

THE DISCIPLE

Editor—V. CHAKKARAI B. A., B. L.

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No. I

THE DISCIPLE

There is the *Sishya* who seeks the *Guru* in the crowded solitude of the town and in the populous jungle but finds him not. There is the *Guru* who seeks the *Sishya* in the temples of learning and worship but retires sad and disappointed. Who is the *Guru* and who the *Sishya*? The *Guru* is the person who longs not only to instruct but to inspire; not to be served but to serve. Can the *Guru* take hold of the dust-stained feet of his *Sishya* and wash him with the water of his own life? If not, to whom is he a *Guru*? The *Sishya* draws back in horror because he feels that he should wash the *Guru's* feet. But the *Sishya* who is not washed by the *Guru* has no part in him.

The *Guru* makes the *Sishya*, finding him amidst the restlessness of life and reason's vain displays to define the indefinable and express the inexpressible. It is in that faith of the saints that the *Disciple* goes forth on its journey. Many in India, the land of the religious quest, as in times of yore, are seeking to know Him who is the *Santi*. And the *Disciple* intends to participate in the great adventure following the voice that is heard in the soul and the face that gleams in the heart. The *Disciple* seeks to discover and unite in a common fellowship, the devout souls, nay even those who are heavy laden with the world's corruption and *Maya*, though unknown to each other. The *Disciple* is born on Christmas Day, the Wonder of the Universe comes in the hearts of some

a spring of water springing into everlasting life. The *Disciple* is not greater than his Lord, but shall be even as He was and is. The *Disciple* in these days when questions are asked concerning the mysteries of life and death that cannot be silenced by the traditional answers is out to seek and find, to discover the pearl of great price and buy it. It is a spiritual adventure full of unknown things—and what may befall the *Disciple* on the way who can tell? The spiritual life, as revealed in the Lord, is an eternal challenge, as Joseph Hocking has well said. Not that we can judge Him to be worthy of us, but whether we are worthy of Him, and stand in the eye of His unerring judgment. What the world needs is not a mere patronising recognition of His greatness or even of His Divinity as if such a thing were the object of His care for men. All men willing to follow Him submit to Him and His valuations of life. The world, alas, seeks and has always sought other values, but the *Disciple* who has touched His lotus feet, can no longer be content, though sorely tempted and tried, and sometimes even fallen. The Lord goes on before and the *Disciple* follows Him, not in His own strength but in His who still finds the consummation of His life unattained. The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but what is His dwelling place? The poet Wordsworth said it is in the light of the setting sun, and the round ocean, and the green earth. It is in the very heart of the man—the *Disciple*.

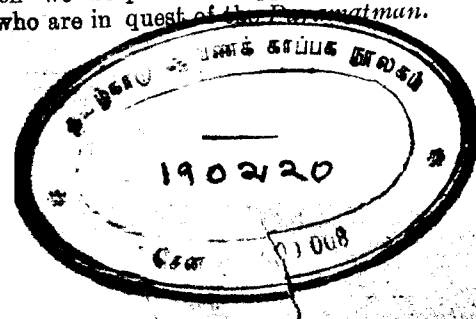
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THE HISTORY

In 1917 the idea was mooted that Christian graduates who could not meet after leaving their College, might gather together at some central place for the review of the religious situation. Just at that time the Indian Nationalist Movement had entered on a new phase of its career, in fact, the Home Rule Movement was launched which in consequence of the war, rose high and caught the imagination of the younger generation of Indian Christians. In response to this surging life, a Conference of Indian Christian graduates took place at Bangalore in midsummer when the relations between Christianity and Indian Nationalism formed the chief centre of combat between the old and the new votaries of the faith. After a few years it was felt that the conference should be open to all, whether graduates or not, whether professing Christians or not. Year after year since then, the Conference, called the Bangalore Conference Continuation, has been held, a few of them being held paradoxically enough, in other places than Bangalore. In short, the Conference has been the clearing house of ideas on the burning issues of the day, nay, of life itself. Latterly, the chief interest has gravitated to what is called the Indianisation of Christianity. A movement perhaps, parallel to what is going on in the administrative sphere in India in certain aspects. But indeed it is a wider, deeper, and more revolutionary movement of thought and life. It is a new Orientation, because it is from the Orient that the new star has risen as of old on the vision of *Baktas* "*India for Christ and Christ for India*" these are the parallel lines and strange to say, these parallels will meet to form a new whole. The last Conference this year met in Vellore in June and one of its resolutions was that a magazine should be started to carry on the work during the year. It is to carry out this resolution that some members of the Christo Samaj met, (the Christo Samaj is a body of Disciples in Madras and elsewhere bound together for the achievement of the above objects) and deliberated. The result is the *Disciple* now sent forth for which we bespeak the support and sympathy of all who are in quest of the *Paramatman*.



ARE ALL RELIGIONS EQUALLY TRUE?

The historian of the Roman Empire, in his reference to the religious conditions prevailing at the beginning of the Christian era said that to the common people all religions were true, to the philosopher all false, and to the magistrate all useful. To the scepticism of the so-called philosopher the falsity of all religions was only too apparent. The more absurd the religion, the greater its chances of success with the credulous masses. And sometimes he could not but acknowledge that even the philosopher was imposed upon by a trickster, as it often happened amidst the medley of religions in the Empire. The contrast presented by the philosopher in India is very striking. He has given, on the contrary, wide currency to the dictum that all religions are equally true and are all paths leading to the same goal, are like rivers flowing into the ocean. Before we evaluate this Indian maxim, it may not be out of place to ask whether in India the philosophers or the common people have always held views based on the widest tolerance. History gives an emphatic negative. Our country has been the birth place and breeding ground of many religious cults, creeds; they did not gain firm footing without many a struggle with the existing rivals; the historical records are full of the terrible persecutions to which Jains and Buddhists were subjected in the south by the Hindu Saiva and Vaishnava *Acharyas* with the help of the arm of the civil magistrate. Nor can it be denied that the philosophical treatises held in great reverence by the sects contain searching and scathing criticisms of rival creeds, showing not even the least appreciation of any element of truth that could be found in them. In this respect there is not anything to choose between the older Christian missionary literature that has been happily suppressed and that of the classical religious treatises of the *Acharyas*. How then explain the popularity and origin of this maxim that all religions are equally true?

