GUYON

METHOD OF PRAYER



Dr. Paul Brunton

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PAUL BRUNTON
PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATION

4936 NYS Route 414
Burdett, NY 14818, USA

Contact:

Tim Smith : 1-607-227-5492

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A SHORT AND EASY METHOD OF PRAYER

Since Madame Guyon's rather unbalanced, diffuse, and sentimental character lacks the richness and dignity, the repress-ed ardours and exquisite delicacy of St. Catherine's mind, so, too, her account of her own interior processes is too often marred by a terrible and unctuous interest in the peculiar graces vouchsafed to her.

Madame Guyon's value to the student of mysticism consists largely in this feeble quality of her surface-intelligence, which hence had little or no modifying or contributory effect upon her spiritual life. True to her own great principle of passivity or "quiet",it lets the interior impulses have their way; and thus we are able in her case to observe their workings with unusual ease, uncomplicated by the presence of a vigorous intellect or a disciplined will. The wind that bloweth where it listeth whistles through her soul; and the response which she makes is that of a weathercock rather than a windmill. She moves to every current; she often mistakes a draught for the divine breath; she feels her gyrations to be of enormous importance. But when it comes to the description of her awakening to the deeper life, a genuine intensity of feeling endows even her effusive style with a certain dignity. --from Evelyn Underhill's "Mysticism"

HEART AND LIFE BOOKLETS. No. 14

A SHORT AND EASY METHOD OF PRAYER

BY

MADAME GUYON

AUTHOR OF
"A CONCISE VIEW OF THE WAY TO GOD"
"SPIRITUAL TORRENTS"
"AUTOBIOGRAPHY"
ETC.



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PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

This little book has exercised a very great influence in both secular and religious circles. It was published at the suggestion of a friend. Madame Guyon thus speaks of it[1]: "Among my intimate friends was a civilian, a counsellor of the Parliament of Grenoble, who might be described as a model of piety. Seeing on my table my manuscript treatise on Prayer, he desired me to lend it to him. Being much pleased with it, he lent it to some of his friends. Others wanted copies of it. He resolved, therefore, to have it printed. I was requested to write a preface, which I did."

It immediately won a great notoriety, five or six editions being required in a very short time. It became the storm-centre in France for a number of years, and was directly the cause of Madame Guyon being attacked and defended by some of the most brilliant writers of her day. Bossuet opposed, and Fénelon as vigorously, and ultimately with complete success, supported the gentle authoress. In the meantime the result upon Madame Guyon was imprisonment in the Bastille!

It has, too, had weighty effect upon English History, particularly in its influence upon the school of modern Christian Mysticism.

The reader is advised that the versions of the Bible to which Madame Guyon in 1685 had opportunity of access were not the same as theirs of to-day, and therefore oftentimes discrepancies apparently occur in her quotations from the Bible. Very often, too, she is quoting direct from the Vulgate.

[1] Upham's "Life of Madame Guyon," p. 234.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

THIS little treatise, conceived in great simplicity, was not originally intended for publication: it was written for a few individuals, who were desirous to love GOD with their whole heart; some of whom, because of the profit they received in reading the manuscript, wished to obtain copies of it; and on this account alone, it was committed to the press.

It still remains in its original simplicity, without any censure on the various Divine Leadings of others: and we submit the whole to the judgment of those who are skilled and experienced in Divine matters; requesting them, however, not to decide without first entering into the main design of the Author, which is to induce the world to love GOD and to serve Him with comfort and success, in a simple and easy manner, adapted to those who are unqualified for learned and deep researches, and are, indeed, incapable of anything but a hearty desire to be truly devoted to GOD.

An unprejudiced reader may find, hidden under the most common expressions, a secret unction, which will excite him to seek after that Sovereign Good, whom all should wish to enjoy.

In speaking of the attainment of perfection, the word FACILITY is used, because GOD is indeed found with facility when we seek Him within ourselves. But, in contradiction to this, some perhaps may urge that passage in S. John, "*Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me*" (Chap. vii. 34). This apparent difficulty, however, is removed by another passage, where He, who cannot contradict Himself, hath said to all,

"*Seek and ye shall find*" (*Matt.* vii. 7). It is true, indeed, that he who would seek GOD, and is yet unwilling to forsake his sins, shall not find Him, because he seeks not aright; and therefore it is added, "*Ye shall die in your sins.*" On the other hand, he who diligently seeks God in his heart, and that he may draw near unto Him sincerely forsakes sin, shall infallibly find Him.

A life of devotion appears so formidable, and the Spirit of Prayer of such difficult attainment, that most persons are discouraged from taking a single step towards it. The difficulties inseparable from all great undertakings are, indeed, either nobly surmounted, or left to subsist in all their terrors, just as success is the object of despair or hope. I have therefore endeavoured to show the facility of the method proposed in this treatise, the great advantages to be derived from it, and the certainty of their attainment by those that faithfully persevere.

O were we once truly sensible of the goodness of GOD toward His poor creatures, and of His infinite desire to communicate Himself unto them, we should not allow imaginary difficulties to affright us, nor despair of obtaining that good which He is so earnest to bestow: "*He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things*" (*Rom.* viii. 32). But we want courage and perseverance; we have both to a high degree in our temporal concerns, but want them in "*the one thing needful*" (*Luke* x. 42).

If any think that GOD is not easily to be found in this way of Simple Love and Pure Adherence, let them not, on my testimony, alter their opinion, but rather make trial of it, and their own experience will convince them that the reality far exceeds all my representations of it.

Beloved reader, peruse this little treatise with a humble, sincere and candid spirit, and not with an inclination to cavil and criticise, and you will not fail

to reap some degree of profit from it. It was written with a hearty desire that you might wholly devote yourself to God; receive it, then, with a like desire for your own perfection: for nothing more is intended by it than to invite the simple and child-like to approach their Father, who delights in the humble confidence of His children, and is grieved at the smallest instance of their diffidence or distrust. With a sincere desire, therefore, to forsake sin, seek nothing from the unpretending method here proposed but the Love of God, and you shall undoubtedly obtain it.

Without setting up our opinions above those of others, we mean only, with truth and candour, to declare, from our own experience and the experience of others, the happy effects produced by thus Simply Following our Lord.

As this treatise was intended only to instruct in Prayer, there are many things which we respect and esteem, totally omitted, as not immediately relative to our main subject: it is, however, certain, that nothing will be found herein to offend, provided it be read in the spirit with which it was written; and it is still more certain, that those who in right earnest make trial of the way, will find we have written the Truth.

It is Thou alone, O Holy Jesus, who lovest simplicity and innocence, "*and whose delight is to dwell with the children of men*" (*Prov.* viii. 3), with those who are, indeed, willing to become "little children"; it is Thou alone, who canst render this little work of any value by imprinting it on the hearts of all who read it, and leading them to seek Thee within themselves, where Thou reposest as in the manger, waiting to receive proofs of their love, and to give them testimony of Thine. Yet alas! they may still lose these unspeakable advantages by their negligence and insensibility! But it belongeth unto Thee, O thou Uncreated Love! thou Silent and Eternal Word! it belongeth unto

Thee, to awaken, attract, and convert; to make Thyself be heard, tasted, and beloved! I know Thou canst do it; and I trust Thou wilt do it by this humble work which belongeth entirely to Thee, proceedeth wholly from Thee, and tendeth only to Thee! And, O most Gracious and adorable Saviour!

TO THEE BE ALL THE GLORY!

A SHORT AND EASY METHOD OF PRAYER

CHAPTER I

The Universal Call to Prayer

WHAT a dreadful delusion hath prevailed over the greater part of mankind, in supposing that they are not called to a state of prayer! whereas all are capable of prayer, and are called thereto, as all are called to and are capable of salvation.

Prayer is the application of the heart to GOD, and the internal exercise of love. S. Paul hath enjoined us to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 *Thess.* v. 17), and our Lord saith, "*I say unto you all, watch and pray*" (*Mark* xiii. 33, 37): all therefore may, and all ought to practise prayer. I grant that meditation is attainable but by few, for few are capable of it; and therefore, my beloved brethren who are athirst for salvation, meditative prayer is not the prayer which GOD requires of you, nor which we would recommend.

Let all pray: we should live by prayer, as we should live by love. "*I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that ye may be rich*" (*Rev.* iii. 8), this is much more easily obtained than we can conceive. "*Come, all ye that are athirst, to these living waters*"; nor lose your precious moments in "*hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that will hold no water*" (*John* vii. 37; *Jer.* ii. 13). Come, ye famished souls, who find nought whereon to feed; come, and ye shall be fully satisfied!

Come, ye poor afflicted ones, who groan beneath your load of wretchedness and pain, and ye shall find ease and comfort! Come, ye sick, to your Physician, and be not fearful of approaching Him because ye are

filled with diseases; expose them to His view and they shall be healed!

Children, draw near to your Father, and He will embrace you in the arms of love! Come, ye poor, stray, wandering sheep, return to your Shepherd! Come, sinners, to your Saviour! Come, ye dull, ignorant, and illiterate, ye who think yourselves the most incapable of prayer! ye are more peculiarly called and adapted thereto. Let all without exception come, for JESUS CHRIST hath called all.

Yet let not those come who are without a heart; they are not asked; for there must be a heart, that there may be love. But who is without a heart? O come, then, give this heart to GOD; and here learn how to make the donation.

All who are desirous of prayer may easily pray, enabled by those ordinary graces and gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT which are common to all men.

Prayer is the guide to perfection and the sovereign good; it delivers us from every vice, and obtains us every virtue; for the one great means to become perfect, is to walk in the presence of GOD: He Himself hath said, "*walk in my presence and be ye perfect*" (*Gen.* xvii. 1). It is by prayer alone, that we are brought into this presence, and maintained in it without interruption.

You must then learn a species of prayer, which may be exercised at all times; which doth not obstruct outward employments; and which may be equally practised by princes, kings, prelates, priests and magistrates, soldiers and children, tradesmen, labourers, women and sick persons: it cannot, therefore, be the prayer of the head, but of the heart; not a prayer of the understanding alone, which is so limited in its operations that it can have but one object at one time; but the prayer of the heart is not interrupted by the exercises of reason: indeed nothing can interrupt this prayer, but irregular and disordered affections: and when once we have tasted of GOD, and the sweetness of His love, we shall find it impossible to relish aught but Himself?

Nothing is so easily obtained as the possession and enjoyment of GOD, for "*in him we live, move, and have our being;*" and He is more desirous to give Himself into us, than we can be to receive Him.

All consists in the manner of seeking Him; and to seek aright, is easier and more natural to us than breathing. Though you think yourselves ever so stupid, dull, and incapable of sublime attainments, yet, by prayer, you may live in GOD Himself with less difficulty or interruption than you live in the vital air. Will it not then be highly sinful to neglect prayer? but this I trust you will not, when you have learnt the method, which is exceedingly easy.

CHAPTER II

The Method of Prayer

THERE are two ways of introducing a soul into prayer, which should for some time be pursued; the one is Meditation, the other is Reading accompanied with Meditation.

Meditative Reading is the choosing some important practical or speculative truth, always preferring the practical, and proceeding thus: whatever truth you have chosen, read only a small portion of it, endeavouring to taste and digest it, to extract the essence and substance thereof, and proceed no farther while any savour or relish remains in the passage: when this subsides, take up your book again and proceed as before, seldom reading more than half a page at a time; for it is not the quantity that is read, but the manner of reading, that yields us profit.

Those who read fast reap no more advantage than a bee would by only skimming over the surface of the flower, instead of waiting to penetrate into it, and extract its sweets. Much reading is rather for scholastic subjects than divine truths: indeed, to receive real profit from spiritual books, we must read

as I have described ; and I am certain, if that method were pursued, we should become gradually habituated to, and more fully disposed for prayer.

Meditation, which is the other method, is to be practised at an appropriated season, and not in the time of reading. I believe the best manner of meditating is as follows :—When, by an act of lively faith, you are placed in the Presence of GOD, recollect some truth wherein there is substance and food ; pause gently and sweetly thereon, not to employ the reason, but merely to calm and fix the mind : for you must observe, that your principal exercise should ever be the Presence of GOD ; your subject, therefore, should rather serve to stay the mind, than exercise the understanding.

From this procedure, it will necessarily follow, that the lively faith in a GOD immediately present in our inmost soul, will produce an eager and vehement pressing inwardly into ourselves, and a restraining all our senses from wandering abroad : this serves to extricate us speedily from numberless distractions, to remove us far from external objects, and to bring us nigh unto our GOD, Who is only to be found in our inmost centre, which is the Holy of Holies wherein He dwelleth.

He hath even promised "*to come and make his abode with him that doth his will*" (John xiv. 23). S. Augustine accuses himself of wasting his time, by not having from the first sought GOD in this manner of prayer.

When we are thus fully introverted, and warmly penetrated throughout with a living sense of the Divine Presence ; when the senses are all recollected, and withdrawn from the circumference to the centre, and the soul is sweetly and silently employed on the truths we have read, not in reasoning, but in feeding thereon, and in animating the will by affection, rather than fatiguing the understanding by study ; when, I say, the affections are in this state, which, however difficult it may appear at first, is, as I shall hereafter show, easily attainable ; we must allow them sweetly

to repose, and peacefully to drink in that of which they have tasted: for as a person may enjoy the flavour of the finest viand in mastication, yet receive no nourishment therefrom, if he does not cease the action and swallow the food; so, when our affections are enkindled, if we endeavour to stir them up yet more, we extinguish their flame, and the soul is deprived of its nourishment; we should, therefore, in stillness and repose, with respect, confidence and love, swallow the blessed food of which we have tasted: this method is, indeed, highly necessary; and will advance the soul farther in a short time, than any other in a course of years.

I have mentioned that our direct and principal exercise should consist in the contemplation of the Divine Presence: we should be also exceedingly watchful and diligent in recalling our dissipated senses, as the most easy method of overcoming distractions; for a direct contest and opposition only serves to irritate and augment them; whereas, by sinking down under a sense and perception of a present GOD, and by simply turning inwards, we wage insensibly a very advantageous, though indirect war with them.

It is proper here to caution beginners against wandering from truth to truth, and from subject to subject: the right way to penetrate every divine truth, to enjoy its full relish, and to imprint it on the heart, is dwelling on it whilst its savour continues.

Though recollection is difficult in the beginning, from the habit the soul has acquired of being always from home; yet, when by the violence it hath done itself, it becometh a little accustomed to it, it will soon be rendered perfectly easy, and become delightful. Such is the experimental taste and sense of His Presence, and such the efficacy of those graces, which that GOD bestows, Whose One Will towards His creatures is to communicate Himself unto them!

CHAPTER III

The First Degree of Prayer

THOSE who have not learnt to read, are not, on that account, excluded from prayer; for the Great Book which teacheth all things, and which is legible as well internally as externally, is JESUS CHRIST Himself.

The method they should practise is this: They should first learn this fundamental truth, that "*the kingdom of God is within them*" (Luke xvii. 21), and that it is there, only it must be sought.

It is as incumbent on the Clergy, to instruct their parishioners in prayer, as in their catechism. It is true, they tell them the end of their creation; but should they not also give them sufficient instructions how they may attain it? They should be taught to begin by an act of profound adoration and abasement before GOD; and closing the corporeal eyes, endeavour to open those of the soul: they should then collect themselves inwardly, and, by a lively faith in GOD, as dwelling within them, pierce into the Divine Presence; not suffering the senses to wander abroad, but withholding them as much as may be in due subjection.

They should then repeat the LORD'S Prayer in their native tongue, pondering a little upon the meaning of the words, and the infinite willingness of that GOD Who dwells within them, to become, indeed, their Father. In this state let them pour out their wants before Him; and when they have pronounced the endearing word, Father, remain a few moments in a respectful silence, waiting to have the will of this their heavenly Father made manifest unto them.

Again, beholding themselves in the state of a feeble child, sorely bruised by repeated falls, and defiled in the mire, destitute of strength to keep up, or of power to cleanse himself, they should lay their deplorable situation open to their Father's view in humble confusion; now sighing out a few words of love and

plaintive sorrow, and again sinking into profound silence before Him. Then, continuing the LORD'S Prayer, let them beseech this King of Glory to reign in them, yielding to His love the just claim He has over them, and resigning up themselves wholly to His divine government.

If they feel an inclination to peace and silence, let them discontinue the words of the prayer so long as this sensation holds; and when it subsides, go on with the second petition, "*Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven!*" upon which these humble supplicants must beseech GOD to accomplish, in them, and by them, all His will; and must surrender their hearts and freedom into His hands, to be disposed of as He pleaseth. And finding that the best employment of the will is to love, they should desire to love GOD with all their strength, and implore Him for His pure love; but all this sweetly and peacefully: and so of the rest of the prayer, in which the Clergy may instruct them. But they should not overburden themselves with frequent repetitions of set forms or studied prayers (Matt. vi. 7); for the LORD'S Prayer, once repeated as I have just described, will produce abundant fruit.

At other times they should place themselves as sheep before their Shepherd, looking up to Him for their true substantial food: "*O Divine Shepherd, Thou feedest Thy flock with Thyself, and art, indeed, their daily nourishment!*" They may also represent unto Him the necessities of their families: but all upon this principle, and in this one great view of faith, that GOD is within them.

The ideas we form of the Divine Being fall infinitely short of what He is: a lively faith in His presence is sufficient: for we must not form any image of the Deity; though we may of the Second Person in the ever-blessed TRINITY, beholding Him in the various states of His Incarnation, from His Birth to His Crucifixion, or in some other state or mystery, provided the soul always seeks for those views in its inmost ground or centre.

Again, we may look to Him as our Physician, and present to His healing influence all our maladies; but always without violence or perturbation; and from time to time with pauses of silence, that being intermingled with the action, the silence may be gradually extended, and our own exertion lessened; till at length, by continually yielding to GOD'S operations, they gain the complete ascendency; as shall be hereafter explained.

When the Divine Presence is granted us, and we gradually relish silence and repose, this experimental feeling and taste of the Presence of GOD introduces the soul into the second degree of prayer, which, by proceeding in the manner I have described, is attainable as well by the illiterate as the learned: some favoured souls, indeed, are indulged with it, even from the beginning.

CHAPTER IV

The Second Degree of Prayer

SOME call the second degree of prayer, "The Prayer of Contemplation," "The Prayer of Faith and Stillness," and others call it, "The Prayer of Simplicity." I shall here use this latter appellation, as being more just than any of the former, which imply a much more exalted state of prayer than that I am now treating of.

When the soul has been for some time exercised in the way I have mentioned, it finds that it is gradually enabled to approach GOD with facility; that recollection is attended with much less difficulty; and that prayer becomes easy, sweet and delightful; it knows that this is the true way of finding GOD; and feels "*his name is as ointment poured forth*" (Cant. 1-3). But the method must now be altered, and that which I prescribe, followed with courage and fidelity, without being disturbed at the difficulties we may encounter therein.

