that such a transference is impossible; but the statement has had no effect on my mind. I do not care wither it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers; it is evidently possible with God, for He has done it. But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care for that, either; it may be contrary to the reason of unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine; and if I am to be guided by reason, I prefer to follow my own ... a fact is the best of arguments. It is a fact that the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all.* Indeed it is a fact, and a necessary one. If the infinite God does not bear the sin of guilty man, which deserves eternal or infinite punishment, how could he ever be liberated? Does any other possible way exist?

- c. Reincarnation is based on the assumption that a person can evolve into something higher and better if he has enough lives to live on this earth. Otherwise there would be no hope for people who had to come back again and again. But man is a sinner and would never stop sinning and become holy no matter how many times he was born on earth. He would always act according to his nature, which is sinful. And so, instead of getting rid of any of his sins, he would only be increasing the number of them. He is helpless and can be changed only by the power of God which comes through faith in Christ. Man could never - not in this one life, not in 84 lakhs of lives - be able to save himself. It is simply impossible. No suffering in a limited number of rebirths would be

sufficient to exhaust the penalty for sin, or make a person good.

- d. Other things about the idea of reincarnation seem strange indeed. Some think that men can come back into the world as animals. But surely no one who understands the vast differences between men and animals could think so. Man's nature with its intellect, affections, and will is vastly superior to animal nature. But even if men could come back as animals, how could animals ever rise to humanity again according to the law of karma? A brute beast cannot practice dharma; it knows nothing of yoga, or jnana, or bhakti (which some insist is so necessary); it is not morally responsible for its actions, and could not possibly earn a higher birth in the life it has, and suffering could not free it.

Also reincarnation (at least the way it is often taught) seems to assume that all suffering on earth is deserved by the one who suffers, that all suffering is necessarily bad, and that one cannot suffer for others in order to release them. All three of these ideas are false and contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

- e. In any case, there is no proof whatever for the doctrine of reincarnation, and hardly anything that can be admitted as even weak evidence. We do not remember any previous birth. The strange memories that some are reported sometimes to have can be explained apart from the idea of rebirth. On the human level there are such things as mental telepathy, clairvoyance, visions, dreams, etc. And on another level there is a great deal of activity in the world from Satan and evil spirits. The point is, why believe some thing that cannot be supported by real evidence?
- f. There is a real evidence for Christ. And I say that even if you believe in reincarnation and have a dread of future births, come to Christ. He will give you eternal life now, forgive all your sins, and liberate you from all bondage. If you trust in Christ you will in this life become a true

Jivan mukta, and can begin to know here and now an experience of harmony and peace with God.

Question: 'No doubt Christ is great, but aren't other great men - Gandhiji for example - on the same level?'

Answer: We should let each person speak for himself and then weigh carefully what is said. Gandhiji never claimed to be an incarnation of God, as Christ did. In fact, he plainly denied it. He never said he was the truth, as Christ did. On the contrary, Gandhiji said that he was still searching, and was sad that he had not found the full truth. He admitted that he was not perfect and said that all he did was with the aim of obtaining liberation. On the other hand, Christ said that He was without sin, and that He had come to bring liberation and salvation to others. Gandhiji never taught that he had to die in the place of sinners and that liberation could come only by faith in him. But Christ did. To know these things one needs only to read what they themselves said. Also it is hardly necessary to point out that Gandhiji never rose again from the dead to demonstrate once for all that he was an infallible teacher and the true and only Son of God.

We all know what Gandhiji did for this nation. We can honor him as the father of a free and democratic India. But it is not honoring him to say things about him which he himself would have emphatically denied. Jesus Christ is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of the universe and the Saviour of all people who come to Him. No man, no matter how great, can be put on His level.

Question: "If people can be saved only by the cross of Christ, how about all those who lived before Christ came into the world?"

Answer: Christ died for all His people whether they lived at the time of His coming, after His coming, or before His coming. God knew from the beginning of the world what Christ would do for men on the cross, and so He saved all those in any age who received the truth He taught them and trusted in Him. God sees everything before it happens

and acts as though it had already happened.