It must be admitted, however, that this maxim is given an one-sided application in practice. Take, for instance, Swami Vivekananda who was one of the greatest exponents of this view, but did he not think that the *Advaita Vedanta* was the loftiest view of religion and did he not make converts from his American audiences? Was not Sister Nivedita (Miss M. Noble) one of his illustrious converts? Then again the Theosophical Society pays up service to this theory, but in practice, carries on secret and open propaganda on behalf of the Krishnamurthy cult. Even granting that this

maxim is true in respect of the major religions, it is not contended that demon worship, serpent worship and other forms of religion are as true as the philosophy of the Vedanta? Such considerations as these deprive it of its wide generality, confining its application to the major religions, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. It cannot be argued, however, that all these religions are identically the same, and that there are no differences among them. They have to be recognised but the equality is in the essentials and the differences are in the non-essentials. Why then carry on a fight against each other? We are not sure that the adherents of these faiths will consent to regard such differences as non-essentials; and very often these very non-essentials are the life and soul of these religions. With even this concession, it is not quite clear what are the essentials of all these religions; vague assertions about the unity of God, *Bakti*, the *Atman*, and *Mukti* are all that can be used to support this position.

To those who contend that all religions are not true, we may put the question, if they are not equally true, are they equally false, including their own? If not, they must have varying degrees of truth. Then how to find out these varieties and the scientific criterion by which these religions can be arranged in the order of the amount of truth that each contains? It has been said by some Christian apologists of very great authority that there is such a thing as eternal truth and eternal goodness discoverable by man, and it is to the test of these that all religions should be exposed. This, in our opinion, is as futile a maxim as the one it contradicts. The admitted fact is that all religions claim to have discovered eternal truth and eternal goodness; and therefore there must be some other standard by which to judge the values. Where are we to find them, and, if found, how are we to be sure that these are eternal goodness and eternal truth? The fallacy of such an argument lies in the old assumption that somewhere eternal truth and eternal goodness are stored up, like so many commodities in a warehouse. And it only remains for man to take possession of them. The time has come to give up these absolutist claims—absolute truth, absolute goodness and absolute beauty are not to be found in this human world of ours. On the contrary it is a world governed by relativity, of relative truth and relative goodness. Absolute unchanging truth may be found in some corner of this vast universe, but they are at least not here. It may be even said that one of the best criteria of a great religion is how far it seeks to create values that can endure the wear and tear of time and subserve human needs; nay, create new

human needs. Religion must be creative in this sense of the term and not merely a mere discovery of absolute values supposed to exist somewhere. It seems to us that in India the need to-day is perfect liberty and tolerance. In the West political expediency has worked out the doctrine and practice of tolerance. But leaving this aside, we must plead for the rights of full discussion and debate. The test is a very pragmatic one, depending upon many factors. Competition will rule but not the cut-throat competition of the commercial world. We plead for genuine co-operation among the faiths and for common purposes and against irreligious and immoral institutions and practices. Unfortunately it is not always the religious element that is the fertile cause of religious and communal feuds. More mundane interests are at stake; human pride and passions rule to the ruin of higher things. It is the sense of my religion and your religion that leads to these quarrels. A higher kind of religious tolerance is possible and can exist with full discussion and enquiry into the values of different religions.

AN EXPLANATION.

It was originally intended to send out the *Disciple* before the Christmas of 1928. But the legal declaration could not be made in time, hence the delay in issuing the magazine. Therefore, some articles meant for the Christmas season appear in it—which it is to be hoped will, nevertheless, be found interesting. Those of our friends to whom this is sent are requested to forward the annual subscription of annas eight to the Editor, 13 Chinna Reddy St., Egmore, if they have not already paid it.

The Editor.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT DISCONTENTS

The article on the National Missionary Society from the pen of Rai Bahadur Mukerji in whom the society has taken flesh and blood, will be read with keen interest by all. It puts on record the level of achievements reached by it up to now. But it closes with the statement

"A CHALLENGE"

TO US

and certainly the resources, though not in money yet in spirituality of the most religious type, of Indian Churches and the present European competitors will be put to the utmost strain. But a deeper question confronts them. Are they a challenge to the so-called non-Christian world out-

side? Is there any phenomenon, connected with the religion they profess which is such a revolutionary fact in the old order of things as to provoke their thought and lives? To the Christian his religion is still a humdrum routine, a ready made system. It does not move, agitate, unsettle, and destroy his shibboleths and shams. India is already full of these, just as the Churches are. But we want a fire that will burn up, purify, and out of this sacrifice, yagna, alone will emerge the challenge to India.

The conservative cries when a reform is attempted, Religion in Danger. This parrot cry has been raised in India and in the West so often that it has altogether ceased to alarm and even to be noticed. So much so that where a real danger

RELIGION IN

DANGER

threatening religion rises, nobody heeds the cry when it is uttered. Religion is always in danger, for the world is always with us, including the flesh and the devil. But when religion becomes a danger, then it attracts attention; then it is religion indeed and not an opiate, as the Bolsheviks say rightly enough, to lull the rebellious spirit of the down-trodden and the daring enquirer. The future of religion is not with those who are timid and fearful (The New Testament says the Kingdom of God is not for such) but with the violent, for the violent take it by force.