First, as soon as the soul by faith places itself in the Presence of God, and becomes recollected before Him, let it remain thus for a little time in a profound and respectful silence.

But if, at the beginning, in forming the act of faith, it feels some little pleasing sense of the Divine Presence; let it remain there without being troubled for a subject, and proceed no farther, but carefully cherish this sensation while it continues: as soon as it abates, the will may be excited by some tender affection; and if by the first moving thereof, it finds itself reinstated in sweet peace, let it there remain: the smothered fire must be gently fanned; but as soon as it is kindled, we must cease that effort, lest we extinguish it by our own activity.

I would warmly recommend it to all, never to finish prayer, without remaining some little time after in a respectful silence. It is also of the greatest importance for the soul to go to prayer with courage; and such a pure and disinterested love, as seeks nothing from God, but the ability to please Him, and to do His will: for a servant who only proportions his diligence to his hope of reward, renders himself unworthy of all reward.

Go then to prayer, not that ye may enjoy spiritual delights, but that ye may be either full or empty, just as it pleaseth God: this will preserve you in an evenness of spirit, in desertion as well as in consolation, and prevent your being surprised at aridity or the apparent repulses of God.

CHAPTER V

Of Spiritual Aridity

Though God hath no other desire than to impart Himself to the loving soul that seeks Him, yet He frequently conceals Himself that the soul may be roused from sloth, and impelled to seek Him with fidelity and love. But with what abundant goodness

doth He recompense the faithfulness of His beloved! And how sweetly are these apparent withdrawings of Himself succeeded by the consoling caresses of love!

At these seasons we are apt to believe, either that it proves our fidelity, and evinces a greater ardour of affection, to seek Him by an exertion of our own strength and activity; or, that this exertion will induce Him the more speedily to revisit us. No, no, my dear souls, believe me, this is not the right procedure in this degree of prayer; with patient love, with self-abasement and humiliation, with the reiterated breathings of an ardent but peaceful affection, and with silence full of the most profound respect, you must wait the return of the Beloved. Thus only you will demonstrate that it is Himself alone, and His good pleasure, that you seek; and not the selfish delights of your own sensations. Hence it is said, "*Be not impatient in the time of dryness and obscurity; suffer the suspension and delays of the consolations of God; cleave unto him, and wait upon him patiently, that thy life may increase and be renewed*" (Eccles. ii. 2, 3).

Be ye, therefore, patient in prayer, though, during life, you can do nought else than wait the return of the Beloved, in deep humiliation, calm contentment, and patient resignation to His will. And yet how this most excellent prayer may be intermingled with the sighings of plaintive love! This conduct, indeed, is most pleasing to the heart of JESUS; and, above all others, will, as it were, compel Him to return.

CHAPTER VI

Of Self-Surrender

WE should now begin to abandon and give up our whole existence unto GOD, from the strong and positive conviction, that the occurrence of every moment is agreeable to His immediate will and permission, and just such as our state requires.

This conviction will make us resigned in all things; and accept of all that happens, not as from the creature, but as from GOD Himself.

But I conjure you, my dearly beloved, who sincerely wish to give up yourselves to GOD, that after you have made the donation, you will not snatch yourselves back again: remember, a gift once presented, is no longer at the disposal of the donor.

Abandonment is a matter of the greatest importance in our process; it is the key to the inner court; so that whosoever knoweth truly how to abandon himself, soon becomes perfect: we must, therefore, continue steadfast and immovable therein, nor listen to the voice of natural reason. Great faith produces great abandonment: we must confide in GOD, "*hoping against hope*" (*Rom.* iv. 18).

Abandonment is the casting off all selfish care, that we may be altogether at the Divine Disposal. All Christians are exhorted to this resignation; for it is said to all, "*Be not anxious for to-morrow; for your Heavenly Father knoweth all that is necessary for you*" (*Matt.* xx. 25). "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*" (*Prov.* iii. 6). "*Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established*" (*Prov.* xvi. 3). "*Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and he himself will bring it to pass*" (*Psa.* xxxvi. 5).

Our abandonment then should be as fully applied to external as internal things, giving up all our concerns into the hands of GOD, forgetting ourselves, and thinking only of Him; by which the heart will remain always disengaged, free, and at peace. It is practised by continually losing our own will in the will of GOD; by renouncing every particular inclination as soon as it arises, however good it may appear, that we may stand in indifference with respect to ourselves, and only will that which GOD from eternity hath willed; by being resigned in all things, whether for soul or body, whether for time or eternity; by leaving what is past in oblivion, what is to come to Providence, and devoting the present

moment to God, which brings with itself God's eternal order, and is as infallible a declaration to us of His will as it is inevitable and common to all; by attributing nothing that befals us to the creature, but regarding all things in God, and looking upon all, excepting only our sins, as infallibly proceeding from Him. Surrender yourselves, then, to be led and disposed of just as God pleaseth, with respect both to your outward and inward state.

CHAPTER VII

Of Sufferings

Be patient under all the sufferings which God is pleased to send you: if your love to Him be pure, you will not seek Him less on Calvary, than on Tabor; and, surely, He should be as much loved on that as on this, since it was on Calvary He made the greater display of His Love for you.

Be not like those, who give themselves to Him at one season, and withdraw from Him at another: they give themselves only to be caressed; and wrest themselves back again, when they come to be crucified, or at least turn for consolation to the creature.

No, beloved souls, ye will not find consolation in aught, but in the love of the Cross, and in total abandonment: "*Whosoever favoureth not the Cross, favoureth not the things that be of God*" (*Matt.* xvi. 23). It is impossible to love God without loving the Cross; and a heart that favours the Cross, finds the bitterest things to be sweet: "*A famished soul findeth bitter things sweet*" (*Job.* vi. 1) because it findeth itself hungering for God, in proportion as it hungereth for the Cross. God giveth the Cross, and the Cross giveth us God.

We may be assured, that there is an internal advancement, where there is an advancement in the

way of the Cross: Abandonment and the Cross go hand in hand together.

As soon as suffering presents itself, and you feel a repugnance against it, resign yourself immediately unto GOD with respect to it, and give yourself up to Him in sacrifice; you shall find, that, when the Cross arrives, it will not be so very burdensome, because you had disposed yourself to a willing reception of it. This, however, does not prevent your feeling its weight as some have imagined; for when we do not feel the Cross, we do not suffer it. A sensibility of sufferings constitutes a principal part of the sufferings themselves. JESUS CHRIST Himself was willing to suffer its utmost rigours. We often bear the Cross in weakness, at other times in strength; all should be equal to us in the will of GOD.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Mysteries

IT may be objected, that, by this method, we shall have no mysteries imprinted on our minds: but it is quite the reverse; for it is the peculiar means of imparting them to the soul. JESUS CHRIST, to whom we are abandoned, and whom "*we follow as the way, whom we hear as the truth, and who animates us as the life*" (*John* xiv. 6) in imprinting Himself on the soul, impresses the characters of His different states; and to bear all the states of JESUS CHRIST is far more sublime, than merely to reason concerning them. S. Paul bore in his body the states of JESUS CHRIST: "*I bear in my body*," says he, "*the marks of the Lord Jesus*" (*Gal.* vi. 17), but he does not say that he reasoned thereon.

In our acts of resignation, JESUS CHRIST frequently communicates some peculiar views or revelations of His states: these we should thankfully receive, and dispose ourselves for what appeareth to be His will. Indeed, having no other choice, but that of ardently

reaching after Him, of dwelling ever with Him, and of sinking into nothingness before Him, we should accept indiscriminately all His dispensations, whether obscurity or illumination, fruitfulness or barrenness, weakness or strength, sweetness or bitterness, temptations, distractions, pain, weariness, or doubtings; and none of all these should, for one moment, retard our course.

God engages some, for whole years, in the contemplation and enjoyment of a particular mystery; the simple view or contemplation of which gathers the soul inward, provided it be faithful: but as soon as God is pleased to withdraw this view from the soul, it should freely yield to the deprivation. Some are very uneasy at feeling their inability to meditate on certain mysteries; but this disquietude hath no just foundation, since an affectionate attachment to God includes every species of devotion: for whosoever, in repose and quiet, is united to God alone, is, indeed, most excellently and effectually applied to every divine mystery: the Love of God comprehends, in itself, the love of all that appertains to Him.

CHAPTER IX

Of Virtue

It is thus we acquire virtue, with facility and certainty; for, as God is the fountain and principle of all virtue, we possess all in the possession of Himself; and in proportion as we approach towards this possession, in like proportion do we rise into the most eminent virtues. For all virtue is but as a mask, an outside appearance changeable as our garments, if it doth not spring up, and issue from within; and then, indeed, it is genuine, essential, and permanent: "*The beauty of the King's daughter proceeds from within*," saith David (*Psa.* xlv. 14). These souls, above all others, practise virtue in the most eminent degree, though they advert not to virtue in particular: God.

to whom they are united, carries them to the most extensive practice of it; He is exceedingly jealous over them, and prohibits them the taste of any pleasure but in Himself.

What a hungering for sufferings have those souls, who thus glow with Divine Love! how prone to precipitate into excessive austerities, were they permitted to pursue their own inclinations! They think of nought save how they may please their Beloved: as their self-love abates, they neglect and forget themselves; and as their love to GOD increases, so do self-detestation and disregard to the creature.

O was this easy method acquired, a method so suited to all, to the dull and ignorant as well as to the acute and learned, how easily would the whole Church of GOD be reformed! Love only is required: "Love;" saith S. Augustine, "and then do what you please." For when we truly love, we cannot have so much as a will to anything that might offend the Object of our affections.

CHAPTER X

Of Mortification

I WILL even affirm, that, in any other way, it is next to an impossibility ever to acquire a perfect mortification of the senses and passions.

The reason is obvious; the soul gives vigour and energy to the senses, and the senses raise and stimulate the passions: a dead body has neither sensations nor passions, because its connection with the soul is dissolved.

All endeavours merely to rectify the exterior, impel the soul yet farther outward into that about which it is so warmly and zealously engaged. It is in these matters that its powers are diffused and scattered abroad; for its application being immediately directed to austerities, and other externals, it thus invigorates those very senses it is aiming to subdue.

For the senses have no other spring from whence to derive their vigour, than the application of the soul to themselves; the degree of their life and activity is proportioned to the degree of attention which the soul bestows upon them; and this life of the senses stirs up and provokes the passions, instead of suppressing or subduing them: austerities may, indeed, enfeeble the body, but, for the reasons just mentioned, can never take off the keenness of the senses, or lessen their activity.

The only method to effect this is inward recollection; by which the soul is turned wholly and altogether inward, to possess a PRESENT GOD. If the soul directs all its vigour and energy towards this centre of its being, the simple act separates and withdraws it from the senses; the exercising all its powers internally leaves them faint and impotent; and the nearer it draws to GOD the farther is it separated from the senses, and the less are the passions influenced by them.

Hence it is, that those, in whom the attractions of grace are very powerful, find the outward man altogether weak and feeble, and even liable to faintings. I do not mean by this to discourage mortification; for it should ever accompany prayer, according to the strength and state of the person, or as obedience will allow. But I say that mortification should not be our principal exercise; nor should we prescribe ourselves such and such austerities, but follow simply and merely the internal attractions of grace; and being possessed and occupied with the Divine Presence (without thinking particularly on mortification) GOD will enable us to perform every species of it; and most assuredly He will give no relaxation to those who abide faithful in their abandonment to Him, until He has mortified in them everything that remains to be mortified.

We have only then to continue steadfast in the utmost attention to GOD, and all things will be rightly performed. All are not capable of outward austerities, but all are capable of this. In the morti-

fication of the eye and ear, which continually supply the busy imagination with new objects, there is little danger of falling into excess: but GOD will teach us this also, and we have only to follow where His Spirit guides.

The soul has a double advantage by proceeding thus, for, in withdrawing from outward objects, it draws the nearer to GOD; and in approaching Him, besides the secret sustaining and preserving power and virtue received, it is the farther removed from sin, the nearer the approach is made; so that conversion becomes habitual.

CHAPTER XI

Of Conversion

"*BE ye truly converted unto that God from whom ye have so deeply revolted*" (*Isa.* xxxi. 6). To be truly converted is to avert wholly from the creature, and turn wholly unto GOD.

For the attainment of salvation it is absolutely necessary that we should forsake outward sin and turn unto righteousness: but this alone is not perfect conversion, which consists in a total change of the whole man from an outward to an inward life.

When the soul is once turned to GOD a wonderful facility is found in continuing steadfast in conversion; and the longer it remains thus converted, the nearer it approaches, and the more firmly it adheres to GOD; and the nearer it draws to Him, of necessity it is the farther removed from the creature, which is so contrary to Him: so that it is so effectually established and rooted in its conversion that it becomes habitual, and, as it were, natural.

Now we must not suppose that this is effected by a violent exertion of its own powers; for it is not capable of, nor should it attempt any other co-operation with Divine Grace, than that of endeavouring to withdraw itself from external objects and to turn

inwards: after which it has nothing farther to do than to continue steadfast in adherence to GOD.

GOD has an attractive virtue which draws the soul more and more powerfully to Himself, the nearer it approaches towards Him, and, in attracting, He purifies and refines it; just as with a gross vapour exhaled by the sun, which, as it gradually ascends, is rarified and rendered pure: the vapour, indeed, contributes to its exhalation only by its passiveness; but the soul co-operates with the attractions of GOD, by a free and affectionate correspondence. This kind of introversion is both easy and efficacious, advancing the soul naturally and without constraint, because GOD Himself is its centre.

Every centre has a powerfully attractive virtue; and the more pure and exalted it is, the stronger and more irresistible are its attractions. But besides the potent magnetism of the centre itself, there is, in every creature, a correspondent tendency to re-union with its peculiar centre which is vigorous and active in proportion to the spirituality and perfection of the subject.

As soon as anything is turned towards its centre its own gravitation instigates and accelerates it thereto, unless it be withheld by some invincible obstacle: a stone held in the hand is no sooner disengaged than by its own weight it falls to the earth as to its centre; so also water and fire, when unobstructed, tend and flow incessantly to their principle or centre. Now, when the soul, by its efforts to abandon outward objects, and gather itself inwards, is brought into the influence of this central tendency, without any other exertion, it falls gradually by the weight of Divine Love into its proper centre; and the more passive and tranquil it remains, and the freer from self-motion and self-exertion, the more rapidly it advances, because the energy of the central attractive virtue is unobstructed and has full liberty for action.

All our care and attention should, therefore, be to acquire inward recollection: nor let us be discouraged

by the pains and difficulties we encounter in this exercise, which will soon be recompensed, on the part of our GOD, by such abundant supplies of grace as will render the exercise perfectly easy, provided we be faithful in meekly withdrawing our hearts from outward distractions and occupations, and returning to our centre with affections full of tenderness and serenity. When at any time the passions are turbulent, a gentle retreat inwards unto a Present GOD, easily deadens and pacifies them; and any other way of contending with them rather irritates than appeases them.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Presence of God

THE soul that is faithful in the exercise of love and adherence to GOD above described, is astonished to feel Him gradually taking possession of their whole being: it now enjoys a continual sense of that Presence, which is become as it were natural to it; and this, as well as prayer, is the result of habit. The soul feels an unusual serenity gradually being diffused throughout all its faculties; and silence now wholly constitutes its prayer; whilst GOD communicates an intuitive love, which is the beginning of ineffable blessedness. O that I were permitted to pursue this subject and describe some degrees of the endless progression of subsequent states![1] But I now write only for beginners; and shall, therefore, proceed no farther, but wait our LORD'S time for publishing what may be applicable to every conceivable degree of "stature in CHRIST JESUS."

We must, however, urge it as a matter of the highest import, to cease from self-action and self-exertion, that GOD Himself may act alone: He saith, by the

[1] An idea pursued in the work entitled "Spiritual Torrents," and also in "The Concise View."

mouth of His Prophet David, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (*Ps.* xlvi. 10). But the creature is so infatuated with a love and attachment to its own workings, that it imagines nothing at all is done, if it doth not perceive and distinguish all its operations. It is ignorant that its inability minutely to observe the manner of its motion is occasioned by the swiftness of its progress; and that the operations of God, in extending and diffusing their influence, absorb those of the creature. The stars may be seen distinctly before the sun rises; but as his light advances, their rays are gradually absorbed by his and they become invisible, not from the want of light in themselves, but from the superior effulgence of the chief luminary.

The case is similar here; for there is a strong and universal light which absorbs all the little distinct lights of the soul; they grow faint and disappear under its powerful influence, and self-activity is now no longer distinguishable: yet those greatly err who accuse this prayer of idleness, a charge that can arise only from inexperience. If they would but make some efforts towards the attainment of this prayer, they would soon experience the contrary of what they suppose and find their accusation groundless.

This appearance of inaction is, indeed, not the consequence of sterility and want, but of fruitfulness and abundance which will be clearly perceived by the experienced soul, who will know and feel that the silence is full and unctuous, and the result of causes totally the reverse of apathy and barrenness. There are two kinds of people that keep silence; the one because they have nothing to say, the other because they have too much: it is so with the soul in this state; the silence is occasioned by the superabundance of matter, too great for utterance.

To be drowned, and to die of thirst, are deaths widely different; yet water may, in some sense, be said to cause both; abundance destroys in one case, and want in the other. So in this state the abundance and overflowings of grace still the activity of self;

and, therefore, it is of the utmost importance to remain as silent as possible.

The infant hanging at the mother's breast is a lively illustration of our subject: it begins to draw the milk by moving its little lips; but when the milk flows abundantly, it is content to swallow, and suspends its suction: by doing otherwise it would only hurt itself, spill the milk, and be obliged to quit the breast.

We must act in like manner in the beginning of Prayer, by exerting the lips of the affections; but as soon as the milk of Divine Grace flows freely, we have nothing to do but, in repose and stillness, sweetly to imbibe it; and when it ceases to flow, we must again stir up the affections as the infant moves its lips. Whoever acts otherwise cannot turn this grace to advantage, which is bestowed to allure and draw the soul into the repose of Love, and not into the multiplicity of Self.

But what becometh of this child, who gently and without motion drinketh in the milk? Who would believe that it can thus receive nourishment? Yet the more peacefully it feeds, the better it thrives. What, I say, becomes of this infant? It drops gently asleep on its mother's bosom. So the soul that is tranquil and peaceful in prayer, sinketh frequently into a mystic slumber, wherein all its powers are at rest; till at length it is wholly fitted for that state, of which it enjoys these transient anticipations. In this process the soul is led naturally, without effort, art, or study.

The Interior is not a stronghold to be taken by storm and violence, but a kingdom of peace, which is to be gained only by love.