Question: "What is the right way to worship God?"

Answer: The Guru taught that we must worship 'in spirit and in truth.'¹⁴ God is Spirit. It follows from this that we must not worship anything physical or material; and this is what the Bible says from one end to the other. God's Word forbids the worship of images or pictures, or the worship of sun, moon, and stars, or anything in creation. We must worship God who is Spirit, and not the works of God or the works of our own hands, which are material.

Also spiritual worship has nothing to do with places, or traditions of men, or mere forms and ceremonies. It is not ritual or the chanting of scriptures, etc. Jesus taught that we must not pray to be seen or heard of men, and that in prayer we must not use empty repetition, as some do who think they will be heard for their many words.¹⁵ True worship comes from the heart, from the spirit, and it results from the true knowledge and love of God.

Also our worship must be supported by a life of righteousness. The worship of a person who does what he pleases, or who practices sin, is not acceptable to God. He says through His prophet: "Come no more with your meaningless offerings! Incense is an abomination to me and so are your new moons and sabbaths, the convoking of the assembly; I cannot endure iniquity and solemn meeting! My soul hates your new moon festivals and appointed seasonal feasts . . . When you spread out your hands I will hide my eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply your prayers I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash you! Make yourselves clean! Remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes. Learn to do well; seek justice: restrain the lawless; protect the orphan; defend the widow.'

Objection: "Christ was an Advaitin. When He said He was the Son of God, and one with God, He was saying what any enlightened man can say."

Answer: Christ was no Advaitin. In fact, His teaching on

many things is just the opposite of Advaita Vedanta. A well-known saying gives the sum of Advaita in one sentence: "Brahman is the only Reality; the world is ultimately false; and the individual soul is not different from Brahman." Those who know Advaita Vedanta may compare that with what Christ taught (teaching either directly, or by approving the Old Testament which He believed). Christ taught:

- a. God is the only eternal, self-existing Reality. There are three, and only three, who are united in the one Divine essence -Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of the highest truths about the Supreme Being is that He is personal. Nirguna Brahman (an impersonal Absolute without attributes) is not the highest view of God. Jesus taught that the Highest, the Supreme Being, is Saguna (with attributes) and personal. This should be enough to settle the matter. For Jesus came from God, is God, and certainly knows what God is like. But even apart from the revelation He has given, it seems strange to think that an impersonal Absolute could ever be higher than a personal God of love, holiness, will, and conscious intelligence. There is no evidence whatever for it.

Judging from all we know, impersonality is not higher than personality. Man without conscious intelligence, power of will, and affections, would be like the most ignorant animal, a vegetable, or a stone. And the Supreme Being without these would be far beneath the great and wonderful God who exists and who has revealed Himself in Christ. Just as spirit is superior to matter, so the personal is higher than the impersonal. Impersonality would limit God, and make Him such lower than He is. God's personality, of course, is not selfish ego as we have seen personality in man. Man has fallen and corrupt personality. God's personality is absolutely pure and unlimited.

But whatever we might think about all this, one fact remains - God has spoken and has revealed Himself as

personal and with attributes. And if we are really wise we will receive this revelation He has made.

- b. God created the world by wisdom, not by Maya or Avidya. The world is real, but not eternal, and it is separate from God, not in any way a part of Him.
- c. Sin and evil entered our world by Satan and the first human beings whom he was able to deceive. Sin has infected all men, and all are guilty.
- d. Illusion or Ignorance is the result of Satan's activity, not God's. Satan blinds the minds of people and deceives them about God, about himself, about themselves, and about other important matters. God permits this to happen in judgment upon people's sin and unbelief.
- e. Man is a creature made by God. His spirit and God's Spirit are entirely different. God's Spirit is eternal and infinite in wisdom, power, glory and holiness. Man's spirit is finite, had a beginning, and is now by nature cut off from God's communion by sin.
- f. Liberation is not from the wheel of birth, death, and re-birth. There is no such thing; and no solution is needed for a problem which does not exist. Liberation is from sin and comes to a man when he is enlightened to see his sin and God's remedy for it in Christ. There is no hope apart from the death of the Son of God in the place of sinners. Salvation is by grace alone, and is gained through repentance and faith.
- g. When people trust in Christ, they immediately receive new spiritual life, and are brought back to God. But they do not become God, and they do not lose their individuality. They are not like drops of water swallowed up in an ocean; they are redeemed persons who can have communion with the personal God, and live joyously in His presence forever.