Men speak and talk and talk till the world is a second Babel. But does God, the supreme object of religion, speak to men of this generation? If so, what is He telling us and how do we hear? No man cares to hear the conventional and convenient formulas. The world has

LET HIM SPEAK become cynical, and it shrugs its shoulders at such religion as a mere amusement, and the sceptic scoffs at it as humbug, and the thinker leaves it, as

a lifeless bag of rattling bones, and prefers those speculators that stir the heart and mind of the modern man.

In the Indian philosophical Congress, the Maharajah of Cochin, the President referred to a distinctive feature of the Indian religious consciousness, viz., the absence of that conflict between science and religion that has been conspi-

RELIGIONS AND

SCIENCE

the West. Two remarks may be hazarded on this (1) As Prof. Alexander has pointed out—the so-called conflict has now become ancient and obsolete. Let us bury or burn the corpse with fitting dignity (2) In India philosophy has steered clear of conflict with religious beliefs, because all philosophy has been held in subjection to the Vedas. Prof. Dhurva explained this by saying that the spiritual intuition of the scriptures supplemented the halting verdict of reason and silenced the voice of its revolt. But when, as in the case Gautama Buddha, the speculations shook off the *Srutis*, then Philosophy and religion came into dire conflict till the one or the other conquered. At first Buddhism won in the duel, then Hinduism disarmed its antagonist and buried its sword in its body. In the West, even from the days of the Sophists in Greece, through the Christian era and down to our day, human reason has held on its career, claiming supremacy even over the religious field which religion has stoutly resisted. It cannot but be true that really these two voices in man are only the different revelations of the same reality. Science in recent years has become more humble and religious, and religion has shed off in its turn, its dogmatisms and become more scientific. Science, after all in the modern sense of that term, is still a youth, compared to the antiquity of religion. And yet we can allow reason to correct itself as a critic of its own crude conclusions.

conflicts and Indian Christian duties" with Mrs. Nathaniel in the chair. He pleaded for a thoroughly scientific study of the Indian situation, which in the North assumed the aspect of the Hindu Muslim conflict and in the South Brahmin and Nonbrahmin. With regard to the former he said that the causes were of a profoundly complex character—social, religious and political, and that the conflict which has manifested itself in different forms was also owing to the old memories of Muslim rule in India. The Brahmin—Nonbrahmin problem, though it had its origin in causes lying in the past was, in the main, economic. It was the competition between the members of the two communities for positions of power and advantage that led to the inauguration of the Nonbrahmin movement. The remedy that he proposed for the solution of the former conflict was to destroy the existing socio-religious structure of Hinduism and Islam and to demolish all those memorials in the North which would remind Hindus and Muslims of their respective humiliations. The interest of the discussion centred in the Brahmin *versus* the Nonbrahmin in the South and the lady president pleaded for freedom from prejudices, and real self-sacrifice as the only solution of all these communal conflicts. Even the Indian Christian Community was by no means free from certain social antagonisms and unless they followed the teachings of Jesus Christ whom they profess to follow, it would be impossible for them to contribute anything useful to the solution of these social difficulties.

On Tuesday the 12th Mr. V. Chakkarai addressed the gathering on "Christian Beliefs in relation to Growing Knowledge" with Rao Sahib T. Kathirval Nainar in the chair. The lecturer remarked that he believed in the mission as well as the conclusions of modern science and the fundamental truths of religion in general and of Christianity in particular would be found not incompatible with the former. He gave an account of the leading ideas and generalizations of science taking Newton, Darwin and Einstein as the leaders of the scientific movement of the last three hundred years in Europe. Amidst many differences the leaders of thought had established the prevalence of order and law in all the realms of nature; there was no real break in the continuity of cause and effect and in the realm of pure physics the ideal was the reduction of all physical phenomena into terms of quantitative formulae. The same procedure was sought to be adopted in the study of life and its phenomena and the different forms of social life, including religion. Here the physical generalizations of mere motion broke down, the phenomena of life, thought and the religious spirit not being susceptible to

treatment in terms of quantitative analysis. The lecturer dealt at length with the concept of successive series of emergent evolution culminating in the birth and life of the founder of Christianity. The great truth of religion as interpreted and confirmed by science was that of an evolving world. The religious man should not fight shy of the discoveries of modern science and the mysteries. These are only to be apprehended by the human spirit as a whole. The task of science was description and that of religion interpretation and real communion with the secret of the Universe. In the discussion that followed, some speakers pointed out that the theory of evolution had not been proved. It is being assailed by scientists themselves, at least in its Darwinian form of natural selection. The story of creation and of Adam should be taken, said one speaker, in its literal form. The sense of the conference was that in spite of all the adverse and destructive work of modern thought the existence of God, the soul and the ultimate destiny of man are all left untouched and can only be dealt with by the religious spirit in man in communion with God.

On Wednesday the 13th instant the Revd. J. A. Jacob, M. A., B. D. read a paper on "Christian Devotion and Hindu Bakti in the light of experience" with Mr. Manilal C. Parekh, a well known Gujarati Christian from Kathiawar in the chair. The history of the Bakti movement in India was traced from the very beginning; he referred to the various schools of bakti. He defined bakti as loving adoration of a personal God by the devotee and also prapatti or surrender of the devotee to God. Christianity and the bakti schools resembled in their common belief in God as a personal being instead of impersonal, in the power of God's grace for the redemption of man from karma, and in service to Him and in passionate emotional worship by means of hymns and praises and gorgeous temple worship and processions. The Hindu Bakti took the relations of master and servant, friend and friend, parent and child and the passionate adoration of wife and husband. The difference lay in the fact of the object of devotion. In Christianity the emotion was put under the restraints of ethical principles which are paramount although even in Christianity certain types of emotionalism have arisen breaking through the ethical barriers. In the Christian Church emphasis is also laid on the other factors in human personality, the intellect and the will. Faith which is the analogue to bakti is a movement of the whole man clinging to his religious object and salvation from sin and service arose in consequence of what the founder of Christianity had done. In the discussion that

Bangalore Christian Conference Continuation— VELLORE.