If any will thus pursue the little path I have pointed out, it will lead them to intuitive prayer. God demands nothing extraordinary nor difficult; on the contrary, He is best pleased by a simple and child-like conduct.

That which is most sublime and elevated in religion is the easiest attained: the most necessary Sacraments are the least difficult. It is thus also in natural

things: if you would go to sea, embark on a river, and you will be conveyed to it insensibly and without exertion. Would you go to GOD, follow this sweet and simple path, and you will arrive at the desired object, with an ease and expedition that will amaze you.

O that you would but once make the trial! how soon would you find that all I have advanced falls short of the reality, and that your own experience will carry you infinitely beyond it! Is it fear that prevents you from instantly casting yourself into those arms of LOVE, which were widely extended on the Cross only to receive you? Whence can your fears arise? What risk do you run, in depending solely on your GOD, and abandoning yourself wholly unto Him? Ah! He will not deceive you, unless by bestowing an abundance beyond your highest hopes: but those who expect all from themselves will inevitably be deceived, and must suffer this rebuke of GOD by His prophet Isaiah, "*Ye have wearied yourselves in the multiplicity of your ways, and have not said let us rest in peace*" (*Isa.* lvii. 10 Vulgate).

CHAPTER XIII

Of Rest before God

THE soul advanced thus far hath no need of any other preparation than its quietude: for now the Presence of GOD, which is the great effect, or rather continuation of Prayer, begins to be infused, and almost without intermission. The soul enjoys transcendent blessedness, and feels that "it no longer lives, but that CHRIST liveth in it"; and that the only way to find Him is introversion. No sooner do the bodily eyes close than the soul is wrapt up in Prayer: it is amazed at so great a blessing, and enjoys an internal converse, which external matters cannot interrupt.

The same may be said of this species of prayer that is said of wisdom, "*all good things come together with*

her" (*Wisdom* vii. 11). For the virtues flow from this soul into exertion with so much sweetness and facility that they appear natural and spontaneous; and the living spring within breaks forth so freely and abundantly into all goodness that it becomes even insensible to evil. Let it then remain faithful in this state; and beware of choosing or seeking any other disposition whatsoever than this simple rest as a preparative either to Confession or Communion, to action or prayer, for its sole business is to expand itself for the full reception of the Divine infusions. I would not be understood to speak of the preparations necessary for the Sacraments, but of the most perfect dispositions in which they can be received.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Inward Silence

"*The Lord is in his Holy Temple, let all the earth keep silence before him*" (*Hab.* ii. 20). Inward silence is absolutely indispensable, because the WORD is essential and eternal, and necessarily requires dispositions in the soul in some degree correspondent to His nature, as a capacity for the reception of Himself. Hearing is a sense formed to receive sounds, and is rather passive than active, admitting, but not communicating sensation; and if we would hear, we must lend the ear for that purpose: so CHRIST, the eternal WORD, without whose Divine inspeaking the soul is dead, dark, and barren, when He would speak within us, requires the most silent attention to His all-quickening and efficacious voice.

Hence it is so frequently enjoined us in Sacred Writ, to hear and be attentive to the Voice of GOD: of the numerous exhortations to this effect I shall quote a few: "*Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation!*" (*Isa.* li. 4), and again, "*Hear me, all ye whom I carry in my bosom, and bear within my bowels*" (*Isa.* xlvi. 3), and farther by the Psalmist

"*Hearken, O daughter! and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty*" (*Psal.* xlv. 10, 11).

We should forget ourselves, and all self-interest, and listen and be attentive to the voice of our GOD: and these two simple actions, or rather passive dispositions, attract His love to that beauty which He Himself communicates.

Outward silence is very requisite for the cultivation and improvement of inward; and indeed it is impossible we should become truly internal without the love and practice of outward silence and retirement. GOD saith, by the mouth of His prophet, "*I will lead her into solitude, and there will I speak to her heart*" (*Hos.* ii. 14 vulg.); and unquestionably the being internally occupied and engaged with God is wholly incompatible with being busied and employed in the numerous trifles that surround us (*Luke* xxxviii. 42).

When through imbecility or unfaithfulness we become dissipated, or as it were uncentred, it is of immediate importance to turn again gently and sweetly inward; and thus we may learn to preserve the spirit and unction of prayer throughout the day; for if prayer and recollection were wholly confined to any appointed half-hour or hour, we should reap but little fruit.

CHAPTER XV

Of Confession and Self-examination

SELF-EXAMINATION should always precede Confession, and in the nature and manner of it should be conformable to the state of the soul: the business of those that are advanced to the degree of which we now treat, is to lay their whole souls open before GOD, who will not fail to enlighten them, and enable them to see the peculiar nature of their faults. This examination, however, should be peaceful and tranquil,

and we should depend on God for the discovery and knowledge of our sins, rather than on the diligence of our own scrutiny.

When we examine with constraint, and in the strength of our own endeavours, we are easily deceived and betrayed by self-love into error; "*we believe the evil good, and the good evil*" (*Isa.* v. 20); but when we lie in full exposure before the Sun of Righteousness, His Divine beams render the smallest atoms visible. It follows from hence that we must forsake self, and abandon our souls to God as well in examination as Confession.

When souls have attained to this species of prayer no fault escapes reprehension; on every commission they are instantly rebuked by an inward burning and tender confusion. Such is the scrutiny of Him who suffers no evil to be concealed; and under His purifying influence the one way is to turn affectionately to our Judge, and bear with meekness the pain and correction He inflicts. He becomes the incessant Examiner of the soul; it can now, indeed, no longer examine itself, and if it be faithful in its resignation, experience will convince the soul that it is a thousand times more effectually examined by His Divine Light than by the most active and vigorous self-inspection.

Those who tread these paths should be informed of a matter respecting their Confession in which they are apt to err. When they begin to give an account of their sins, instead of the regret and contrition they had been accustomed to feel, they find that love and tranquillity sweetly pervade and take possession of their souls: now those who are not properly instructed are desirous of withdrawing from this sensation, to form an act of contrition, because they have heard, and with truth, that it is requisite: but they are not aware that they lose thereby the genuine contrition, which is this Intuitive Love, infinitely surpassing any effect produced by self-exertion, and comprehending the other acts in itself as in one principal act, in much higher perfection than if they were distinctly perceived, and varied in their sensa-

tion. Be not then troubled about other things when GOD acts so excellently in you and for you.

To hate sin in this manner is to hate it as GOD does. The purest love is that which is of His immediate operation in the soul: why should it then be so eager for action? Let it remain in the state He assigns it, agreeable to the instructions of Solomon: "*Put your confidence in* GOD; *remain in quiet, where he hath placed you*" (*Eccles.* xi. 22).

The soul will also be amazed at finding a difficulty in calling faults to remembrance: this, however, should cause no uneasiness; first, because this forgetfulness of our faults is some proof of our purification from them; and in this degree of advancement it is best. Secondly, because when Confession is our duty GOD will not fail to make known to us our greatest faults, for then He Himself examines, and the soul will feel the end of examination more perfectly accomplished than it could possibly have been by the utmost exertion of its own endeavours.

These instructions, however, would be altogether unsuitable to the preceding degrees while the soul continues in its active state, wherein it is right and necessary it should in all things use the utmost industry in proportion to the degree of its advancement. It is those that have arrived at this more advanced state whom I would exhort to follow these instructions, and not to vary their one simple occupation even on approaching the Communion; they should remain in silence, and suffer GOD to act freely and without limitation. Who can better receive the Body and Blood of CHRIST than he in whom the HOLY SPIRIT is indwelling?

CHAPTER XVI

Of Reading and Vocal Prayer

IF, while reading, you feel yourself recollected, lay aside the book and remain in stillness; at all times

read but little, and cease to read when you are thus internally attracted.

The soul that is called to a state of inward silence should not encumber itself with long vocal prayers; whenever it does pray vocally, and finds a difficulty therein, and an attraction to silence, it should not use constraint by persevering, but yield to the internal drawings, unless the repeating such prayers be a matter of obedience. In any other case, it is much better not to be burdened with and tied down to the repetition of set forms, but wholly given up to the leadings of the HOLY SPIRIT; and herein, indeed, is every species of devotion inclusively fulfilled in a most eminent degree.

CHAPTER XVII

Of Petitions

THE soul should not be surprised at feeling itself unable to offer up to GOD such petitions as it had formerly made with freedom and facility; for now the Spirit maketh intercession for it according to the will of GOD, that "*Spirit which helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (*Rom.* viii. 26). We must co-operate with, and second the designs of GOD, which tend to divest us of all our own operations, that in the place thereof His own may be substituted. Let this then be done in you, and suffer not yourself to be attached to anything, however good it may appear; for it is no longer good if it in any measure turns you aside from that which GOD willeth of you: the Divine Will is preferable to all things else. Shake off then all attachments to the interests of self, and live on faith and resignation; here it is that genuine faith begins truly to operate.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of Defects or Infirmities

SHOULD we either wander among externals, or sink into dissipation, or commit a fault, we must instantly turn inwards; for having departed thereby from our GOD, we should as soon as possible return again unto Him, and suffer in His presence whatever sensations He is pleased to impress. On the commission of a fault it is of great importance to guard against vexation and disquietude, which springs from a secret root of pride and a love of our own excellence; we are hurt by feeling what we are; and if we discourage ourselves or despond, we are the more enfeebled; and from our reflections on the fault a chagrin arises, which is often worse than the fault itself.

The truly humble soul is not surprised at defects or failings; and the more miserable and wretched it beholds itself, the more doth it abandon itself unto GOD, and press for a nearer and more intimate alliance with Him, that it may avail itself of His eternal strength. We should the rather be induced to act thus, as GOD Himself hath said, "*I will make thee understand what thou oughtest to do; I will teach thee the way by which thou shouldst go; and I will have mine eye continually upon thee for a guide*" (*Psal.* xxxii. 8, vulg.).

CHAPTER XIX

Of Distractions and Temptations

A DIRECT contest and struggle with distractions and temptations rather serves to augment them, and withdraws the soul from that adherence to GOD, which should ever be its principal occupation. The surest and safest method for conquest is simply to

turn away from the evil and draw yet nearer and closer to our GOD. A little child, on perceiving a monster, does not wait to fight with it, and will scarcely turn its eyes towards it, but quickly shrinks into the bosom of its mother, in total confidence of safety; so likewise should the soul turn from the dangers of temptation to GOD. "*GOD is in the midst of her*," saith the Psalmist, "*she shall not be moved; GOD shall help her, and that right early*" (*Psal.* xlvi. 5).

If we do otherwise, and in our weakness attempt to attack our enemies, we shall frequently feel ourselves wounded, if not totally defeated; but, by casting ourselves into the simple Presence of GOD, we shall find instant supplies of strength for our support. This was the succour sought for by David: "*I have set*," saith he, "*the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope*" (*Psal.* xvi. 8, 9). And it is said in Exodus, "*The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*"

CHAPTER XX

Of Self-Annihilation

SUPPLICATION and sacrifice are comprehended in prayer, which, according to S. John, is "*an incense, the smoke whereof ascendeth unto GOD;*" therefore it is said in the Apocalypse that "*unto the Angel was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all Saints*" (Chap. viii. 3).

Prayer is the effusion of the heart in the Presence of GOD: "*I have poured out my soul before GOD*," saith the mother of Samuel. (1 *Sam.* i. 15.) The prayer of the wise men at the feet of CHRIST in the stable of Bethlehem, was signified by the incense they offered: for prayer being the energy and fire of love, melting, dissolving, and sublimating the soul, and causing it to ascend unto GOD; therefore, in proportion as the

soul is melted and dissolved, in like proportion do odours issue from it; and these odours proceed from the intense fire of love within.

This is illustrated in the *Canticles* (i. 11) where the spouse saith, "*While the King sitteth on his couch, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*" The couch is the ground or centre of the soul; and when GOD is there, and we know how to dwell with Him, and abide in His Presence, the sacred power and influence thereof gradually dissolves the obduration of the soul, and, as it melteth, odours issue forth: hence it is, that the Beloved saith of His spouse, in seeing her soul melt when He spake, "*Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, like pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?*" (*Cant.* v. 6—and iii. 6).

Thus doth the soul ascend unto GOD, by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of Divine Love: this, indeed, is a most essential and necessary sacrifice in the Christian religion, and that alone by which we pay true homage to the sovereignty of GOD; as it is written, "*The power of the LORD is great, and he is honoured only by the humble*" (*Eccles.* iii. 20). By the destruction of the existence of self within us, we truly acknowledge the supreme existence of our GOD; for unless we cease to exist in self, the Spirit of the ETERNAL WORD cannot exist in us: now it is by the giving up of our own life, that we give place for His coming; and "in dying to ourselves, He liveth and abideth in us."

We should, indeed, surrender our whole being unto CHRIST JESUS; and cease to live any longer in ourselves, that He may become our life; "*that being dead, our life may be hid with CHRIST IN GOD*" (*Col.* iii. 3). "*Pass ye into me,*" saith GOD, "*all ye who earnestly seek after me*" (*Eccles.* xxiv. 16). But how is it we pass into GOD? We leave and forsake ourselves, that we may be lost in Him; and this can be effected only by annihilation; which being the true prayer of adoration, renders unto GOD alone, all "*Blessing, honour, glory and power, for ever and ever*" (*Rev.* v. 13).

This is the prayer of truth; "*It is worshipping God in spirit and in truth*" (*John* iv. 23). "In spirit," because we enter into the purity of that Spirit which prayeth within us, and are drawn forth and freed from our own carnal and corrupt manner of praying; "In truth," because we are thereby placed in the great Truth of the ALL OF GOD, and the NOTHING of the creature.

There are but these two truths, the ALL, and the NOTHING; everything else is falsehood. We can pay due honour to the ALL OF GOD, only in our own annihilation; which is no sooner accomplished, than He, who never suffers a void in nature, instantly fills us with Himself.

Did we but know the virtue and the blessings which the soul derives from this prayer, we should willingly be employed therein without ceasing. "*It is the pearl of great price: it is the hidden treasure*" (*Matt.* xiii. 44, 45), which, whoever findeth, selleth freely all that he hath to purchase it: "*It is the well of living water, which springeth up unto everlasting life*": It is the adoration of GOD "*in spirit and in truth*" (*John* iv. 14-23), and it is the full performance of the purest evangelical precepts.

JESUS CHRIST assureth us, that the "*Kingdom of GOD is within us*" (*Luke* xvii. 21), and this is true in two senses: First, when GOD becometh so fully the Master and Lord in us, that nothing resisteth His dominion; then is our interior His kingdom: And again, when we possess GOD, who is the Supreme Good, we possess His kingdom also, wherein there is fullness of joy, and where we attain the end of our creation: thus it is said, "*to serve GOD, is to reign.*" The end of our creation, indeed, is to enjoy our GOD, even in this life; but alas! how few there are who think of this seriously.

CHAPTER XXI

The Noble Results of this Species of Prayer

Some persons, when they hear of the prayer of silence, falsely imagine, that the soul remains stupid, dead, and inactive. But, unquestionably, it acteth therein, more nobly and more extensively than it had ever done before; for God Himself is the mover, and the soul now acteth by the agency of His Spirit.

When S. Paul speaks of our being led by the Spirit of God, it is not meant that we should cease from action; but that we should act through the internal agency of His Grace. This is finely represented by the Prophet Ezekiel's vision of the "*wheels, which had a Living Spirit; and whithersoever the Spirit was to go, they went; they ascended, and descended, as they were moved; for the Spirit of Life was in them, and they returned not when they went*" (*Ezek.* i. 18). Thus the soul should be equally subservient to the will of that Vivifying Spirit wherewith it is informed, and scrupulously faithful to follow only as that moves. These motions now never tend to return, in reflection on the creatures or itself; but go forward, in an incessant approach towards the chief end.

This action of the soul is attended with the utmost tranquillity. When it acts of itself, the act is forced and constrained; and, therefore, it can the more easily perceive and distinguish it: but when it acteth under the influence of the Spirit of Grace, its action is so free, so easy, and so natural, that it almost seems as if it did not act at all: "*He hath set me at large, he hath delivered me, because he delighted in me*" (*Psal.* xviii. 19).

When the soul is in its central tendency, or, in other words, is returned through recollection into itself; from that moment the central attraction be-

comes a most potent action, infinitely surpassing in its energy every other species. Nothing, indeed, can equal the swiftness of this tendency to the centre: and though an action, yet it is so noble, so peaceful, so full of tranquillity, so natural and spontaneous, that it appears to the soul as if it did not act at all.

When a wheel rolls slowly we can easily distinguish its parts; but when its motion is rapid we can distinguish nothing. So the soul, which rests in GOD, hath an activity exceedingly noble and elevated, yet altogether peaceful: and the more peaceful it is, the swifter is its course; because it is proportionately given up to that Spirit, by which it is moved and directed.

This attracting spirit is no other than GOD Himself, Who, in drawing us, causes us to run unto Him. How well did the spouse understand this when she said, "*Draw me, and we will run after thee*" (*Cant.* i. 3). Draw me unto Thee, O my Divine centre, by the secret springs of my existence, and all my powers and senses shall follow the potent magnetism! This simple attraction is both an ointment to heal, and a perfume to allure: "we follow," saith she, "the fragrance of thy perfumes;" and though so powerfully magnetic it is followed by the soul freely, and without constraint; for it is equally delightful as forcible; and whilst it attracts by its potency, it charms with its sweetness. "Draw me," saith the spouse, "and we will run after Thee." She speaketh of and to herself: "draw me,"—behold the unity of the centre which attracteth! "we will run,"—behold the correspondence and course of all the senses and powers, in following that attraction!

Instead then of promoting idleness, we promote the highest activity, by inculcating a total dependence on the Spirit of GOD, as our moving principle; for it is "*in him we live, and move, and have our being*" (*Acts* xvii. 28). This meek dependence on the Spirit of GOD is indispensably necessary to reinstate the soul in its primeval unity and simplicity, that it may thereby attain the end of its creation.

We must, therefore, forsake our multifarious activity, to re-enter the simplicity and unity of GOD, in Whose image we were originally formed. "*The Spirit is one and manifold*" (*Wisdom* vii. 22), and His unity doth not preclude His multiplicity. We enter into His unity when we are united unto His Spirit, and have one and the same Spirit with Him; and we are multiplied in respect to the outward execution of His will, without any departure from our state of union: so that when we are wholly moved by the DIVINE Spirit, which is infinitely active, our activity must, indeed, differ widely in its energy and degree from that which is merely our own.