Our common consciousness that we are distinct from animals and lifeless creation on the one hand, and distinct from God on the other hand, is not the result of Maya. It is

the very truth of God which Jesus taught. Maya is not in the universe and it is not the cause of the universe; it is in men. Because men are deceived they have wrong conceptions of God and of themselves and of the way to God.

Jesus taught that we all, by faith in Him, might become the children of God. But He is the Son of God in a unique sense that cannot apply to anyone else. He is God; we are all men. He is the only Son of God, as He Himself said: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."¹⁷ Men can never become God; the creature can never become the Infinite and Eternal. This is one of the chief differences between Jesus Christ and even the best of men.

Another obvious and very important difference between Advaita and Christ's teaching is this: Advaita is based on certain unproved and unproveable assumptions, but Christ's teaching is the revelation of God.

Question: "What about Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita and Mad-hva's Dvaita - are these closer to Christ's teaching?"

Answer: Even if it were so, closeness to the truth is not enough. One may be on the very borders of the Kingdom of God, but if he doesn't step inside it will do him no good to be that close.

In order to know the truth we must get it settled in our minds that Christ is the true Son of God and has given to us the revelation of God, and the truth of God. This truth includes the cross and the resurrection of Christ, and the necessity of faith and surrender to Him. Without these we miss the heart of God's revelation. It is not enough to be closer to the truth than someone else. We must know the truth and embrace the truth and love the truth. This truth is Christ.

Question: "Do you say, then, that all gurus except Christ are false and do not know the truth"?"

Answer: God alone is the true Guru. As the incarnation of God, Jesus Christ is the true Gurudev who guides people into the truth. All human gurus are on a lower level. We

certainly can't believe every guru who comes along. We must always think of the evidence, or the lack of it, a person presents.

Some gurus simply follow tradition. They do not deliberately teach what is false, but they don't know the truth. Some gurus do not care for the truth at all, and do not mind teaching what is false if there is profit for them in some way. Some gurus say there is no real distinction between false and true. Some gurus unconsciously, and some consciously, teach contrary to Christ's teaching. And some teach what Christ taught to the best of their ability. A true guru on the human level is one who has been taught by Christ and who knows Him, trusts Him, loves Him, and tries to teach and live according to Christ's teaching.

But we should all lift our hearts to God the Creator and Sustainer and Ruler of the universe, and beg Him to teach us. And if God does teach us, we will certainly be led by Him to receive Jesus Christ whom He sent into the world. Jesus said. This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent";¹⁸ "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me." Mark those words well. And certainly we must not worship any guru except Christ, for only He is truly God.

Question: "When all is said and done, why should anyone believe in Christ?"

Answer: We should all believe in Christ because He is the truth. He has come with great evidence. He can be experienced and known in our lives now. And He can answer every question we really need to know on this earth.

References for this chapter:

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|----|------------------------|----|-------------------|
| 1 | John 3:16 | 11 | Isaiah 46:9,10 |
| 2 | Matthew 28:18 | 12 | Deuteronomy 6:4,5 |
| 3 | John 3:15 | 13 | Luke 16:19-31 |
| 4 | John 8:12 | 14 | John 4:24 |
| 5 | 1 Corinthians 11:25-27 | 15 | Matthew 6:5-7 |
| 6 | 1 Corinthians 2:14 | 16 | Isaiah 1:15-17 |
| 7 | John 5:44 | 17 | John 3:16 |
| 8 | Romans 8:7 | 18 | John 6:29 |
| 9 | Colossians 2:8 | 19 | John 6:45 |
| 10 | Deuteronomy 18:10-12 | | |