THE twelfth session of the Bangalore Christian conference continuation was held at Vellore between the 11th and 15th instant when delegates from the local Christian community and outside took part in its proceedings. This year's Conference was quite a remarkable success, in that unlike as in previous years, a local Committee undertook to make all the arrangements of the Conference and

provided free hospitality to all the delegates. The delegates were lodged in the bungalow of the Principal of the American College where the meetings were also held and the meals were provided in the adjacent Christian Hostel.

On Monday the 11th instant Mr. George S. Isaac, B.A., L.T. read a paper on "Intercommunal

followed great emphasis was laid upon the experience of Hindu Bakti which was lacking in the Christian forms of worship, even the freedom and intensity of passionate devotion. This defect was evidently due to the fact that the several forms of Christianity had been imported to India by Christian Puritans who in their own country had rebelled against the ritualistic forms of worship. The Indian Church required to express itself in forms congenial to its own genius. The danger in the mere emotional religion was to be content with mere subjectivism and the failure to grapple with the problems of life around. The object of worship should furnish a perpetual source of moral and intellectual inspiration and the solution of life's problems. The Chairman gave a very interesting account of one form of Vishnavism founded about 100 years ago by Swami Narain and drew attention to the fine character and spirit of ahimsa that had been developed by the adherence of this creed.

On Thursday the 14th Mr. G. V. Job, M. A., read an instructive paper on the "Evidence of Resurrection and its Signification" with Mr. V. P. Adiseshiah, M. A., Acting Principal of the Voorhee's College, in the chair. The lecturer said that on the question of evidence the fact of the resurrection is recorded in all the four gospel accounts and most competent critics were agreed as to the general reliability of the records. The disciples of Jesus could not have been led to any hallucination to this belief that their master had risen from the grave, as there was no expectation of such a belief before he actually rose and they were disappointed and thoroughly dispirited. The real evidence is to be found in the fact of the foundation of the Christian Church. No other implications than Jesus was alive after death could account for the birth of the Christian Church; all other attempts to account for it otherwise have not been successful. Some such stupendous occurrence alone would be a sufficient and adequate explanation. The ethical argument is founded in the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was the only triumphant vindication of the life and character of Jesus Christ. It was the objective assurance of the hope of the immortality of the soul which without it will remain only a philosophical abstraction. The psychological proof consists in the character of Jesus and the inviolability of its sacredness demands the physical resurrection as the triumph against the world's evil. By means of the resurrection Jesus had evolved a new type of spiritual life. The bodily evolution has stopped with the formation of the human body; the further progress of man lay in the evolution of the spirit capable of the larger and more finished life. In the discussion several speakers

pointed out that the resurrection is the corner stone of Christianity and some of the objections, as to the historicity of the resurrection were referred to. The Chairman pointed out that to certain types of minds the physical resurrection would present formidable difficulties and what was necessary is the spiritual resurrection of Christianity in the hearts of his followers and his abiding influence. He said that the body that Jesus took after his resurrection was not the old physical body but the glorified or sublimated body, which he proved from the New Testament.

The Bible study was conducted by Mr. V. Chakkarai every morning who based his thoughts on an examination of some of the leading ideas of St. John in his first Epistle. In the religious experience of the Christian, the Scriptures, the cumulative experience of the Church and the influence of the spirit of God worked together. The widest conception is that "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." He dwelt on the intellectual and moral attributes of God. The modern expanded knowledge enabled man to conceive the power and wisdom of God in terms of grandeur and on a larger scale than prescientific ages. All theories that tended to describe God as possessing any element of ignorance or darkness were defective. He dealt with human imperfections and the age long history of man was one long record of diverse methods pursued by God to eliminate evil.

The devotional addresses were conducted by the Revd. E. Savarirayan, Mr. V. P. Adiseshiah, M. A., Revd. M. Peter, Mr. C. J. Lucas and Mr. Manilal C. Parekh.

It was proposed to hold the next year's Conference at Bangalore. The main theme of the Conference will be "Religion and Modern Thought." It was proposed and carried that the Conference should be widened into an All-India body consisting of provincial branches to enable its ideas to be broadcasted and to bring together similar groups in other parts of India into contact with each other. It was decided to appoint a Committee with the following members: Mr. V. Chakkarai, Mr. Manilal C. Parekh, Mr. R. L. Joshi (Hyderabad Deccan), Revd. Isaac and Mr. T. P. Gopalaswami, with power to co-opt, to draw up a constitution on the lines suggested and to bring it up before the next Conference at Bangalore.

Members were enrolled on a subscription of at least Re. 1/- per annum.

The need for the issue of a Bulletin for this conference was urged, and it was unanimously resolved to start a Bulletin published once in two months,

the editor being Mr. V. Chakkarai and the subscription six annas per annum.

The Conference expressed its thanks to Mr. & Mrs. H. P. Thomas for undertaking the catering and Mr. George S. Isaac for making other arrangements, the local authorities of the American Mission for lending their building for the use of the Conference and local Church for the liberal contribution that they had made.