We must yield ourselves to the guidance of "*Wisdom, which is more moving than any motion*" (*Wisdom* vii. 24); and by abiding in dependence on its action, our activity will be truly efficient. "*All things were made by the* WORD, *and without him was not anything made, that was made*" (*John* i. 3). GOD originally formed us in His own likeness; and He now informeth us with the Spirit of His WORD, that "*Breath of Life*" (*Gen.* ii. 7), which was inbreathed at our creation, in the participation whereof the Image of GOD consisted; and this life is a Life of Unity, simple, pure, intimate, and always fruitful. The Devil having broken and deformed the Divine Image in the soul, the agency of the same WORD, whose Spirit was inbreathed at our creation, is absolutely necessary for its renovation; and it can only be renewed by our being passive under Him who is to renew it: but who can restore the Image of GOD within us in its primeval form, save He who is the Essential Image of the Father.

Our activity should, therefore, consist in endeavouring to acquire and maintain such a state as may be most susceptible of Divine impressions, most flexile to all the operations of the ETERNAL WORD. Whilst a tablet is unsteady, the painter is unable to delineate a true copy: so every act of our own selfish and proper spirit is productive of false and erroneous lineaments; it interrupts the work, and defeats the design of this adorable Painter; we must then remain

in peace and move only when He moves us. "*Jesus Christ hath the Life in himself*" (*John* v. 26), and He should be the life of every living thing.

As all action is estimable only in proportion to the dignity of the efficient principle, this action is incontestably more noble than any other. Actions produced by a Divine principle, are Divine; but creaturely actions, however good they appear, are only human, or at best virtuous, even when accompanied by Grace. Jesus Christ saith, He hath the Life in Himself. All other beings have only a borrowed life; but the Word hath the Life in Himself, and being communicative of His nature He desireth to communicate it to man. We should, therefore, make room for the influx of this Life, which can only be done by the ejection of the Adamical life, the suppression of the activity of self. This is agreeable to the assertion of S. Paul: "*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new!*" (2 *Cor.* v. 17), but this state can be accomplished only by dying to ourselves and to all our own activity, that the activity of God may be substituted in its place.

Instead, therefore, of prohibiting activity, we enjoin it; but in absolute dependence on the Spirit of God, that His activity may take place of our own. This can only be effected by the concurrence of the creature; and this concurrence can only be yielded by moderating and restraining our own activity, that the activity of God may gradually gain the ascendancy, and finally absorb all that is ours as distinguishable from it.

Jesus Christ hath exemplified this in the Gospel: Martha did what was right; but because she did it in her own spirit Christ rebuked her. The spirit of man is restless and turbulent; for which reason it does little, though it would appear to do much. "*Martha*," saith Christ, "*thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her*" (*Luke* x. 41, 42). And what was it that Mary had chosen? Repose, tranquillity, and peace.

She apparently ceased to act, that the Spirit of CHRIST might act in her; she ceased to live, that CHRIST might be her life.

This shows us how necessary it is to renounce ourselves and all our own activity, to follow JESUS CHRIST; and we cannot follow Him without being animated with His Spirit. Now that His Spirit may gain admission in us it is necessary that our own proper spirit should be first expelled: "*He that is joined unto the Lord*," saith S. Paul, "*is one spirit with him*" (1 *Cor.* vi. 17); and David said, "*It was good for him to draw near unto the Lord, and to put his trust in him*" (*Ps.* lxxiii. 28). This drawing near unto GOD, is the beginning of Union.

Divine Union has its commencement, its progression, and its consummation. It is first an inclination and tendency towards GOD: when the soul is introverted in the manner before described, it gets within the influence of the central attraction, and acquires an eager desire after Union: on a nearer approach unto GOD, it adheres to Him; and growing stronger and stronger in its adhesion, it finally becomes one; that is, "One Spirit with Him:" and it is thus that the spirit which had wandered and strayed from GOD, returns again to its proper source.

Into this process, which is the Divine motion, and the Spirit of JESUS CHRIST, we must necessarily enter. S. Paul saith, "*If any man hath not the Spirit of CHRIST, he is none of his*" (*Rom.* viii. 9): therefore, to be CHRIST'S, we must be filled with His Spirit, and to be filled with His Spirit we must be emptied of our own. The Apostle, in the same passage, proves the necessity of this Divine influence or motion: "*As many*," saith he, "*as are led by the Spirit of GOD, they are the sons of GOD*" (*Rom.* viii. 14). The Spirit of Divine Filiation is then the Spirit of Divine action or motion: he, therefore, adds, "*Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

This Spirit is no other than the Spirit of CHRIST, through which we participate in His Filiation; "*And*

this Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of GOD" (*Rom.* viii. 16). When the soul yields itself to the influence and motions of this Blessed Spirit, it feels the testimony of its Divine Filiation; and it feels also, with superadded joy, that it hath received not the Spirit of bondage, but of Liberty, even the liberty of the children of GOD. It then finds that it acts freely and sweetly, though with vigour and infallibility.

The Spirit of Divine action is so necessary in all things, that S. Paul, in the same passage, foundeth that necessity on our ignorance with respect to what we pray for: "*The Spirit*," saith he, "*also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.*" This is positive; if we know not what we stand in need of, nor pray, as we ought to do, for those things which are necessary; and if the Spirit which is in us, and to which we resign ourselves, asks and intercedes for us; should we not give unlimited freedom to its action, to its ineffable groanings in our behalf?

This Spirit is the Spirit of the WORD, which is always heard, as He saith Himself: "*I know that thou hearest me always*" (*John* xi. 42); and if we freely admit this Spirit to pray and intercede in us, we also shall be always heard. The reason of this is given us by the same Apostle, that skilful Mystic, and Master of the Internal life, where he adds, "*He that searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; because he maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of* GOD" (*Rom.* viii. 27). That is to say, the Spirit demandeth only that which is conformable to the will of GOD; and the will of GOD is, that we should be saved: that we should become perfect: He, therefore, intercedeth for that which is necessary for so great an end.

Why should we then burden ourselves with superfluous cares, and fatigue and weary ourselves in the multiplicity of our ways, without ever saying, "Let

us rest in peace?" God Himself inviteth us to cast our cares, our anxieties, upon Him; and He complains in Isaiah, with ineffable goodness, that the soul had expended its powers and its treasures on a thousand external objects, and mistook its path to happiness, which was attainable by means much more facile: "*Wherefore*," saith God, "*do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness*" (*Isa.* lv. 2).

Did we but know the blessedness of thus hearkening unto God, and how greatly the soul is strengthened and invigorated thereby, "*All flesh would surely be silent before the Lord*" (*Zech.* ii. 13); all would cease and be still, as soon as He appears. But to engage us farther in a boundless resignation, God assures us, by the same Prophet, that we should fear nothing in this abandonment, because He takes a care of us, surpassing the highest tenderness of which we can form an idea: "*Can a woman*," saith He, "*forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet will I not forget thee*" (*Isa.* xlix. 15). O blessed assurance, pregnant with consolation! Who, after this, shall be fearful of resigning themselves wholly to the dispensations and guidance of their God?

CHAPTER XXII

Of Internal Acts

Acts are distinguished into External and Internal. External acts are those which bear relation to some sensible object, and are either morally good or evil, merely according to the nature of the principle from which they proceed. I intend here to speak only of Internal acts, those energies of the soul, by which it turns internally to some objects, and averts from others.

If during my application to God I should form a will to change the nature of my act, I thereby withdraw myself from God, and turn to created objects, and that in a greater or less degree according to the strength of the act: and if, when I am turned towards the creature, I would return to God, I must necessarily form an act for that purpose; and the more perfect this act is, the more complete is the conversion.

Till conversion is perfected many reiterated acts are necessary; for it is generally progressive, though with some it is almost instantaneous. My act, however, should consist in a continual turning unto God, an exertion of every faculty and power of the soul purely for Him, agreeably to the instructions of the Son of Sirach: "*Re-unite all the motions of thy heart in the holiness of God*," and to the example of David, "*I will keep my whole strength for thee*" (*Ps.* lviii. 10), which is done by earnestly re-entering into one's self. As Isaiah saith, "*Return to your heart*" (*Isa.* xlvi. 8); for we have strayed from our heart by sin, and it is our heart only that God requires, "*My son give me thine heart, and let thine eye observe my ways*" (*Prov.* xxiii. 26). To give the heart to God is to have the whole eternal energy of the soul ever centring in Him, that we may be rendered conformable to His will. We must, therefore, continue invariably turned to God from our very first application to Him.

But the soul being weak and unstable, and accustomed to turn to external objects, is consequently prone to dissipation. This evil, however, will be counteracted if the soul, on perceiving the aberration by a pure act of return to God, instantly replaces itself again in Him; and this act subsists as long as the conversion by the powerful influence of a simple and unfeigned return to God lasts: and as many reiterated acts form a habit, the soul contracts the habit of conversion, and that act which was before interrupted and distinct becomes continual.

The soul should not then be perplexed about forming an act which already subsists, and which, indeed, it cannot attempt to form without difficulty and con-

straint; it even finds that it is withdrawn from its proper state under pretence of seeking that which is in reality acquired, seeing the habit is already formed and is confirmed in habitual conversion and habitual love. It is seeking one act by the help of many, instead of continuing attached to GOD by one simple act alone.

We may remark that at times we form with facility many distinct yet simple acts, which shows that we have wandered, and that we re-enter our heart after having strayed from it; yet when we have re-entered we should remain there in peace. We err, therefore, in supposing that we do not form acts; we form them continually, but they should be in their nature conformable to the degree of our spiritual advancement.

The greatest difficulty with most spiritual people arises from their not clearly comprehending this matter. Now some acts are transient and distinct, others are continual; and again, some are direct, and others reflex. All cannot form the first, neither are all in a state suited to form the last. The first are adapted to those who have strayed, and who require a distinguishable exertion, proportioned to the degree of their deviation, which, if inconsiderable, an act of the most simple kind is sufficient.

By the continued act I mean that whereby the soul is altogether turned toward GOD in a direct tendency, which always subsists, and which it doth not renew unless it has been interrupted. The soul being thus turned is in charity, and abides therein, "*and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in* GOD" (1 *John* iv. 16). The soul then, as it were, existeth and reposeth in this habitual act, but free from sloth or torpor; for still there is an unintermitted act subsisting, which is a sweet sinking into the Deity, whose attraction becomes more and more powerful; and in following this potent attraction, the soul presses farther, and sinks continually deeper, into the ocean of Divine Love, maintaining an activity infinitely more powerful, vigorous, and effectual than that which served to accomplish its first return.

Now the soul that is thus profoundly and vigorously active, being wholly given up to God, doth not perceive its activity, because it is direct and not reflex; and this is the cause why some, who do not express themselves properly, say that they do not act at all; but it is a mistake, for they were never more truly or nobly active: they should rather say that they did not distinguish their acts than that they did not act. I allow they do not act of themselves, but they are drawn, and they follow the attraction. Love is the weight which sinks them into God, as into an infinite sea, wherein they descend with inconceivable rapidity from one profound depth to another.

It is then an impropriety to say that we do not form acts: all form acts, but the manner of their formation is not alike in all. The cause of the mistake is this, all who know they should act are desirous of acting distinguishably and perceptibly. But this cannot be; distinct and sensible acts are for beginners, and acts of a higher nature for those in a more advanced state. To stop in the former, which are weak and of little profit, is to debar one's self of the latter; and again, to attempt the latter without having passed through the former is a no less considerable error.

All things should then be done in their season. Every state has its commencement, its progress, and its consummation; and it is an unhappy error to stop in the beginning. There is even no art but what hath its progress; and at first we must labour with diligence and toil, but at last we shall reap the harvest of our industry. When the vessel is in port the mariners are obliged to exert all their strength that they may clear her thence and put to sea; but at length they turn her with facility as they please. In like manner, while the soul remains in sin and creaturely entanglements, very frequent and strenuous endeavours are requisite to effect its freedom; the cords which withhold it must be loosed; and then by strong and vigorous efforts it gathers itself inwards, pushing off gradually from the old port; and in leaving

that at a distance it proceeds to the interior, the haven to which it wishes to steer.

When the vessel is thus turned, in proportion as she advances on the sea, she leaves the land behind; and the farther she departs from the old harbour, the less difficulty and labour is requisite in moving her forward: at length she begins to get sweetly under sail and now proceeds so swiftly in her course that the oars which have become useless are laid aside. How is the pilot now employed? He is content with spreading the sails and holding the rudder. To spread the sails is to lay one's self before GOD in the prayer of simple exposition, that we may be acted upon by His Spirit: to hold the rudder is to restrain our hearts from wandering from the true course, recalling it gently, and guiding it steadily to the dictates of the Blessed Spirit, which gradually gain possession and dominion of the heart, just as the wind by degrees fills the sails and impels the vessel. While the winds are fair the pilot and mariners rest from their labours, and the vessel glides rapidly along without their toil; and when they thus repose and leave the vessel to the wind, they make more way in one hour than they had done in a length of time by all their former efforts: were they even now to attempt using the oar they would not only fatigue themselves, but retard the vessel by their ill-timed labours.

This is the manner of acting we should pursue interiorly; it will, indeed, advance us in a short time, by the Divine impulsion, infinitely farther than a whole life spent in reiterated acts of self-exertion; and whosoever will take this path will find it easier than any other.

If the wind is contrary and blows a storm, we must cast anchor to withhold the vessel: our anchor is a firm confidence and hope in our GOD, waiting patiently the calming of the tempest and the return of a favourable gale as David *waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto him and heard his cry* (*Ps.* xl. 1). We must, therefore, be resigned to the Spirit of GOD, giving up ourselves wholly to His Divine Guidance.

CHAPTER XXIII

To Pastors and Teachers

If all who laboured for the conversion of others were to introduce them immediately into Prayer and the Interior Life, and make it their main design to gain and win over the heart, numberless as well as permanent conversions would certainly ensue. On the contrary, few and transient fruits must attend that labour which is confined to outward matters; such as burdening the disciple with a thousand precepts for external exercises, instead of leaving the soul to Christ by the occupation of the heart in Him.

If ministers were solicitous thus to instruct their parishioners; shepherds, while they watched their flocks, might have the Spirit of the primitive Christians, and the husbandman at the plough maintain a blessed intercourse with his God; the manufacturer, while he exhausts his outward man with labour, would be renewed in internal strength; and every species of vice would shortly disappear and every parishioner become a true follower of the Good Shepherd.

O when once the heart is gained, how easily is all moral evil corrected! it is, therefore, that God, above all things, requires the heart. It is the conquest of the heart alone that can extirpate those dreadful vices which are so predominant, such as drunkenness, blasphemy, lewdness, envy, and theft. Jesus Christ would become the universal and peaceful Sovereign, and the face of the Church would be wholly renewed.

The decay of internal piety is unquestionably the source of the various errors that have arisen in the Church; all which would speedily be sapped and overthrown should inward religion be re-established. Errors are only so far prejudicial to the soul as they tend to weaken faith and deter from prayer; and if, instead of engaging our wandering brethren in vain disputes, we could but teach them simply to believe

and diligently to pray, we should lead them sweetly unto GOD.

O how inexpressibly great is the loss sustained by mankind from the neglect of the Interior Life! And how tremendous must the great day of retribution be to those who are entrusted with the care of souls, for not having discovered and dispensed to their flock this hidden treasure.

Some excuse themselves by saying that this is a dangerous way; pleading the incapacity of simple persons to comprehend spiritual matters. But the Oracles of Truth affirm the contrary: "*The Lord loveth those who walk simply*" (*Prov.* xii. 22). And where can be the danger of walking in the only true way, which is JESUS CHRIST? of giving up ourselves to Him, fixing our eye continually upon Him, placing all our confidence in His grace, and tending with all the strength of our soul to His pure Love?

The simple ones, so far from being incapable of this perfection, are, by their docility, innocence, and humility, peculiarly adapted and qualified for its attainment; and as they are not accustomed to reasoning, they are less employed in speculations, less tenacious of their own opinions. Even from their want of learning, they submit more freely to the teachings of the Divine Spirit; whereas others, who are blinded by self-sufficiency and enslaved by prejudice, give great resistance to the operations of Grace.

We are told in Scripture "*that unto the simple God giveth the understanding of his law*" (*Ps.* cxviii. 130); and we are also assured that GOD loveth to commune freely with them: "*The Lord careth for the simple; I was reduced to extremity, and he saved me*" (*Ps.* cxiv. 6). To warn Spiritual Fathers against preventing the little ones from coming to CHRIST, He Himself said to His Apostles, "*Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven*" (*Matt.* xix. 14). It was the endeavour of the Apostles to prevent children from going to our Lord, which occasioned this gracious charge. Man frequently

applies a remedy to the outward body, whilst the disease lies at the heart.

The cause of our being so unsuccessful in reforming mankind, especially those of the lower class, is our beginning with external matters; all our labours in this field do but produce such fruit as endures not: but if the key of the interior be first given, the exterior would be naturally and easily reformed. To teach man to seek GOD in his heart, to think of Him, to return to Him whenever he finds that he has wandered from Him, and to do and to suffer all things with a single eye to please Him, is the natural and ready process; it is leading the soul to the very source of Grace, wherein is to be found all that is necesssary for sanctification.

I, therefore, conjure you all, O ye who have the care of souls, to put them at once into this way, which is JESUS CHRIST; nay, it is He Himself who conjures you, by the Precious Blood He hath shed for those entrusted to you, "*to speak to the heart of Jerusalem*" (*Isa.* xl. 2). O ye Dispensers of His Grace, ye Preachers of His Word, ye Ministers of His Sacraments, establish His Kingdom!—and that it may indeed be established, make Him Ruler over the hearts of His subjects! for as it is the heart alone that can oppose His Sovereignty, it is by the subjection of the heart that His Sovereignty is most highly exalted: "*Give glory to the holiness of GOD, and he shall become your sanctification*" (*Isa.* viii. 13). Compose catechisms particularly to teach prayer, not by reasoning nor by method, for the simple are incapable thereof; but to teach the prayer of the heart, not of the understanding; the prayer of GOD's Spirit, not of man's invention.

Alas! by wanting them to pray in elaborate forms, and to be curiously critical therein, you create their chief obstacles. The children have been led astray from the best of Fathers, by your endeavouring to teach them too refined, too polished a language. Go then, ye poor children, to your Heavenly Father; speak to Him in your natural language; and though

it be ever so rude and barbarous in the opinion of men, it is not so to Him. A Father is much better pleased with an address which love and respect in the child throws into disorder, because He knows it proceeds from the heart, than by a formal and barren harangue, though ever so elaborate in the composition. The simple and undisguised emotions of filial love are infinitely more expressive than all language and all reasoning.