Messrs. T. P. Gopalaswami, D. M. Devasahayam and Revd. J. A. Jacob, M. A., B. D. were appointed as Secretaries for the ensuing Conference at Bangalore.

The public of Vellore took advantage of the presence of two of the delegates of the Conference, Messrs. Manilal C. Parekh and V. Chakkarai, and arranged five public lectures at Lakshmanaswami Town Hall, Vellore, from 13th to 17th June. The former delivered a series of three lectures and the latter two. Mr. Chakkarai preached also in the Church at Vellore on Sunday morning (17th June).

OFFICIAL REPORT.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST AND THE SHEPHERDS.

Around the mountain and through the town they passed, and came to the gate of the khan, where there was a man on watch.

"What would you have?" he asked.

"We have seen and heard great things to-night," they replied.

"Well, we too, have seen great things but heard nothing. What did you hear?"

"Let us go down to the cave in the enclosure, that we may be sure; then we will tell you all. Come with us, and see for yourself."

"It is a fool's errand."

"No, the Christ is born."

"The Christ! How do you know?"

"Let us go and see first."

The man laughed scornfully.

"The Christ indeed. How are you to know him?"

"He was born this night, and is now lying in a manger, so we were told: and there is but one place in Bethlehem with mangers."

"The cave?"

"Yes, come with us."

They went through the court-yard without notice, although there were some up even then talking about the wonderful light. The door of the cavern was open. A lantern was burning within, and they entered unceremoniously.

"I give you peace," the watchman said to Joseph and the Beth-Dagonite. "Here are people looking for a Child born this night, whom they are to know by finding Him in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger."

For a moment the face of the stolid Nazarene was moved; turning away, he said, "The Child is here."

They were led to one of the mangers, and there the Child was. The lantern was brought, and the shepherds stood by mute. The little one made no sign; it was as others just born.

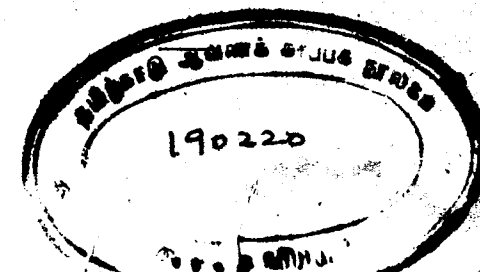
"Where is the mother?" asked the watchman. One of the women took the baby, and went to Mary, lying near, and put it in her arms. Then the bystanders collected about the two.

"It is the Christ!" said the shepherd at last.

"The Christ!" they all repeated, falling upon their knees in worship. One of them repeated several times over.—

"It is the Lord, and His glory is above the earth and heaven." And the simple men, never doubting, kissed the hem of the mother's robe, and with joyful faces departed. In the khan, to all the people aroused and pressing about them, they told their story; and through the town, and all the way back to the Marah, they chanted the refrain of the angels, "Glory to god in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

The story went abroad, confirmed by the light so generally seen; and the next day, and for days, thereafter, the cave was visited by curious crowds, of whom some believed, though the greater part laughed and mocked.—BEN-HUR.



THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"Good Tidings of Great Joy"

(RAJAJIAH D. PAUL, M. A.)

"Be not afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day a saviour which is Christ the Lord."

What exactly is the significance of Christmas? What really does the annual celebration of this festival mean, to Christians first, and to the world at large next? Does it stand for anything vital in human life in relation to God, or is it merely a social observance? "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy," said the angel to the rustics gathered at night, tending their flocks on the hill-sides near Bethlehem, some nineteen hundred and odd years ago. Are there any glad tidings announced year after year at this time? Are they tidings of great joy? And are the tidings intended for all the people, or are they merely for Christians? Is it merely a social festival that we are celebrating at this time,—some national festival of the West, transplanted to this country, and observed only by certain west-imitators: or has it got any spiritual significance to us and to all men, whether of the West or of the East.

What is this Christmas, this festival when Christians deck themselves out in new clothes, attend service at Church, pay social calls, exchange presents, have feasts, and generally make themselves merry; and Non-Christians join in by sending a few cards, engraved with words and mottoes they scarcely understand, in the hope that the receiver will be pleased? This festival whose outward manifestations seem so stale, commonplace and this-worldly, is the commemoration of the birth of Jesus, some twenty centuries ago, in a little village in Palestine. It is the celebration of the birthday of one whom all the world acknowledges to have been a great and a good man. But wherein does the happiness, the joy come in? Why these outward symbols of making merry? Are they merely traditional excrescences, or have they their root in anything more deep seated?

An analysis of the causes of this joy will show it is no mere superficial gladness that is exhibited at this time, and that these external signs of happiness are but the symptoms of an inward spiritual joy. The springs from which this exultation arises are the very basis of Christian spiritual experience.

Who is this person whose birthday is being celebrated in this festival? Is he merely a great and

a good man, a religious reformer who lived and died like many another before him? No, most emphatically not. The person who was born that cold wintry night at Bethlehem is God himself in human flesh. The person is no mere man: he is very God, but in human flesh and in human form. Born among men, to live among men, and to die for men. The possibility of God taking human form for the purpose of succouring humanity is not a strange idea to Indians. The point to be explained to the Non-Christian Indian is why we call Jesus God. But before we can explain ourselves to him we shall want him to study the life of Jesus for himself. We shall want Him to judge his personality without being biased by preconceived notions and led by opinions based on hearsay. Let him read His life written by His contemporaries; follow closely the delineation of His character therein made, ponder over it with the reverence due to an admittedly great personality. He will then perceive for himself a fulness of character, and the perfection of spirituality which are nothing less than divine. Look at the face of Jesus; you perceive therein the very lineaments of God. It is not merely the portrait that compels your attention. Hear ye the challenge. Hear also the claim. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The challenge was heard by a crowd of people who knew the challenger's life intimately. The claim was made in the presence of the whole company of the apostles. The challenge was not taken up: the claim was not disputed. Not one of them could lay his hand on anything in His life and say "Herein hast thou fallen short." The challenge has still not been met, except by certain unspiritual and unthinking traducers. This festival then is no mere birthday celebration: it is the recurring realisation of the fact of the Incarnation. Why wonder then at our spiritual exultation at this season? What can be happier than the news that God has become Man and has taken upon Himself the form of man, to redeem the world from sin?

The second cause of the joy is the purpose of this incarnation. This Incarnation which we celebrate at this time is very different from the other Avatars we have heard about. It was no casual act on the part of God, nor the result of a caprice, nor even undertaken at His pleasure. It was no mere *leela* this; it was the fulfilment of an

age-long plan, a fore-ordained remedy for the sins of the Universe. It was a deliberate act of God's Love. "God so loved the World that He gave His begotten son". This is the most joyful news the world has ever received." There is born to you this day a saviour which is Christ the Lord." Prior to that, there had been born into the world great and good men; great teachers, prophets, and religious leaders. But no saviour had yet been announced at any time before this. None of them had ever claimed to be, or found to be, able to redeem men from sin. This profound significance of the birth of Jesus is what makes for the supreme happiness experienced by all believers at this blessed season.

But why this extraordinary claim of saviourhood on behalf of this person, you ask? Two reasons. First, he claimed to be so himself. He was done to death by men: and he said that his death was a sacrifice for the sins of humanity, an atonement for the sins of the world. Secondly, a more adequate reason is that he has been found to be a saviour, a real sin-bearer and sin-lifter, in the experience of thousands of his followers. It has been found over and over again in the spiritual experience of humanity that Jesus Christ is able to lift away the load of sin from the life and conscience of repentant sinners who come to him in faith and humility, and to give them a new power to overcome sin and to attain to spiritual heights never before dreamed of by them. The evidence for the reality of this experience is overwhelming; and is to be found in the recorded lives of Christian saints of all ages and of all countries. It is an experience shared and felt by all real believers, in some measure at least, in their lives. Jesus claimed to be the Saviour of mankind: and apart from all intellectual reasoning or theological argument, he has made good the claim over and over again in the lives of all those that believe on him. This explains the spiritual exultation that comes to us at this season, and this the message which this festival brings to "all people." God incarnate, and God incarnate to be the saviour of mankind is the recurring message of Christmas. There is nothing like this in the whole history of religion. Hence the supreme significance of Christmas to Christians in particular, and to the whole world in general. Each successive Christmas repeats this glorious message, these glad tidings of great joy,— "There is born to you to-day a saviour which is Christ the Lord."

National Missionary Society of India.

In response to a desire expressed by the Editor, I send the following contribution in the hope that it will serve a useful purpose in enlightening the members of the Christian Church in regard to the mission and purpose of the National Missionary Society of India.

This Society was established by a band of 16 young men who had gathered together from different parts of the country in order to make a survey of the work of Christian Missions in India. I give their names:—

R. Sirajuddin and S. N. Mukerji, Lahore;
J. R. Chitamber, Lucknow;
N. C. Mukerji, Allahabad;
J. M. Gulam Masih, Mainpuri;
J. R. Banerji, B. C. Sircar, V. S. Ratnavale and
J. W. N. Hensman, Calcutta;
S. V. Karmakar, Bombay;
K. T. Paul, V. S. Azariah & G. S. Eddy, Madras;
E. A. de Alwis, Kandy;
L. T. Ah Sow and Ah Pon, Rangoon.

These young men met in the historic city of Serampore which is consecrated by the memory of the honoured names of Carey, Marshman and Ward on the 25th December 1905. They met under a pagoda which is associated with the name of Rev. Henry Martyn, another Prince among missionaries. They spent a considerable time in making a survey of the work that had been done by Foreign Missionaries in various parts of the country and they thanked God for what had been accomplished. They could not however escape the question as to what the duty of the Indian Church was in the matter of the evangelisation of our dear motherland. The burden of their thought was, should we all the time be casting our eyes towards the West in order that our needs may be supplied and be always stretching forth our hands towards them in order to receive what they may wish to give us. They felt that the time had come when the Indian Church should make serious effort in taking a share in the evangelisation of their own country. They received an answer to their prayers then and there and they passed the following resolution:—

"Believing that the time has come for the Christians of India to take a larger share in the evangelisation of the country than they have done hitherto, and in accordance with the conviction of the representative Indian Christians from all parts of the country, resolved that a Society be organised for carrying out this object by Indian Christians through Indian men and Indian money."

They appointed their first Secretary Mr. V. S. Azariah (now the Bishop of Dornakal). We sincerely thank God for what He has enabled us to do. Remembering that our number is small, that our community is poor, that our Churches are divided, we have still been able under God's providence to accomplish something. We started out in 1905 with nothing. During the first year we established our Mission in one field in the District of Montgomery in the Punjab with one man. Our income during the first year was Rs. 2335/-. In the year 1928 we find that instead of one Province we are working in 7 Provinces amongst people speaking 9 different languages, instead of one centre we are working from 46 centres, instead of one man, we have now a band of 110 workers, instead of Rs. 2935/-, we have raised an income from 60 to 70 thousand rupees. We are to-day maintaining one High School with a Hostel attached, 33 Primary Schools, one Hospital, one Dispensary, one Boarding School for boys and girls, and are publishing Journals in three different languages. I am sure it will be agreed that for a small and a divided community these results are very gratifying.