By forming instructions how to love by rule and method the ESSENTIAL LOVE, men have in a great measure estranged themselves from Him. O how unnecessary is it to teach an art of loving! The language of Love, though natural to the lover, is nonsense and barbarism to him who loveth not. The best way to learn the love of GOD is to love HIM. The ignorant and simple, because they proceed with more cordiality and simplicity, often become most perfect therein. The Spirit of GOD needs none of our arrangements and methods; when it pleaseth Him, He turns shepherds into prophets: and, so far from excluding any from the Temple of Prayer, He throws wide the gates, that all may enter; while Wisdom cries aloud in the highways, "*Whoso is simple let him turn in hither*" (*Prov.* ix. 4); and to the Fools she saith, "*Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled*" (*Prov.* ix. 5). And doth not JESUS CHRIST Himself thank His Father for having *hid the secrets of his kingdom from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes?* (*Matt.* xi. 25).

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the way to attain Divine Union

IT is impossible to attain Divine Union solely by the activity of meditation, or by the meltings of the affections, or even by the highest degree of luminous

and distinctly-comprehended prayer. There are many reasons for this, the chief of which are as follow:—

First, According to Scripture "*no man shall see God and live*" (*Exod.* xxxiii. 20). Now all the exercises of discursive prayer, and even of active contemplation, while esteemed as the summit and end of the passive, and not merely as a preparative to it, are still living exercises by which we cannot see God; that is to say, be united with Him; for all that is of man's own power or exertion must first die, be it ever so noble, ever so exalted.

S. John relates "*That there was a great silence in heaven*" (*Rev.* viii. 1). Now heaven represents the foundation and centre of the soul, wherein, ere the Majesty of God appears, all must be hushed to silence. All the efforts, nay, the very existence of self-sufficiency must be destroyed, because nothing is opposite to God but self-sufficiency; and all the malignity of man is in this failing, as in the power of its evil nature, insomuch that the purity of a soul increases in proportion as it loses this quality; till at length that which had been a fault, while the soul lived in self-sufficiency and so acted, becomes no longer such, from the purity and innocence it hath acquired by departing from that which caused the dissimilitude between it and God.

Secondly, To unite two things so opposite, as the impurity of the creature and the purity of God, the simplicity of God and the multiplicity of man, much more is requisite than the impotent efforts of the creature: no less than a singular and efficacious operation of the Almighty can ever accomplish this, for things must be reduced to some familiarity before they can blend and become one. Can the impurity of dross be united with the purity of gold? What then does God do? He sends His own Wisdom before Him, as the last fire shall be sent upon earth to destroy by its activity all that is impure therein; and as nothing can resist the power of that fire, in like manner this Wisdom dissolves and destroys all the

impurities of the creature and disposes it for Divine Union.

This impurity, so opposite to Union, consists in self-sufficiency and activity.

This is the source and fountain of all that defilement and corruption which can never be allied to Essential Purity; the rays of the sun may glance, indeed, upon filth and mire, but can never be united with them. Activity obstructs Union; for GOD being an Infinite Stillness, the soul, in order to be united to Him, must participate in this stillness, else the contrariety between stillness and activity would prevent assimilation.

Therefore, the soul can never arrive at Divine Union but by the repose or stillness of the will, nor can it ever become One with GOD but by being re-established in the purity of its first creation, that is, in this central repose.

GOD purifies the soul by His Wisdom, as refiners do metals in the furnace. Gold cannot be purified but by fire, which gradually separates from and consumes all that is earthy and heterogeneous: it must be melted and dissolved, and all impure mixtures taken away by casting it again and again into the furnace; thus it is refined from all internal corruption, and even exalted to a state incapable of farther purification.

The goldsmith now no longer discovers any adulterate mixture; its purity is perfect, its simplicity complete. The fire no longer touches it; and were it to remain an age in the furnace its purity would not be increased nor its substance diminished. Then is it fit for the most exquisite workmanship: and if thereafter this gold seems obscured or defiled, it is no more than an accidental defilement contracted by its contiguity to some impure body; but this is only superficial, and widely different from its former impurity, which was hidden in the very centre and ground of its nature and, as it were, identified with it. Those, however, who are ignorant of this process and its blessed effects would be apt to despise and reject the vessel of pure gold sullied by some external

pollution, and prefer an impure and gross metal that appeared superficially bright and polished.

Farther, the goldsmith never mingles together the pure and the impure gold, lest the dross of the one should corrupt the other; before they can be united they must first be equally refined; he therefore plunges the impure metal into the furnace till all its dross is purged away and it becomes fully prepared for incorporation and union with the pure gold.

This is what S. Paul means when he declares that "*the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*" (1 *Cor.* iii. 13). He adds, "*If any man's work be burnt, he shall suffer loss; yet he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*" (15 verse). He here intimates that there is a species of works so degraded by impure mixtures that though the mercy of GOD accepts them, yet they must pass through the fire to be purged from the contamination of Self; and it is in this sense that GOD is said to "*examine and judge our righteousness*" (*Ps.* xiv. 3), because that, "*by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified, but by the righteousness of GOD, which is by faith in JESUS CHRIST*" (*Rom.* iii. 20, etc.).

Thus we see that the Divine Justice and Wisdom, as an unremitting fire, must devour and destroy all that is earthly, sensual, and carnal, and all self-activity, before the soul can be fitted for and capable of Union with GOD. Now this purification can never be accomplished by the industry of fallen man; on the contrary, he submits to it always with reluctance: he is so enamoured of self, and so averse to its destruction, that did not GOD act upon him powerfully and with authority, he would for ever resist.

It may, perhaps, be objected here that as GOD never robs man of his free will he can always resist the Divine Operations, and that I therefore err in saying GOD acts thus absolutely and without the consent of man.

Let me, however, explain myself. By man's giving a passive consent, GOD, without usurpation, may assume full power and entire guidance; for having,

in the beginning of his conversion, made an unreserved surrender of himself to all that God wills of him or by him, he thereby gave an active consent to whatsoever God thereafter might operate or require. But when God begins to burn, destroy, and purify, then the soul, not perceiving the salutary design of these operations, shrinks from them: and as the gold seems rather to blacken than brighten when first put into the furnace, so it conceives that its purity is lost and that its temptations are sins; insomuch that if an active and explicit consent were then requisite the soul could scarcely give it, nay, often would withhold it. The utmost the soul can do is to remain firm in a passive disposition, enduring as well as it is able all these Divine Operations, which it neither can nor will obstruct.

In this manner, therefore, the soul is purified from all proper, distinct, perceptible, and multiplied operations which constitute the great dissimilitude between it and God: it is rendered, by degrees, conformed, and then uniform; and the passive capacity of the creature is elevated, ennobled, and enlarged, though in a secret and hidden manner, and therefore called mystical: but in all these operations the soul must concur passively. It is true, indeed, that at the beginning of its purification activity is requisite; which as the Divine Operations become stronger and stronger it must gradually cease, yielding itself up to the impulses of the Divine Spirit, till wholly absorbed in Him. But this is often a difficult and tedious process.

We do not then say, as some have falsely supposed, that there is no need of action in the process of Divine Purification; on the contrary, we affirm it is the gate; at which, however, we would not have those stop who are to obtain ultimate perfection, which is impractible, except the first helps are laid aside: for, however necessary they may have been at the entrance of the road, they become afterwards mere clogs, and greatly detrimental to those who adhere to them, preventing them from ever arriving at the

end of their course. This made S. Paul say, "*Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in* CHRIST JESUS" (*Phil.* iii. 13).

Would you not say that he had lost his senses, who, having undertaken an important journey, should fix his abode at the first inn because he had been told that many travellers who had come that way had lodged in the house and made it their place of residence? All that we would wish then is, that souls should press toward the mark, should pursue their journey, and take the shortest and easiest road; not stopping at the first stage, but following the counsel and example of S. Paul, suffer themselves to be guided and governed by the Spirit of Grace which would infallibly conduct them to the end of their creation, the enjoyment of GOD. But while we confess that the enjoyment of GOD is the end for which alone we were created; that without holiness none can attain it: and that to attain it, we must necessarily pass through a severe and purifying process; how strange is it that we should dread and avoid this process, as if that could be the cause of evil or imperfection in the present life, which is to be productive of glory and blessedness in the life to come!

None can be ignorant that GOD is the Supreme Good; that essential blessedness consists in Union with Him; that the Saints are more or less glorified, according as this Union is more or less advanced; and that the soul cannot attain this Union by the mere activity of its own powers: for GOD communicates Himself to the soul in proportion as its passive capacity is great, noble, and extensive; it cannot be united to GOD but in simplicity and passivity; and as this Union is beatitude itself, the way to it in simplicity and passivity, instead of being evil, must be good, must be most free from delusion and danger, the safest, the surest, and the best.

Would JESUS CHRIST have made this the most perfect and necessary way had there been evil or

danger therein? No! all can travel this road to blessedness; and all are called thereto, as to the enjoyment of God, which alone is beatitude, both in this world and the next. I say the enjoyment of God Himself and not His gifts which, as they do not constitute essential beatitude, cannot fully content an immortal spirit: the soul is so noble, so great, that the most exalted gifts of God cannot fill its immense capacity with happiness unless the Giver also bestows Himself. Now the whole desire of the Divine Being is to give Himself to every creature, according to the capacity with which it is endued; and yet, alas! how reluctantly man suffers himself to be drawn to God! how fearful is he to prepare for Divine Union!

Some say that we should not attempt, by our own ability, to place ourselves in this state. I grant it: but what a poor subterfuge is this? since I have all along asserted and proved that the utmost exertion of the highest created being could never accomplish this of itself: it is God alone must do it. The creature may, indeed, open the window; but it is the sun himself that must give the light.

The same persons say again that some may feign to have attained this blessed state: but, alas! none can any more feign this than the wretch, who is on the point of perishing with hunger can for a length of time feign to be full and satisfied; some wish or word, some sigh or sign, will inevitably escape him, and betray his famished state.

Since then none can attain this blessed state save those whom God Himself leads and places therein, we do not pretend to introduce any into it, but only to point out the shortest and safest road that leads to it: beseeching you not to be retarded in your progress by any external exercises, not to sit down a resident at the first inn, nor to be satisfied with the sweets which are tasted in the milk for babes. If the Water of Eternal Life is shown to some thirsty souls, how inexpressibly cruel would it be, by confining them to a round of external forms, to prevent their

approaching it, so that their longing shall never be satisfied but they shall perish with thirst!

Let us all agree in the way, as we all agree in the end, which is evident and incontrovertible. The way has its beginning, progress, and end; and the nearer we approach the end, the farther is the beginning behind us: it is only by proceeding from one that we can ever arrive at the other. Would you get from the entrance to the distant end of the road without passing over the intermediate space? And surely, if the end is good, holy, and necessary, and the entrance also good, can that be condemnable, as evil, which is the necessary passage, the direct road leading from the one to the other?

O ye blind and foolish men, who pride yourselves on science, wisdom, wit, and power, how well do you verify what GOD hath said, that "*His Secrets are hidden from the great and wise, and revealed unto* THE LITTLE ONES—THE BABES!"

THE END

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FOREWORD

BY

P. NATARAJAN, M.A., L.T, D. Litt. (Paris)

My good friend 'A' has felt himself called upon to share his meditations on Truth with his friends and is bringing out this brochure as the first of a series to be published on similar subjects from his spiritual home "Mahasthan" at Sri Ramanashram. I welcome the project. I have known the writer for many years as a seeker intent on searching Truth wholeheartedly and uncompromisingly. He is one who has himself lived a full and intense life as a representative of the past of India at its best, as a patriot in the fullest sense of the term and as an engineer and industrialist who did his share to give the much needed positive touch to our national life. In and through these apparently varied activities and phases he has been preserving a thread of spiritual life which I find is blossoming forth in him at the present time, of which this spontaneous and free composition is perhaps the first flower, which he is now offering at the feet of his Guru. I was present when this was read to Sri Ramana Maharishi and received his silent blessing.

There is a stage in the life of every thinking man when he is caught in the throes of a new birth. This regeneration is attended by pangs and agonies which may be mild or strong according to circmstances. It is attended by dangers in which the need of a personal Guru becomes keenly felt. Bhagavan Sri Ramana has been a subtle and potent guide blessing the attempt of this unsophisticated seeker in a sense that can be fully known only by the Guru and his disciple. The nature of the rebirth at which the Guru, to use an ancient figure of speech, acted as a 'midwife' is summed up in three lines of the ancient chant :

From the unreal lead me to the Real
From darkness lead me into Light
From death lead me unto Immortality.

Written soon after the bereavement of his dearly beloved son, Veda-Vikas, who died in the full promise of youth on 30th April 1943 and whose worldly remains are interred in "Mahasthan" the transition implied in the last line of the above chant gains a reality and significance all its own. We are immersed in darkness and we crave for Light ; we hanker to outgrow the false

and live in the True. The transition from one aspect to the other has been so complete, marked and natural in the case of the present writer that one sees the imprint of it left in the naive and transparently enthusiastic style of the words recorded.

The student of Vedanta will easily recognize the attitude implicit in the article. Sri Ramana himself represents the quintessence of this same, familiar to Indian thinkers from time immemorial. Karmakanda and Religion are forces that counteract the pure trends of Vedantic teaching compromising it into various forms of cults and creeds. Vedantic teaching itself is neutral. This neutrality when it attains its purest form conforms with the essential teaching of every great religion and can be reduced to mathematical terms common to all religions. This white point is attained in the *Mandukya Upanishad* and in the highest Buddhistic teachings. All other religions contribute to this Neutral Truth in various forms. They form together the one Religion of Humanity.

Divided and disunited, India and the World need refreshing re-statements of Truth assimilating new standards, values and forms of thought and expression.

Parables may have to be replaced by scientific formulæ in the process. In this constant flux of change and becoming each one of us is to bring his light in order to set it afloat in the general current of enlightenment. A subtle integration will then result. It is in this sense that I welcome this contribution of my esteemed friend. I commend it, and if there seem to be slight overstatements here and there, I know that they represent only the joy of discovery on the part of the writer (not bitterness) which I hope the friends of 'A' would share with him.

Fernhill, Nilgiris
Dec. 1943.

P. NATARAJAN.

TRUTH

AS UNDERSTOOD BY 'A'.

Truth is Existence (*Sat*), Truth is knowledge (*Chit*) and where there is true knowledge there is bliss (*Ananda*). To find Truth completely is to realise oneself and one's destiny i. e., to become perfect.

> "When one seeks to know anything other than himself, without caring to know the truth of his own self, the knowledge he thus obtains cannot possibly be the right knowledge,"

says my great Guru, the Sage of Arunachala. Self-knowledge is the essence and foundation of all knowledge. All imperfections, all sense instincts, thoughts, *samskaras* etc. must be wiped out of one's own nature by self-enquiry and analysis This pursuit of Truth is pure *Bhakti* (devotion). Devotion and search of knowledge are one and the same; the twin aspects of the same Truth. Both go together, as fire and heat. They are inseparable. Devotion is nothing but the expression of knowledge through feeling. From an absolute standpoint

Devotion and knowledge refer to the same Reality. Knowledge is Pure Consciousness and Devotion is the Creative Force. Identical in essence, one cannot exist without the other.

"Knowledge and love of God are ultimately one and the same. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love."

(*Sri Ramakrishna*)

Truth is the knowledge of Reality, which alone exists. Truth is the Immutable Principle—the Supreme Principle that governs the universe. It is observed in all climes and at all times. Truth is the intellectual as well as the spiritual wealth of humanity. Nothing is greater in life, nothing is more important in life, than to find Truth amid errors and darkness. Man's whole existence is to know and solely to know the Truth. More generally speaking, Knowledge is striving to know its own true nature. Life after life man is craving for it, going through innumerable experiences. But nothing here on earth can satisfy the urge in man to know the Truth. He wants to know, know and know. There is an irresistible desire inherent in man to know the mystery of life and death, the source of

this "I". Contentment, peace of mind, association with the wise and rational investigation help the seeker to reach Truth. The progress in that direction is hindered and delayed by his fear, by the desires of his sensuous life, by his superstitions, by his wrong actions, his ignorance of facts around him and above all the ignorance of the reality of his own Supreme State, in which he is always unconsciously abiding.

Truth is the foundation of all religions, the super-structure, the glittering dome of progress. Truth is the mother of peace and happiness, the soul of a nation and humanity at large. It ennobles societies, civilizes the primitives and purifies the individual. There is nothing higher that can enter the human soul than the desire to know the Truth. It is the grandest of all ambitions of human life. Truth gives man the greatest power for good. Search of Truth releases the noblest traits of a man's character from grossness. Truth is the sword and the shield. It is the beacon light of the soul. It assures happiness. The man who finds truth lights a torch. He attains the highest happiness or bliss. He becomes the centre, the solace and the support of mankind. His bliss radiates all

around and fills others with happiness. A never-ending current of bliss runs down his heart. Life becomes one continuous song of perpetual bliss.

Truth for an ordinary mortal cannot be objective, his subjective weaknesses always blur his vision. Hegel's great contribution to human thought was the discovery of historical relativism. No human mind he found, could climb out of its environment and view it objectively from an absolute standpoint. But in India from time immemorial, the masters have reiterated that with ceaseless effort and assiduous detachment from worldly things, the mind can become free. Sri Bhagawan Ramana says that the complete destruction of the egoistic mind can stop the offspring of thoughts which keep man bound on earth. Like Vasishtha, he says that the mind is responsible for everything, every concept, every idea, sorrow and joy, freedom and bondage and when this egoistic mind resolves itself into its pure essence, then only can it transcend direct and inferential knowledge. With vision undimmed, one can see the Truth as it is, which is entirely different from what seems to us and what we call Truth.

The Truth that Sri Bhagawan Rama-na of Arunachala is giving us (as I have understood it) is not only the correctness of facts and of logical accuracy but *his life* in its entirety stands before us welded in harmony of thought, word and deed and therefore his actions whether mental or physical, nay, even his very sight, his very presence bears immediate fruition. Knowledge and Bliss radiate in abundance. This sanctifying influence does not come from the mere imagination of a devotee, but it is the experience of many devotees; of all who have once come near him. It is an effortless state of final union with the Truth; in other words, the Absolute Unity with the Divine Self within and without. It is impersonal, beyond all qualities and self-consciousness. Self-consciousness brings the illusion that makes one see the world as a sum total of varieties—beings, names and forms; these vanish by the touch of that transcendental Truth within, which is in other words the totality of consciousness —the Absolute Reality. The Absolute Reality as my beloved Guru says must be above all change, divisions, differentiations and relations. Absolute is alone real, which has no creation, no destruction, no

bondage or freedom—beyond all qualities. The world is only an appearance, a phenomenon, or at best a product of prolonged imagination—an acute mental formation ! It is real only relatively to the individuals who experience it and to the time which is being experienced. Therefore it is no more real than a dream ; a dream of longer duration if time is taken into consideration. It is real, while it lasts, real because we are yet asleep. This knowledge of Truth however remains with ordinary men as an intellectual understanding or belief but never becomes a true living experience. With awakening, one is conscious of this monstrous dream ! A huge joke !