We would next ask the question what does the National Missionary Society stand for? Let us in the first instance say what it does not stand for. It is not out to establish a new Church, to prescribe a new creed, or to start a new ecclesiastical organisation. The Indian Church has good reasons to deplore the existence of so many denominations in this country which divide the Church. India does not require any more of such organisations. In the next place, it does not stand forth as a rival to any Home Missionary organisation. Instead of a rival, we profess readiness to help all such organisations. We place our services at the disposal of all Home Missionary organisations in order to create and foster a missionary spirit in our Churches.

Where then is the difference? It lies in this that all Home Missionary organisations which work in connection with Churches are necessarily attached to particular denominations and therefore their outlook is circumscribed by their denominational environments. The National Missionary Society attempts to work through all Churches. Being an inter-Church body we receive support from all Churches, irrespective of their differences and are thus able to give a national expression to the missionary zeal and enterprise of the Church of Christ in India as a whole.

How are we able to accomplish it? We do this by drawing our support from all Churches irrespective of those differences which in ecclesiastical matters divide them. We shall find that with the exception of the Roman Catholic Church and per-

haps one or two other narrow and exclusive bodies, we derive support from all, and as we do this we employ them in one common enterprise. Our field in the Punjab works in spiritual communion with the Anglican Church, that in the U. P. with the Presbyterian Church or what is now called the United Church of India North, that in Behar and Orissa with the Lutheran Church, that in Bengal with the High Church section of the Anglican Church, that in Nizam's Dominions with the Anglican Church of Travancore and Cochin, that in the Mahratta Country with the Congregational Church which is also now a part of the United Church of India North, that in the District of North Kanara with the Mar Thoma Syrian Church and lastly that in the District of North Arcot with the South India United Church. Now can we think of any organisation which could have brought together Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Mar Thoma Syrians and others and united them in one common enterprise. Manifestly the answer is, there is none. When we meet in our Committees and Conferences we meet not as Churchmen but as Christians. We think then not of the differences that divide us but of those essentials which unite us. This is an achievement for which we do sincerely thank God.

The National Missionary Society has succeeded to some extent in changing the angle of vision of many of its constituent Churches, for example, it is well known that the Lutherans are a somewhat exclusive body and yet they have joined in this enterprise with the greatest earnestness and enthusiasm. When they joined this Society they came with an income of Rs. 2500/- only. Last year their contributions amounted to almost Rs. 8000/- and this without taking a pice from their contributions to their own Churches and their Home Missionary organisations—indeed, instead of taking away they have actually, as a result of the increase in missionary spirit and enterprise, increased their contributions to their own Church organisations. For the next year they have drawn up a budget for Rs. 12000/-. Take next the Syrian Church, in the past a Church wanting in missionary spirit and enthusiasm, for if it had been possessed of these who knows whether the history of the Christian Church in India would not have been written differently. And yet this Church had been confined within the narrow limits of its home, in Travancore and Cochin. But ask Bishop Abraham of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church to-day and he will tell us that the National Missionary Society has changed the angle of vision of this Church completely. The Mar Thoma section has not only undertaken the entire support of our field in North Kanara, at Honavar, Karwar,

THE STATUS OF NON-CONFORMITY IN HINDUISM.

Ankola and other places, but also for the first time in their history it has turned its attention to the so-called out-caste and untouchable classes of people living round about them.

In the third place it is attempting to capture the imagination of your young people. Affiliated to us in the Ashram at Tirupattur where work is carried on mainly in a Hospital. The Hospital is not a very big one. It has provision for only 38 beds though as a matter of fact, it has often actually to deal with many more than 38. Patients come and admit themselves into the hospital, whether the doctors would have them or no, and in consequence it is not difficult to imagine that the work at times is exceedingly difficult and taxing and yet the whole of the work in this Ashram is being done by means of voluntary labour. The Ashram does not employ a single paid worker. Bands of young men come from various parts of the country and work in the Hospital in the spirit of the Master without any remuneration. The number varies constantly, sometimes we have as many as 20 or 25, at other times only 4 or 5 but the work knows no variation or diminution. These men come at their own expense. The Ashram only feeds them as long as they are there. We have sometimes had women also although there is no regular provision yet for their employment. We however long for the day when a sisterhood would be established in Tirupattur which would carry on work as complementary to the work of the men. In our station at Puram we sometimes have young women students and others who come and spend a little time in rendering voluntary service. At Hamagha where a brotherhood of young men also carry on the work of the St. Andrews Mission content with only their food and clothing and that of the coarsest kind. The greatest problem before the Church to-day is to capture the imagination of our young people and help them to see the vision.

I do most earnestly desire to invite the attention of the Indian Church to the great change that is taking place in India outside the Church in regard to our Master. The spirit is working and our countrymen have begun to look upon Jesus Christ in a way in which they had never done before. This change in their attitude constitutes a challenge to the Church and I trust we shall all turn towards God and ask Him to help us to take up this challenge.

M. MUKERJI.

He who offereth to Me with devotion a leaf,
a flower, a fruit, or water, that I accept from the
poor, the afflicted, the afflicted, the afflicted,
with devotion.

—Sri. 9-26.

Students of church history are conversant with the part played by the 'Standard of Conformity' in the growth and development of Christianity. Now it is to a creed, now to a church, now to a dogma, that the disciple is required to confirm himself. Every schism, every breach, every revolt in the history of the church has arisen out of 'dissent' out of Non-Conformity, so much so the Non-Conforming conscience is a type often held up as a warning to the pious. The liberal tendencies of the twentieth century, have secured to every man the privilege of being a law unto himself. Nevertheless the habits of the past make it difficult to utilise the liberty thus decreed. There is a lurking fear which manifests itself in freak legislations, disciplinary trials, that liberty by destroying conformity might degenerate into license. The Indian church is come of age. It has grown under the tutelage of the West and has inherited its suspicions, fears, great schemes of union always achieved by compromise, face the grave danger of sacrificing conscience for conformity. Need a Christian conform to any standard save Christ? Does the Lord bind his children by any chain other than love? I will not answer the question directly. I shall direct attention to Hinduism. It is a faith which has the longest history among the religions of to-day. It has faced dangers both external and internal. Yet it has survived. What part has conformity played in keeping it intact? That is an interesting enquiry which no 'ecclesiastic' in India strangely enough has undertaken.

There is a symposium composed by an enterprising publisher of Madras consisting of replies given by leading Hindus to the question 'Who is a Hindu?' The answers are illuminating. They indicate hopeless diversity of opinion, some evasions, and often amusing embarrassment at a simple question, the only coherent answer, is given, the orthodox and it is that he is a Hindu who accepts the authority of the Vedas. The proposition was received without enthusiasm by many and by some with derision since notoriously Hinduism has departed from the spirit and letter of the Vedas so much that the very suggestion of conformity to it as an essential sounds strange and startling. The actual history of conformity to Vedic canon justifies this notion and throws considerable light on the non-conforming tendencies in Hinduism. In tracing the history of conformity I first confine my attention to those who acknowledge its authority and not to heretical sects like Bhuddhism and Jains who repudiate it or to Protestant sects which neglect it.

What are called Vedas consists of three portions—samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanishads. The Samhitas are hymns addressed to Vedic Gods, Brahmanas relate to ritual and Upanishads to philosophy of life. When we speak of conformity to Vedas it may mean conformity to either the worship of Vedic Gods or to Vedic ritual or philosophy. It is obvious that orthodoxy has ceased to worship any of the Vedic Gods. Not one of them commands the allegiance of the Hindus. As for ritual, the real sacrificial portion is abandoned altogether. Sacrifices are rarely performed, and when performed in the case of at least two important sects, Vaishnavites, Madhwas, there is no killing of animals at the ritual and the Arya Samaj which has revived the cult of Vedas has dropped the sacrifice altogether. As for the philosophy of life, the Upanishads themselves constitute the earliest 'dissent' from Vedic teaching. The teaching of Upanishads in spirit and in letter is a thoroughgoing repudiation of the Vedic canon. The 'Atman' displaced the Vedic God, meditation has ousted ritual. The significant change in the Upanishads, is the change of the centre of gravity in religion from authority to experience, from conformity to conscience. Indeed there are indications that the 'Brahman' philosophers regarded Vedic cult as 'inferior' worship.

Next turning to the six Darsanas i. e., orthodox systems of philosophy, not one of them accepts the Vedas in toto. The Samkhya perhaps the earliest of these systems, propounds as pramanas—perception, inference and tradition along with scriptures. According to this school the scriptures are authority only on matters beyond the range of perception. Within the range of perception, scriptures should not be interpreted so as contradict experience—a polite way of saying within the range of experience, perception prevails over scriptures—a theory which will scandalise the readers of the 'Indian Christian' if applied to Christian scriptures. The conformity of Purva Mimamsa—a system avowedly committed to Vedic ritual is still more enigmatic. It holds that all obligatory statements in the Vedas are injunctions as to ritual. The corollary to this proposition is that the statement in the Vedas as to the worship of Gods, is merely imagery because they the Gods don't exist. This orthodox system repudiates Vedic Gods in the name of Vedas. Indra, Varuna, Agni, we are told are not Gods, but are words, grouping of potent sounds and no more. As for Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta, Sankara its classic exponent classes the Vedic ritual, (beloved of the Purva Mimamsists) as inferior knowledge. It is to Upanishads which have raised the standard of revolt against Vedas that he goes for support. The story is not yet at an end. The Bhagavad-gita—the bible of the Hindus as it is appropriately called

—expresses the view that Bakti is Superior to Vedic worship.

So much for the conformity to Vedas in the Hindu Church. The treatment of Non-Conformist is quite the reverse of what the Western Church accords to such. It has made Buddha the arch-heretic, one of the incarnations. It has taken from the Jains whom it prosecuted, the most pregnant conception in its ethics—Ahimsa. The whole Bakti movement candidly lives without any reference, save the thinnest profession of conformity, to Vedas. May we not conclude that as far as true spirituality is concerned, unquestionably in Hinduism and very likely in Christianity, conformity has been a doubtful aid, and the non-conforming mind—an asset.

P. CHENCHIAH.

THE PENITENT SOUL.

1. The bitter unripe fruit can become sweet ;
The poison of the cobra can become the food
of the immortals ;
The mirage of the desert can become the green
garden of the Lord ;
The fierceness of sin can become the purity of
thy goodness ;
The broken pot can become the pure gold ;
Ah me, my rebellions will has not yet become
thy gracious will, and what can I say to
this ?
2. In vain do I spend the days of my life ;
Thy fragrant feet have I not yet beheld ;
Nor have I seen those who have seen them ;
Nor do I long with love to reach them ;

St. Ramalinga.

I hope nothing more than to call myself your servant ; but I do not know the secret of your service ; do you be charitable to me. We go on prating with our lips ; ostentation is vain without faith. Tuka says we know how to make a great display.

Tukaram Sadhu.

Great Light of Grace, Thou hast come to me
early in the day to save me from death.
Great Light of Grace, thou hast lit up the
lamp in my heart, banishing the darkness of
illusion.
Great of Light of Grace, thou hast set up thy
Truth in the world to raise the dead from
their sleep.
Great Light of Grace, thou hast thrown into
the shade all the crores of leaders who have
hidden the Truth.