Experience has proved that when a man becomes the embodiment of detachment, he attracts men and wealth, when a man has conquered his desires and wants nothing for himself strength follows him. The Lives of Lord Buddha, Asoka the Great, Swami Vivekananda and other saints of the past, as also those of present times, like Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Bhagawan and others bear ample testimony to this. Their strength lies in their love for Truth. The great Swami Vivekananda says :

"I know it is Truth alone that gives strength, I know that Truth alone gives life and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach Truth until he is strong."

The Vedas say: A weakling can never attain the Self– the Truth—the Eternal transcendent Soul. When a man stops waste of energy, observes celibacy and silence, by a planned economy of time and energy—he enjoys the perfect state of mind and body. Therefore it is not at all a negation of life but a fullness of existence—the Completeness of Life, though it is a perpetual denial of sense appeals and impressions.

It is the attitude of non-possession which gives clarity of vision. The desire for worldly objects is the coil of the venomous serpent that keeps man bound in it. It destroys his strength and wisdom, upsets the balance of his mind throwing it in confusion and darkness. Contemplation in solitude helps the mind to become unattached. An aspirant can then live to a great extent unpolluted by the elements of desires.

Truth is to be found by investigation experiments and reason so far as the sense perception goes. Investigation must be

made to one's utmost ability. One must not accept anything unless one is satisfied with facts. A true seeker wants facts and nothing but facts. His mind must not be satisfied with stories, doctrines or dogmas given by the ignorant priests or the pseudo teachers. He should keep open his doors of reason and fact. He must not allow his mind to fill itself with miracles, lies, with the impossibles, the absurd or the infamous. He must have the capacity to separate the essentials from the non-essentials and should develop a faculty of incessant search after Truth, an effort to undergo the training necessary to be able to see the Truth, and find out the Truth through varying conditions of life. He must passionately love Truth as a child loves its mother and which weeps bitterly till she reveals herself before it. One must go mad to find it out, like Buddha, Christ, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna. A true seeker must investigate and must not be influenced by mere belief (not based on facts), superstitions, miracles etc. Superstitions and miracles of any kind are deadly foes of a seeker of truth. His mind must be free from fear of men and gods alike. There can be no true investigation unless one is free from fear.

A fearless and unbiassed disposition is essential for a knower of Truth.

Truth is one. Paths to approach it are many and different. It is not the exclusive property of any particular race, caste or creed. It belongs to the whole human race.

A predisposed mind can never arrive at the Truth. Therefore a true seeker must purify his mind first, from all the impressions he has gathered through millions of births. Impressions create notions in the mind which are the progeny of ignorance. He must liquidate once for all his sweet and alluring notions. This purification is pre-essential for the seeker of Truth.

Love for Truth is the highest mental virtue, it imposes self-discipline, purifies the intellect, awards true manhood and brings liberation to life. The Bhagavath Gita says in Chapter IV, verse 39:

"He that loves Truth and subdues his whole being to the love of Truth, shall find it."

Truth knows no compromise. There can be no partial love of truth as it implies a love of untruth in greater or lesser degree. Perfect love of Truth means a perfect

readiness to renounce whatever shall be found to be untrue, as a result of an impartial examination. All the beliefs must be submitted to a thorough and scientific examination. No attachment should colour our search. Impartial examination cannot be carried out without complete detachment from one's comfortable beliefs of a pre-disposed mind. However dear they may be, a devotee of Truth must be ready to renounce all for the sake of Truth and Truth alone. The complete eradication of all preconceived notions, false knowledge and beliefs is demanded, hard though the conditions are. A true seeker of Truth cannot remain in subjection to ignorance—he must liberate himself.

Truth loves the light, the vastness of the sky, the ocean, the sea and the open field, adores frankness and straightforwardness, desires sincerity and simplicity, acts openly and abhors secrecy—it appeals to the senses, to the judgment, the reason and to all higher and nobler faculties and powers of mind. It seeks to calm the passions, to destroy prejudice and to increase the volume and intensity of reason's flame —the *Satwic* quality in man shines forth. To find Truth in life, the true seeker first

analyses his own character and finds out his own faults and defects and corrects them before starting to criticise others. He confesses his own sins to his inner Man and not to a foolish priest or to a pious beggar. He silently struggles within himself to sweep clean the stagnation from the pool of his own nature and without that purification he cannot discover what is true and what is false. Truth can never shine on a dirty mind. Such a seeker does not give sermons to others when he knows he himself is not perfectly clean.

A true seeker of Truth preserves the perfect veracity of soul.

"He examines all questions presented to his mind without prejudice—unbiassed by hatred or love or by desire or fear. His only object is to find out the Truth for himself. He weighs the evidence, the arguments in honest scales—scales that passion, sentiment, emotion, flattery, promise or rewards or interest of any kind cannot change. He cares nothing for authority, nothing for names, traditions, customs, ways, doctrines or dogmas —nothing for anything that his reason does not say is true.*"

*Col. Ingersoll's "Lectures & Essays." (page 10)

Reason becomes his own master and guide. A true lover of Truth is not satisfied by the authority of another or the imposition of another or the enticement of another. His mind is filled with the burning problem of life and death, the cause and origin of the universe, the true nature of the soul, etc. He wants to discover the Truth for himself. And once found he is his own authority. No doubt, he will have to go through fiery ordeals to find it out. Truth demands sacrifice. The so-called rulers and makers of this mischievous world and societies will no doubt rise up their heads with all the evil forces at their disposal to crush you—but fear not ! Go ahead and stop not till the goal is reached. Truth has infinite power and potency. Persecution or contradiction cannot stand on the path of one who is animated by an intense longing and unswerving love for Truth. He will rather face death than forsake Truth. Jesus said :

> "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake ; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." However, "it should never be forgotten that the aspirant to Wisdom has to encounter far more terrible dangers than the

ordinary man, and the slightest false step or shadow of a selfish motive will send him to an unutterable doom. The greater the height the longer the fall and the narrower the path."... (The Voice of Silence, translated by H. P. B.).

Be careful then of your own action. Action is your friend and foe. It can enslave you or liberate you. Therefore, surrendering the self conscious 'I' at the feet of the Guru the *Atman*, the Absolute, do the right action, action that brings illumination, gives you joy and peace. Those who accept others' authority, doctrines or dogmas without examining the facts, enslave themselves ; instead of rising they degrade themselves.

Even when you watch your daily life, you find that in every department of human endeavour men are seeking Truth, may be consciously or unconsciously, trying to get at the facts. For example, Statesmen read history to avoid mistakes of the past, Chemists make countless experiments to arrive at the truth. The physicians and surgeons rely on observations, scientists on physical facts etc. Nothing can shake one's belief thus found. Then one can walk

fearlessly in life. It is the birth-right of every one to question and investigate and test every idea for himself, before he accepts it on authority. Prejudice, egotism, hatred, contempt, and disdain are the enemies of truth and progress. A real searcher of Truth does not accept any statement merely because the same has come from a man of high public position or from a high priest or the same is mentioned in a scripture; whatever may be the case, to a genuine seeker, Truth is the only eternal and imperishable scripture. He is ruled by none but by his own knowledge of the thing. He accepts no authority, no opinion, no creed, no assertions without examining them. Blind clinging to authority stops further advance. It breaks the man with the change of authority. Only a sheep follows without questioning and offers itself at the altar of the slaughter-house. A true seeker must not be moved by name, form, fame, place and robe. He must not obey and follow anything blindly but understand it. To understand, he must question, reason, reflect and examine every idea put before his mind. He cannot be satisfied by the imposition of another or the enticement of another. He is governed by his own reason, his own judgment and sees everything with his own

inner light—the intuitive knowledge, that which springs up spontaneously in a purified mind. The French philosopher Rane Descartes puts it very clearly when he says:

"By intutition, I understand not the fluctuating testimony of the senses, nor the misleading judgment that proceeds from that blundering constructions of imagination but the conception which an unclouded and attentive mind gives us so readily and distinctly that we are wholly freed from doubt about that which we understand."

In all directions and in all activities he seeks the Truth and when found accepts it with joy, accepts it in spite of hatred and prejudice.

Generally, people do not like to think for themselves. They are not willing to break away by their own effort from their environment. They do not like to strain their intellect, they depend on others' brain—the result is they follow, cringe and crawl. They are too lazy to utilise their own brains. They rather suffer than struggle and therefore do not progress in life. They are satisfied with the words of the dead or of a man in robes or of a man of social position. They want a ready-made religion

and laid-down laws which give them hope and consolation. This does not cure their disease or lessen the pain. Self-knowledge is the only remedy for all evils and sufferings.

The desire to arrive at the Truth increases one's power and satisfies the wants of the mind. Life becomes honest, free and serene Hypocrisy vanishes, then he becomes sacred. Men will then really love men and help themselves for their upliftment from ignorance. They will start worshipping the true and honest souls instead of stone gods, carved by the imperfect hands of sculptors.

The ignorance of Truth, I mean here the ignorance of our true nature in relation to the objects around us, breeds a wrong attitude which is the cause of bondage. The world is the imaginary child of the ignorant mind, which has no existence by itself. In ignorance it lives and dies. That ignorance is the Ego in man. Ego springs up from the seed of desire planted in the mind substance. Desire is the fire that burns out all the finer and nobler instincts in man. None can quench the thirst of desire by making offerings to it. Offerings only increase the volume and intensity of that fire and dis-

turbs the tranquillity of the mind. Mind disturbed by the forces of desires runs with the senses after the objects and thereby becomes conscious of a distinctive individuality of its own—the ego, the finite self, the self-conscious 'I' which perceives the phenomena. Only an agitated mind follows the sense objects around it. Therefore the phenomenal world is also perceived. The tranquil mind is known as the Silent mind and that Silent mind is Brahman, the Atman, the Self where the knowledge of the Supreme One is abiding. Mind, free from agitation is imperishable, above sorrows and pain. The object of spiritual life is therefore to bring the agitated mind to its own tranquil state. Tranquillity is the most desired state of Existence. Truth reveals itself in a tranquil mind—a mind that has got rid of 'I' and 'mine'. So long as there remains an iota of desire in the mind, nay, even a hidden impression of it, one cannot have perfect tranquillity. A single unworthy thought is enough to disturb the tranquillity and disqualify the seeker. Tranquillity in other words is peace which everybody is directly or indirectly seeking in life. Tranquillity brings illumination, awards discrimination ; one is enabled to judge for

oneself the true value of things and ideas—one is freed from them all. One who is not a master of his senses cannot have perfect tranquillity; the proof of this tranquillity we see before us in Bhagavan Ramana whose existence proves beyond all doubts that his mind is unruffled even in the midst of death. He is happy everywhere under any condition of life, ever serene and impregnated with eternal freshness—a friend of all, full of compassion, a living illustration of the truth that Vedanta teaches. In Yoga-Vasistha we read:

> "Tranquillity is the harbinger of beautitude and peace, through it one attains the *summum bonum* of life." .... (II-13-52).

Hence the practice of meditation is essential for a seeker of Truth. It sharpens his powers of observation and brings forth the effortless awareness. Meditation consumes the out-going energy, the Ego, making the *sadhak* free and blissful. It stops the current of thoughts. When thoughts are stopped, senses are subdued, idea of possession vanishes, for then, the true light shines forth, giving clarity of vision, bringing discrimination and tranquillity back, removing the veil of separation between

the Self (Atman) and the world. The projection of mind into the external world comes to a close ; there is an absolute cessation of all particularity of self-consciousness. Even the idea of time and space is no longer experienced. One is as if enveloped in the bliss of the Void The mind without thought is the Pure *Chit*, the Infinite, eternally unchanged Reality ; and with thought it is the finite mind,—the egoistic mind. The egoistic mind with all its actions, desires, ideas, worlds and imaginations gets absorbed and assimilated by the Absolute Consciousness of the self as a result of deep and continous abiding in the Self which is probably a kind of *samadhi* described in the scriptures and has been called the Yoga or meditation. The aspirant experiences freedom, freedom from all identifications, duality, confused conceptions, imperfections, miseries, sorrows and of that self-conscious 'I'. All controversies are buried for ever. The egoistic mind is melted away by the touch of the Truth—the Self, giving rise to the hidden purified mind in which there is an utter negation. The *Sadhak* then reaches the Buddha-hood or the state of a *gnani*. The secret door towards Divinity is then opened for him. Truth dawns ; contentment

follows. None can enjoy true happiness living in ignorance.

A true seeker struggles to free himself first from ignorance, and once freed, *he helps others to freedom*. His very existence will then purify human minds. "The struggle to reach freedom is the ground work of all morality of unselfishness," says Swami Vivekananda.

The will to live in this world of failures, sufferings, decay and death is the ignorance -- the *Maya* that keeps one entangled in Samsara. It vanishes before the light of Truth—the Knowledge of the Self.

Ignorance of reality is the mother of mysteries, a veritable den of miseries, a hill of superstitions and an ocean of sorrows, of waste and want. A mere vision of the Self is sufficient to wipe out all ignorance from human nature, bringing forth to the surface the hidden undecaying bliss and peace. Self is the Infinite and whole Consciousness manifesting itself both as the subject and object.

> "That Self is the Truth in which one is always abiding. None doubts his own existence,"

says my great Guru of Arunachala.

That is the living Reality—the Truth that persists even after elimination of objects and ideas, which is self-evident. Existence is beyond idea, beyond imagination. Thoughts cannot reach it, mind cannot understand it, intellect (Buddhi) cannot conceive it - It is the thing-in-itself. It knows no separation or unity, freedom or bondage, sorrow or joy. It goes beyond opposites and extremes, reaches the neutral state, which I believed is explained in the scriptures as the state of Pure Awareness.

Nothing can exist outside the Self. There is nothing distinctive to prove whence the Self or Existence came and if at all it disappeared whither it went It is, it was and it will be, here, there, and everywhere. There can be no locality of Existence—the Self-the Life-the Absolute which is inexhaustible fullness of all that is. It is limitless, self-contained, self-sufficient, self-caused, independent, self-existent, all pervading—the Eternal and therefore must be above pleasure, pain decay and death. It is not affected by the conditions of body and mind.

It is the ego, the self-conciousness in man that creates the idea of separateness, individuality, past and future, conflict and effort.

So long as he clings to his separate entity, I mean his individuality, he will have to go through the pangs of birth and death. He cannot be aware of Truth, the all-pervading Self,—the Reality in its completeness. The desire for self-identification is the cause of sorrow and suffering. It is completely absent in realised souls.

> "He alone knows the Absolute Reality who knows it by direct intuition placing and merging himself in it; others only repeat the words of the scriptures."..... Yoga Vasishtha* VI, 52, 29 (Pratyaksa Anubhuti).

It can only be realised by complete cessation of all particularities and of self-consciousness. A true aspirant turns fearlessly towards the search for Truth at all costs, with single-minded sincerity and prepared for any sacrifice and suffering. Then his mind turns inward and begins to reflect on the problems of the world as did the minds of all great masters Buddha, Sankara, Christ, Chaitanya and others. His reflective consciousness then experiences and finds unhappiness, restlessness and fearfulness,

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* "Philosophy of Yoga Vasishtha" by Dr. B. L. Atreya.

inconsistence everywhere. None he finds truly happy and peaceful in this world. Everyone he sees is suffering from unfulfilled desires.

"Everything in life shows that earthly happiness is destined to be frustrated and recognised as an illusion....Life presents itself as a continuous deception in small things as in great.....Life with its hourly, daily, weekly, yearly little great and greater misfortunes, with its deluded hopes and its accidents destroying all our calculations, bears so distinctly the impression of something with which we must become disgusted, that it is hard to conceive how one has been able to mistake this and allow oneself to be persuaded that life is there in order to be thankfully enjoyed and that men exist in order to be happy. Rather that continued illusion and disillusion and also the nature of life throughout presents itself to us as intended and calculated to awaken the conviction that nothing at all is worth our striving, our efforts and struggles; that all good things are vanity, the world in all its ends bankrupt; and life a business which does

not cover expenses." .... Schopenhauer in "The world as Will and Idea," Volume III, page 382. "Surely every. one is caught up in sorrow or in the sorrow of another. Man is burdened with sorrow, his pleasure is bound up by tears. There is a constant conflict, weariness, fear, jostle ; never the tranquillity of harmony, poise and completeness. Man desires to be free of that weariness, free of that love in which there is sorrow, pain and those qualities which corrupt love. You all want to be free. Be free of these things and there is Truth. Then you w not ask "What is Truth "....Sri Krishnamurthi (Star Bulletin : Answers to Questions : August 1931).

When one has realised the true nature of worldly existence, there grows in one a desire, subduing all other desires, for freedom, the desire to escape from limitations and sorrows.

When one rises above the plane of normal (vital) consciousness and goes beyond the self-forgetting or self-limiting ignorance, which one has unconsciously imposed upon oneself by one's past action, then one realises the essential nature of the

Self—the Absolute; the Life, the Existence; abiding in silence everywhere throughout the phenomenal worlds and beyond. The self-conscious 'I' (Ego) and the Self (the Atman) cannot exist together. For self-consciousness which men call life leads to sorrow, to pain, to decay and death, while the Knowledge of Self leads to Truth, self-forgetfulness, to unchangeable Reality, to immortality and to the totality—the Absolute, where subject and object cannot be in existence. There one recovers his True nature—Brahmanhood—the cherished eternal freedom. This is the real knowledge which one should seek; all other kinds of knowledge are mere semblance of knowledge; knowledge of a relative plane, sensuous knowledge—and which therefore cannot be put in the category of knowledge. Knowledge should not remain a mere belief, but should become a living experience. The final test of all our knowledge is the direct experience and that experience is within us which can cure us of all afflictions and doubts. Therefore the purpose of experience is to remove the idea of separation, making the seeker free from all the clouds of appearances, individuality, personality and of the phenomenal world.

" With the imperfections exhausted, doubts dispelled, senses controlled and being engaged in the good of all beings, the Rishis obtain absolute freedom."..... (Gita, V, 25). " Verily they only who having subdued all the senses and remaining even-minded everywhere are engaged in the welfare of all beings reach Myself." (Gita, XII, 4). "He who has not turned away from bad conduct, whose senses are not under control, whose mind is not collected and pacified, cannot attain the Self or Supreme Knowledge."..... Katho Upanishad (XI, 24).

Truth, that Eternal Reality is within us, exists in all things and is not something apart from us. That One All-pervading Reality is beyond time and space, progress and regress, cause and effect. It is the Absolute.

" .....that Kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whomsoever shall know himself shall find it." said Jesus. " Truth is everything. Truth is that freedom of consciousness which is perfect balance, in which all particularity or qualities have no existence. Truth is self-caused, self-existent,

eternal. To know that, you must be free of sorrow which is caused by the consciousness of 'I'. When you have realised Truth, then you will not seek from another the assurance of your realization for there is an inward reality, an inward completeness."....Sri Krishnamurthi (Star Bulletin, August 1931).

"Being firmly established in that full, all seeing vision which blossoms forth by the abandonment of every thought and feeling of the separate 'I', 'My' and 'Mine', and standing in thy own inmost Being by the attainment of the state of one who has realized Absolute Freedom of the Spirit while still living in a physical body (Jivanmukta)—the state which results from the Vision—move thou about in the World, O Raghava, joyfully, as though engaged in a play."

....Yoga Vasishtha, Vol, 17.....(Selected by Sri Bhagavan Ramana and freely rendered into English by Mr. J. Chatterjee).

Fear not, aspirant, fear not, though you are in the transitory world of desires and actions; rejoicingly go deep down into the

cavity of your heart — the Locus — the Secret-Silent-Home, where dwells your Life Eternal, the Immortal Friend, the beloved Sachidananda—the Great Self—The Existence—All inclusive Consciousness —the All-embracing Unity. *Thou Art That*': This is the Maha-Vakya of the Upanishads. He who is able to touch his Sacred Source knows God, himself, the World and beyond. Life then becomes complete and its mission is fulfilled. Make an effort here and now to be effortless. Be free from that self-consciousness that has kept you in bondage!

The world is the great dream of Eternity—The Self is the only Truth, The Supreme Reality, The Unchangeable Reality, The Nirvana, beyond all experiences.

OM SANTI, SANTI, SANTI.

This is an inadequate exposition of the living presence of the Guru—the Knowledge— the Atman—Sri Ramana, — the Truth Personified, as grasped by 'A'.

EMERSON'S ODE TO AMERICA

(July 4, 1857)

United States! the ages plead,
    Present and Past in under-song,
Go put your creed into your deed,
    Nor speak with double tongue.

For sea and land don't understand
    Nor skies without a frown
See rights for which the one hand fights
    By the other cloven down.

Be just at home; then write your scroll
    Of honour o'er the sea,
And bid the broad Atlantic roll
    A ferry of the free.

And henceforth there shall be no chain,
    Save underneath the sea
The wires shall murmur through the main
    Sweet songs of liberty.

For He that worketh high and wise,
    Nor pauses in His plan,
Will take the sun out of the skies
    Ere freedom out of man.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!

America! America!
God shed His grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood,
From sea to shining sea!

—KATHERINE LEE BATES, (1904)
SAMUEL A. WARD.



LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF
SANKARACHARYA

BY

S. S. SURYANARAYANA SASTRI
Head of the Department of Philosophy
Madras University

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PREFACE

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S. S. S.

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BY

DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

FOREWORD BY

PROF. M. HIRIYANNA, M.A.

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"Shall we say that the great *Upanishads* are the deep, still mountain tarns, fed from the pure water of the everlasting snows, lit by clear sunshine, or, by night, mirroring the high serenity of the stars?

The *Bhagavad Gita* is, perhaps, the lake among the foot-hills, wherein are gathered the same waters of wisdom, after flowing through the forest of Indian history, with the fierce conflict of the Children of Bharata.

Then, in the *Brahma Sutras*, we have the reservoir, four-square, where the sacred waters are assembled in ordered quiet and graded depth, to be distributed by careful measure for the sustenance of the sons of men.

What shall we say, then, of the Master Sankara? Is he not the Guardian of the sacred waters, who, by his Commentaries, has hemmed about, against all impurities or Time's jealousy, first the mountain tarns of the *Upanishads*, then the serene forest lake of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and last the deep reservoir of the *Sutras*; adding, from the generous riches of his wisdom, lovely fountains and lakelets of his own, the *Crest Jewel*, the *Awakening*, the *Discernment*?"—Charles Johnston.

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SANKARACHARYA

I

THE LIFE OF SANKARACHARYA

THE crown of Hindu philosophy is by a good many considered to be the Advaita Vedanta, the promulgation and consolidation of which is associated with the name of Sri Sankaracharya. According to this system, pure infinite consciousness is the sole reality; the entire knowable universe, consisting of forms and names applied thereto, is but an appearance, a transfiguration thereof. How the infinite appears as finite, how the formless is figured in diverse forms, how the one mass of bliss seems cut up into pleasures and pains, is a mystery; it is actual and calls for explanation; but it is elusive and defies explanation; hence it is we call it

illusory. While thus we have a supreme miracle in the infinite appearing at all as finite, the majority of us are not content with this but seek further miracles even in the lives of those who professed Advaita. It is a wonder how the one consciousness apparently suffers disruption into teacher and taught; it is a greater wonder that the resultant teaching is faithful to the primal unity without distorting it; the greatest wonder is that we seek to graft other wonders on these, as if these were not sufficiently inexplicable. Hence it is that we find the life of Sankara shrouded in myth, none of which adds to his greatness, while some detract therefrom. When stripped of the fabulous, there is not material left even for a bare skeleton of his life.

Certain features seem to be well settled. Sankara was a native of the West Coast. He belonged to a Nambudiri family settled in Kaladi, a village six miles from Alwaye. He was the only son of his father,

Sivaguru, who died when the boy was very young. The boy was precocious in the pursuit, not merely of his studies, but also of renunciation, without which the highest knowledge cannot be realised. By tricks or cajolery he won the consent of his mother, Aryamba, to let him become a sannyasin, and after promising to return for the due performance of his mother's obsequies, went away to Govinda Bhagavatpada, who lived on the banks of the Narmada, and received formal instruction from him. Govinda was probably a pupil of Gaudapada, an advaitin of some renown. After finishing his course of instruction, he travelled over India, defeated some adversaries in dispute, wrote a number of important works, firmly established Advaita by silencing its principal antagonists—the atheism of the Bauddha, the ritualism of the Mimamsaka and the logicism of the Naiyayika, returned home in time to perform the last rites for his mother, established several mutts, the most

notable of which are, perhaps, those of the Sarada Pitha and the Kamakoti Pitha, and finally departed from this world at the early age of thirty-two. Those who have not had their intellectual palate tickled by romances may find inspiration even in the story as it stands. But we have always delighted in miracles; and the biographers have not avoided the temptation.

Perhaps the best known life of Sankara is the *Digvijaya* attributed to Madhava Vidyaranya. It is very comprehensive, but also very unreliable. While supernatural elements may conveniently be grafted on at little risk beyond provoking a smile from the incredulous, it is not safe to play with historical facts, susceptible of precise knowledge even by those of a later day. Yet this so-called Vidyaranya seems to have been oblivious to the danger to such an extent that he indiscriminately lumped together writers of very different centuries among those whom Sankara met and defeated. Thus we find mention of Kumarila

(probably 6th or 7th century A.D.), Sri Harsha and Udayana (10th century A.D.) and Srikantha (11th century A.D., if not later). Evidently this biographer found it convenient to believe that each decade of Sankara's life was equivalent to a century. The work in question abounds in so many other defects, that its alleged authorship is generally, if not wholly, discredited.

Even the less spurious accounts are not free from the fabulous. The best we can do is to glance at the elements, pausing only where some instruction may be gleaned. A teacher of note, some believe, cannot be merely human; he must be an incarnation of Divinity. So it is said that Sankara was an incarnation of the great Divine Sankara Himself, condescending to come down on earth in response to the prayers of the other gods who were sick of the irreligion then current in this ancient land of *dharma*. The time chosen by Siva accorded with that when there found favour in his ears the prayers of a virtuous but

childless Brahmana of Kaladi. True to form, the mother was asked to choose between a long-lived idiot and a brilliant son who would die prematurely; wisely, she chose the latter boon and in due course Sankara was born to her. Like another saint born in similar circumstances, Markandeya, Sankara was destined to live for only sixteen years. Since, however, his life-work was then just about to commence and the divine purpose would have been left unfulfilled by his death at that age, the sage Vyasa intervened and obtained an extension by another sixteen years.

About the approximate date of this incarnation there is little certainty. The generally accepted date is 788 A.D. and Sankara is supposed to have departed this life in 820 A.D. This date mentioned by Teile and supported by Pathak finds some kind of confirmation in Greater India; an inscription of Cambodia refers to one Siva-soma, the pupil of Bhagavan Sankara, and the preceptor of Indravarman (878-887 A.D.);

he was also the grandson of Jayavarman's maternal uncle, known to have lived from 802 to 869 A.D. There is no improbability in Sivasoma having been a pupil, perhaps one of the juniormost set, of a master who departed this life in 820 A.D. But there is no conclusiveness since the successors of Sankara in the various pontificates were also known as Sankara-Acharyas; and any disciple may in his reverence have referred to his own guru as 'Bhagavan' without any question of his having been the first of that name in the line of Advaita tradition. Other dates claiming greater or less probability range from 400 A.D. to 805 A D. The suggestion by Telang would place Sankara in the seventh century if not earlier; for in the course of his commentary on the *Vedanta Sutras* (IV. ii, 5) Sankara refers to the cities of Srughna and Pataliputra; the latter reference would have been meaningless after that city had been destroyed by river erosion, about 750 A.D.

There is also reference to a Purnavarman, probably a well-known king of the period; such a king is mentioned by Hieuen Tsiang, as having ruled about 590 A.D. Probably, Sankara was a contemporary. The trouble with such arguments is that they are so inconclusive. 'Purnavarman' may have denoted a particular king or may have been used indifferently just as one says Tom, Dick or Harry; for no interest in personalities is relevant to the writer's argument. Even when such interest may be presumed as where Suresvara (alias Visvarupa) is said to have graced the court of a Prabhakara, there is no conclusive evidence of this being one Prabhakara Vardhana rather than another; and on such evidence it is hardly fair to attempt to fix the period to which a person belonged. The reference to places may seem more significant; but that too is not conclusive. An Indian student of Western Logic talks of the mortality of Socrates as an example of an inferential

conclusion, though he may have never heard of Socrates and have no interest in him. Similarly, a student of Indian logic glibly uses examples with names like Devadatta, Chaitra, and Maitra though such names are wholly unfamiliar in every-day life; the fact is these are stock examples which are repeated from mouth to mouth, irrespective of any consideration of actualities. To take the specific mention of Pataliputra, we find it comes in this way; if a person goes from A to B and from B to C, we shall be justified in speaking of him as having gone from A to C, even without mention of B that intervenes; where we would thus use the symbols A, B and C, Sankara speaks of Srughna, Mathura and Pataliputra respectively; the name Pataliputra has no more significance than the symbol C; and the example using the identical names would seem to have been used by other writers as well, and possibly contributed a stock example.

It has been said that the upper and lower limits at least are fairly fixed. Sankara came after Bhatrihari, who, according to I-Tsing, lived between 600 and 650 A.D.; and he must have preceded by a reasonable interval, Vachaspati Misra, who wrote his commentary, the *Bhamati*, on Sankara's *Sutra-bhashya*; Vachaspati's date is fixed about 841 A.D.

There is reason to think that Kumarila Bhatta, a stalwart exponent of the Mimamsa school of philosophy lived in the latter half of the seventh century A.D. Sankara reveals himself as a critic of both of the schools of Mimamsa—that of Bhatta as well as that of Prabhakara. Mandana Misra is also a critic of both schools, though reputed to have been the pupil of Kumarila. And in some places in the *Brahmasiddhi*, an Advaita work of Mandana's, Sankara's views seem to be presupposed and criticised, notably in the discussion of the value of ritual observances in securing release and in the conception of release

even while embodied (*jivanmukti*). This kind of pupil-critic-criticised relation seems best to fit in with the hypothesis that Kumarila, Mandana and Sankara were contemporaries, and that Sankara, like Kumarila, belonged to the latter half of the seventh century A.D. Attractive as it is, this suggestion (of Dr. T. R. Chintamani) cannot yet command final acceptance. We have to bear in mind all the while that Sankara was not the first exponent of Advaita; and that even such peculiarities of doctrine as we have learnt to associate with him were probably inherited by him from some now obscure, but not unimportant, predecessor; it may have been part of what he got from his preceptor, Govinda, whose views might have been well known at the time, though no writing of his has come down to us. The supposition that because a view criticised is one known to be professed by Sankara, Sankara should have preceded or been contemporaneous with the critic, commands only a certain

measure of probability, liable to be upset by other considerations. As for the tradition that Mandana was a pupil of Kumarila's, this, in view of the confusion we shall presently note about the identity of Mandana, is of little probative value. On the view that Sankara died in 820 A.D. it is no doubt difficult to believe that only two decades elapsed between him and Vachaspati who wrote a commentary on the *Sutra-bhashya*; but the difficulty by no means amounts to an impossibility. At least one commentary, the *Panchapadika*, is known to have been written by a pupil in Sankara's own lifetime; the composition of another commentary only a few decades after his death is in no way improbable. The same remark applies to Vachaspati's reference to the *Panchapadika*; for, as we have said, this gained currency in Sankara's lifetime; and the improbability of access in the case of one is not greater than in the case of the other.

There remains, however, another difficulty, that a Jaina author named Vidyananda quotes from the *Brihadaranyaka-upanishad-bhashya-vartika*, a work of Suresvara Acharya, a disciple and successor of Sankara. Vidyananda is mentioned by another writer, Jinasena, who belonged to 783 A D. or thereabouts; it is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that Sankara who preceded Suresvara quoted by Vidyananda lived not later than the close of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century. But the whole argument rests on the correctness of the date assigned to Jinasena; the writer who advances this argument has himself to rely on another for Jinesena's date; and those who have to deal with Indian chronology know that there are few accepted dates not liable to be upset. Further, Jinasena's literary career (to say nothing of his life) is known to have extended over half a century; hence he could have well survived into the early decades of the ninth century and referred

to Vidyananda, who was probably a contemporary of Sankara and Suresvara.

Even accepted traditions about personalities are liable to challenge. Thus it was for long believed by advaitins, including writers of such eminence as Madhusudana Sarasvati, that Sarvajnatman, the author of the *Sankshepasariraka*, was a pupil of Suresvara Acharya and only twice removed from Sankara; from the reference to a king in the penultimate verse of that work, Sarvajnatman is set down as of the ninth century, more or less a contemporary of Vachaspati's; and Sankara could not have been much earlier. But this same author wrote another work called *Pramanalakshana*, where Devananda is referred to as his *parama-guru* (preceptor's preceptor). Even in the other, better known, book, Sarvajnatman offers obeisance, not to Survesvara, but to Devesvara; and the identification of the two has no better basis than the identity of meaning between *deva* and *sura*; the inferred identity,

however, is upset by what is now known about the *parama-gura*; and Sarvajnatman could have come a century or more after Sankara.

In all this confusion of evidence, it seems safest to assume that Sankara flourished some time between the middle of the seventh and the first quarter of the ninth centuries. There is no warrant for taking him earlier, while it is impossible to bring him lower down. And for discarding the dates generally assigned, *viz.*, 788-820 A.D., no sufficient grounds have yet been shown. Not even the most devoted of his followers need regret the comparatively late dating; for antiquity is not a necessary mark of value; and the Advaita tradition, of which Sankara was the exponent, can always claim to be much older than Sankara.

About the relation to Gaudapada too, there is not much certainty. Gaudapada has written the *Mandukya Karikas*, verses explaining and confirming with argument

the teaching of the *Mandukya Upanishad*. On the *Karikas* there is a commentary by Sankara, who there claims Govinda as his *guru* and Gaudapada as his *parama-guru* (preceptor's preceptor). It has been suggested that this particular expression need not in all cases bear the sense assigned to it, that it might even mean a distant preceptor. In any case, the question is a vexed one, not free from difficulties. The *Karikas* contain some expressions like '*dharma*' which are most suitably understood according to Buddhist teaching; but the commentator has twisted them and done little justice either to himself or to the text; and it is arguable that Sankara who shows such mastery of Buddhism elsewhere could hardly have been responsible for this poor exhibition. Buddhist doctrines apart, the text of the *Karikas* does not appear to have received the treatment one might reasonably expect from the author of the *Sutra-bhashya*. It is unsafe to rely too much on such

arguments; but it is no less inadvisable to brush them aside lightly, especially if we remember that those who advance them are interested not in belittling Sankara, but in conserving the reverence due to him. It seems safest, therefore, to suspend judgment, merely noting that while tradition asserts a particular relation between Sankara and Gaudapada, its accuracy is subject to serious doubt.

Of his own guru, Govinda Bhagavatpada, there appears to be no doubt whatever. Perhaps, this is because of our almost total ignorance of his identity and achievements. The less we know, the less there is to question.

Sankara had become an ascetic even before he found his guru. There would appear to have been in him a strong inclination towards *sannyasa* even from boyhood. The widowed mother, dependent on an only son for her prospects in this world as well as in the next, would naturally oppose the son's renunciation,

though, being unselfish like most mothers, she would base her objections not on the present, but on the future, her son's as well as her own. How could a person renounce without going through the ordained earlier stages of life, the householder's and the forest-dweller's? And though the son in his precocity, might convince her that the *sastras* sanctioned such a course, what was to become of her at death, deprived of the obsequies naturally due from the son? The son had to promise that he would faithfully return to her in her last moments and carry out all funeral rites. Even with this promise the mother was not satisfied (so the story runs). So one day when mother and son had gone to bathe in the river, the son cried out that a crocodile had caught hold of him. Would not his mother sanction his *sannyasa* at least now *in extremis*? The mother reluctantly enough gave her consent; from that moment Sankara had renounced for all practical purposes; and the crocodile

went away as mysteriously as it had come. Even if the story was not invented at a later day, it is not improbable that the crocodile was invented by Sankara, referring to his fear of marriage (of which there seems to have been some talk) and further entanglement in *samsara*; for *samsara* as we know is frequently compared to an ocean infested by crocodiles, sharks and other aquatic monsters. Anyhow the permission to renounce was obtained, albeit by a trick. The point to note is that Sankara violated tradition twice over and both times in pursuance of the spirit rather than the letter of the law. The ritualists, who had deified the Act and killed the Spirit naturally condemned him; and the revolt is all the more glorious for the condemnation. When there is non-attachment established in the heart, that is the moment to renounce, neither earlier nor later. When renunciation is complete and has culminated in realisation, who is to say what such a one should or should not

do? The average ascetic has no competency to perform rites; but is Brahman too under that disability? Is not Brahman, on the contrary, pure consciousness which alone is truly active, the activity of the inert being only a shadow thereof? And surely the released soul has become Brahman, has attained *Brahmibhava*. The notion of Brahman acting seems to us ludicrous, because we look on our finite selves as agents; but all activity in truth is infinite and derives from the infinite. When, therefore, the kinsmen of Sankara objected to his performing his mother's funeral ceremonies, they knew not what they were doing; they thought an agent was performing an act, for which they in their wisdom considered him ineligible; they little realised that they were seeking to dam the fountain of all activity—activity that was bound to express itself in spite of their non-co-operation, and impress them with its influence in spite of themselves. It is said that those kinsmen would not give

Sankara firewood for the funeral pyre; nor would they assist him to move the corpse. So Sankara cut down plantain stems from the small garden of the house where his mother had lived and died, made up a pyre in a corner of that garden, cut up the corpse, to remove it bit by bit to the pyre, and set fire to the whole in a mysterious manner. And because of the attitude of his Nambudiri kinsmen he laid a curse on them that thenceforth no corpse of theirs was to be cremated except in their own gardens and without sufficient prior mutilation. The story runs that the curse was operative in certain Nambudiri families till very recently when it was lifted by a successor of Sankara's in the Sringeri Pitha. The gruesome details and the miracles may not appeal to some minds; but the fundamental truth should not be overlooked—that while the flesh may be bound, the spirit cannot be, and that he who has realised has become truly spirit, in spite of continuing to tenant,

in our eyes, a fleshly tabernacle. Advaitins have differed in their opinions, as to whether release is possible during embodiment, whether the released person will continue to act like others, whether the prescriptions and prohibitions of the *sastras* would apply to him and so on. Some have held that *jivanmukti* is only a figurative expression, applied to one whose release is imminent; others have maintained the reality of such *mukti* and the complete freedom of the *mukta* from all obligations, positive as well as negative; he *need* do nothing and he *may* do anything; a third school has set aside positive obligations alone, not negative; the *mukta* may not commit murder, though the prohibition has little sense since no *mukta* is likely to want to commit murder. In all this dispute, one may safely turn to this incident in Sankara's life as a clear indication; the bound person has obligations imposed on him, according to his station and order of life; the released

person is above all such distinctions and obligations, except such as he chooses to impose on himself, for what he alone can judge to be the welfare of the world. His acts, whether of commission or omission, do not come within the compass of our judgment. To say that, though a *sannyasin*, he felt bound by the promise to his mother and that to keep this promise he violated the rules of the ascetic's order, may be a human touch calculated to endear him to some hearts; but it will be to miss a significant element of his life-story as well as of his teaching.

It is curious to note how the biographers have alternated between the extremes of making their subject all too human and all too mythical. Sankara when he went to Govinda was obviously in need of a *guru* to instruct him in the highest philosophy. But inconsistently enough, we are told that at the very first meeting, when questioned by Govinda as to his identity, Sankara replied in the words of

what is now known as the *Dasasloki*, a poem in ten verses, describing the self as pure consciousness, not identifiable with the elements, with castes or orders of life, with men or gods, with holy places or waters, with any of the schools of philosophy and so on. There is no reason to think that this work, the basis of a valuable commentary by Madhusudana Sarasvati, was anything but the product of a relatively mature age. It is only excess of zeal that leads some biographers to date it to the period of his induction to philosophy by Govinda Bhagavatpada, when he was, perhaps, in his teens.

When he had finished with the course of instruction under the *guru*, Sankara left for Benares, where disciples began to gather round him. One of the earliest was a South Indian who came to be known later as the Padmapada, because of the following incident: Once master and pupil were on opposite banks of the river Ganges and Sankara called to the pupil to come

over; the pupil unhesitatingly stepped on to the water and began to walk across; and lo! at every step he took a lotus blossomed to support his foot. The incident may be apocryphal, but the name Padmapada has survived, as that of a favourite pupil, the author of a commentary called the *Panchapadika* on the *Sutrabhashya*. The master would appear to have had considerable affection and regard for this pupil. For when the commentry had been finished, Padmapada went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram, taking this book with him and leaving it on the way at an uncle's house. The doctrines taught were not to the taste of the uncle, who therefore faked a fire accident before the return of the nephew. When Padmapada returned to the master disconsolate, Sankara undertook to repeat what he remembered of the work; that amounted to five padas, about five-sixteenths of the whole work and was carefully written to dictation; unluckily even this much has not come down to us; what

we have is a small, though important, fragment, covering the first four of the *Vedanta Sutras*; the quintessence of Advaita teaching is indeed claimed to be contained in the commentary on these four *sutras*.

Another famous disciple, one to whom the master was supposed to show special partiality, was Suresvara, well known for his very extensive commentary on Sankara's bhashya on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*; but the encounter with Suresvara must wait till we finish with some other incidents that preceded it. One of these relates to an alleged encounter in Benares with Siva himself, disguised as an untouchable, and accompanied by the four Vedas in the guise of four dogs. Sankara's disciples indignantly attempted to clear for their master a path unpolluted by the *chandala*, when the intruder rebuked them and their master for the inconsistency between their practice and the non-dualism they professed. Sankara at once realised the greatness of this *chandala* in disguise and offering deep

obeisance, gave utterance to the verses known as *Manishapanchaka*, where he expresses his credo that the man of non-dual realisation is his master, be he *brahmana* or *chandala*. Here again we are concerned not with the historic veracity of the tale, but with the spirit underlying it, the readiness to find and acknowledge greatness under whatever mask it may hide itself.

Less significant is the alleged encounter with Vyasa, the author of the *Vedanta Sutras*. Sankara and Vyasa are said to have started an endless wrangle, which could be terminated only when Padmapada intervened and requested them to desist, pointing out how unseemly it was for the incarnations of Siva and Vishnu to dispute there. The story goes on to say that the authoritativeness of Sankara as a commentator was then accepted by the author of the *Sutras*, so that Sankara could go forth with full confidence to establish his system.

One of his earliest encounters was with Kumarila Bhatta, who was about to immolate himself in fire, as an expiation for his having learnt Bauddha doctrines from a *guru* in the guise of a Bauddha disciple, and then betrayed him by merciless criticism. His object had been good, the establishment of *Sanatana-dharma*; but the means had been bad and expiation was necessary, especially as Kumarila's lifework had in his estimation been accomplished. Sankara had been hungering for a disputation with this arch-defender of ritualism and hurried to the spot on hearing of the impending immolation. But he arrived too late for anything but an advice to seek out and dispute with Mandana Misra, another ritualist, and a brother-in-law of Kumarila's. The story is not vouched for by any known history, and it has no significance to commend it.

The encounter with Mandana looms large in Sankara chronicles; for it is the

person thus sought and defeated in argument, who became a *sannyasin* under the name of Suresvara and later succeeded Sankara in the pontificate of Sringeri (some say Conjeeveram); and tradition would also have it that the temple consecrated to Sri Sarada at Sringeri is really in honour of the wife of Suresvara in his pre-sannyasa stage of life. It is now fairly well settled that Suresvara had, as a householder, the name of Visvarupa Acharya. And we shall speak of him under this name rather than that of Mandana, in order to avoid confusion with another Mandana Misra, probably a senior contemporary of Sankara's, and an advaitin whose thought had considerable influence on Vachaspati Misra and others of a later day; this latter Mandana's Advaita work, the *Brahmasiddhi*, has only recently seen the light of day. From a study of it, one realises that there is no justification whatever for the traditional identification of Mandana

Misra with Suresvara; it is not wholly improbable that the latter was also known as Mandana, but to avoid confusion it is better to refer to him in the householder's state as Visvarupa. It was to this person that Sankara had been directed by Kumarila (or by some less known, but more historically proximate, personage). He arrived on a day when Visvarupa was occupied in performing a *sraddha* for his ancestors. The door being bolted Sankara mysteriously appeared in the court-yard. The householder was wroth at the inopportune appearance of this shaven monk and straightaway there commenced an abusive duel. That was the prelude to a regular disputation, at which Visvarupa's wife, an incarnation of Sarasvati, was asked to arbitrate. She put a garland round the neck of each disputant and went about her household duties. After some time the garland round her husband's neck began to fade and Visvarupa realised his defeat.

In accordance with his pledged word, he prepared to become a *sannyasin* and his wife prepared to depart for her heavenly abode as Sarasvati. But Sankara detained her by spells and made her follow his company till they reached Sringeri where he put up the temple for her. There is little that is edifying in this story, except the alleged conversion to the path of knowledge of one who had been blindly addicted to the path of works. Such conversions are not unknown in religious history; and the convert's zeal may even outrun that of the master. It will not be surprising to find in the circumstances that such a person becomes a favourite pupil or succeeds the master in the pontificate. It also stands to reason that other pupils will be jealous of this ex-heretic and will seek to decry him in all ways and on all occasions. There is, therefore, some probability in that part of the story which mentions the unwillingness of Sankara's other disciples to let Suresvara

write a commentary on the *Sutrabhashya*. He had to undergo a rigid probation by writing the *Brihadaranyaka-upanishad-bhashyavartika* and the *Naishkarmyasiddhi* before he was accepted by his co-disciples, if indeed he was accepted at any time whole-heartedly. And when two such personalities as Sankara and Visvarupa in his unregenerate days came together there is bound to have been a clash, some sparks and even a little thunder. But all this could well be appreciated without descending to gross-ness of language or miracle-mongering.

The embellishment relating to Visvarupa's wife, Bharati, is even less worthy of credence. There was little need for Sankara to have compelled her to stay when she, her wifely mission accomplished, was preparing to return to her heavenly home. And the legendary consequence of this compulsion was that Bharati entered into argumentation with Sankara. Finding that she was steadily losing ground, she began to question him on the art of love

in which he had to confess his ignorance. But not willing to own defeat, he prayed for time, went forth with his disciples, found that a wise and virtuous king named Amaru had just departed this world, commanded his disciples to tend with great care his own physical frame, which by his yogic powers he temporarily discarded, to tenant the king's body. The relatives, ministers and subjects of the king rejoiced much at the re-animation of what had been thought a corpse and cherished him greatly. Living in these surroundings, Sankara cultivated the knowledge he had lacked and even wrote a work thereon, called the *Amarusataka*. The ministers had a shrewd suspicion that the king's body had a new tenant, a great soul, which should not be lightly allowed to depart; hence they gave orders for a vigilant search for and destruction of any apparently lifeless bodies. The servants of the state in carrying out the behest came upon Sankara's body and prepared to cremate it; Sankara

himself had very nearly, if not quite, forgotten his own body and disciples, in the new round of pleasures and duties. Fortunately he came to himself in the nick of time, rushed back to find his body on the already lit pyre, entered it, and by an opportune prayer to Narasimha was able to get up and escape unscathed. Then he returned to Bharati and exhibited his new skill, whereupon she had to own herself finally defeated and ready to do his bidding. Quite apart from the miraculous elements in this story, it offends us by the introduction of an unnecessary debate with the unforeseen consequence of Sankara's having to undergo experiences which he had deliberately renounced; this offends the moral susceptibilities of many. There is also a logical difficulty. At the time he met Bharati and her spouse, was Sankara merely a clever disputant, or a realised soul? If the former, did he ever attain realisation? We are not made aware of any period or incident which marks his

realisation. If, on the other hand, he was already a realised soul, should he not have had at his command the omniscience of *Isvara*, the immediate knowledge of everything as it is? Where then was the necessity to depart this body and to tenant another? If the incident was calculated to edify the common people, was Bharati, the incarnation of Sarasvati, also to be included among these? Even if it may have edified some people, what of the rest who are offended at the incapacity, or else the lapse, of their idol?

It is not improbable, as has been suggested, that Bharati was a very learned lady attracted to the Advaita philosophy. When her husband was worsted and became a *sannyasin*, she may have elected to follow Sankara's entourage, partly of her own will and partly at his request; for the philosophy of non-dualism respects no differences of sex or caste, though, up to a point, such distinctions may act as barriers to the unhindered acquisition of

the highest knowledge. The incidents centring round Bharati and the *Manisha-panchaka* may have been in the first instance but illustrative of this truth. With their subsequent garnishings, however, they serve neither to instruct nor to edify.

The incident of Hastamalaka, said to have been a son of Prabhakara, is not without interest. The boy's dumbness was a source of great grief to the parents who brought him one day to Sankara; to their great joy, their son broke out in song, composing twelve verses expounding the Advaita doctrine of the self as of the nature of eternal consciousness. Thence-forward he remained in the company of the master, as a favourite pupil, contributing not a little to the jealousy of the others. The verses have a commentary ascribed without sufficient warrant to Sankara himself.

The incidents relating to the funeral of Sankara's mother have already been noted

and discussed. They are said to have belonged to the period subsequent to his dialectic victory at Mahishmati, and his tour in South India, in the course of which he established the mutt at Sringeri. Even those with the least inclination for philosophical and religious pursuits cannot fail to be impressed with the grandeur and calm of the location of this mutt. One is transported to a different atmosphere altogether of deep and quiet spirituality; the limpid waters of the Tunga, the cool cloisters of the *pathasala*, the sylvan beauties of the forest on the other bank, the grace and charm of the presiding deity, Sri Sarada, the ordered life of those in and around the mutt, all alike are calculated to impress and to elevate. If Sankara had done nothing else but found this mutt that alone would justify his immortality.

Quite a number of other mutts are associated with Sankara's name, *e g.*, the *Kamakotipitha*, originally at Conjeevaram and now at Kumbakonam, the *Govardhan*

mutt at Puri and so on. They speak to the extensiveness of Sankara's travels and the weight of his contemporary influence. Many of them flourish even to-day shedding a kindly lustre that inspires the weak even where they may not enlighten the strong. Two other mutts of note claiming establishment by Sankara are those at Dvaraka and Badarikasrama.

Mystery enshrouds even the last days of Sankara. He is said to have established his superior wisdom by seating himself on the throne of omniscience. Some say this was in Kashmir and others at Kanchi. Tradition seems to be fairly unanimous about his visit to Nepal and Kashmir. While in the north, he came across a *sakta* called Abhinava Gupta, who practised evil spells on him with the result that Sankara got a bad attack of haemorrhoids. He was cured of this, thanks to the loving devotion of his pupils; but he was never completely cured and since Abhinava Gupta had neither been placated nor killed, his

sorcery prevailed in the end and Sankara had to succumb. Others say that Sankara realised his allotted span of life was drawing to a close and entered a cave in the Himalayas to pass into *samadhi*. Yet others say that he ended his days peacefully at Kanchi. The Abhinava Gupta tradition seems to have the least to support it. We know of one Kashmiri named Abhinava Gupta, a follower of the *Pratyabhijna* school of Saivism which has strong affinities with both the Sakta and Advaita schools. At least one Advaita work, the *Paramarthasara*, was adapted and expanded by Abhinava Gupta to constitute a Pratyabhijna manual. Perhaps some later day advaitins, resenting such piracy and failing to appreciate the genuine *rapprochement* between those schools, made a *sakta* of the *saiva* and made him out to be the assassin of the advaitin. Even now it is a moot point whether a work attributed to Sankara, like the *Dashninamurthy-ashtaka*, is predominantly Advaita or Pratyabhijna

in the tenets it expresses; only self-opinionated partisans can speak with certitude; and in the eyes of such, the opponent will easily appear an assassin. The only element, with a reasonable certainty, is that Sankara did pass away at the early age of thirty-two, though even in this matter, one account would make him out to have lived fifty-three years. This narrative, however, which assigns a different birth-place (Chidambaram) and a different set of parents hardly commands credence.

II

THE WORKS OF SANKARA

THAT any one person should have acquired knowledge, renounced, gathered pupils, travelled widely winning dialectical victories all the way, met professors of diverse faiths and converted them at least to purer forms of their own worship and established mutts in different parts of the country for the preservation of the Hindu faith, these are achievements enough to pack into the small compass of thirty-two years. When we add to this the works, his authorship of which is indisputable, the account seems almost incredible; and it becomes really so if we consider the list of all the works attributed to him. Dr. S. K. Belvalkar has considered this list with some care and has divided the works into three groups, with three sub-groups in each. The groups are: I. the Commentorial works or *bhashyas* on the Vedanta Sutras, the

Upanishads, etc; II. the hymns or *stotras*; III. the minor expository or dialectical works in prose or in verse (the *prakaranas*). In each group, he distinguishes (*a*). those the author of which is unquestionably Sankara; (*b*) those the authorship of which is doubtful; and (*c*) those of which Sankara is clearly not the author. The standards adopted for evaluation are fairly satisfactory, though, perhaps, not absolutely beyond question. The *Sutra-bhashya*, the *Gita-bhashya* and the commentaries on some ten Upanishads constitute I (*a*). The *Vedanta Sutras*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads constitute the three basic works (prasthana-traya) of any Hindu *astika* school. And we may treat the Commentaries on these as the indisputable nucleus of the work of any one who set about to propagate Advaita and reform the Hindu faith. And when we find references to these works or commentaries on them by Sankara's immediate disciples, like Padmapada and Suresvara, or by those like Vachaspati, who

came a very short while after, their authenticity becomes unquestionable. Even among the *Upanishad-bhashyas*, however, we have no complete certainty. It is usual to speak of the ten principal Upanishads: *Isa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Prasna*, *Mundaka*, *Mandukya*, *Taittiriya*, *Aitareya*, *Chandogya*, and *Brihadaranyaka*. Sankara did not comment on all the 108 Upanishads; admittedly he made a selection; if so he is likely to have stopped with the ten, and not written (as he is claimed to have) commentaries on some minor Upanishads like the *Svetasvatara* and the *Narasimhatapaniya*. It is likely that these commentaries are by another hand, perhaps a later Sankara. Even of the major Upanishads it is not certain that the *Mandukya* and Gaudapada's *Karikas* thereon were commented on by Sankara; one seems to miss there both the felicity of understanding and the facility of expression associated with Sankara. So the *Mandukya-bhashya* has to be relegated to I(*b*). Under I (*c*), Dr. Belvalkar lists some

31 commentaries, including some said to be on Sankara's own works, some on the Sankhya and Yoga and one on the work on erotics (*Amarusataka*) alleged to have been composed by him while tenanting another body. Of the *stotras*, Dr. Belvalkar would bring under II (*a*) and regard as genuine some eight, including works like the *Dakshinamurthy-ashtaka*, the *Dasasloki* (with which Sankara is alleged to have greeted his preceptor Govinda), and the very popular *Bhaja Govindam* (said to have been composed at Benares when Sankara listened daily to the empty grammatical lore and wranglings of the numerous pupils gathered there for learning). He brings under II (*b*), as of doubtful authorship, the *Manishapanchaka* (said to have been composed on the occasion of meeting the supposed *chandala*), the *Sopanapanchaka* (suggesting a routine for the aspirant to release) and the *Sivabhujanga*. Some 214 *stotras* are brought under II (*c*) and their ascription to Sankara dismissed as spurious. One

standard of genuineness is the existence of fairly early commentaries. As to spuriousness, one of the standards adopted by Dr. Belvalkar is not unquestionable; he refuses to ascribe to Sankara any work in an artificial style of composition, *e.g.*, in the *bhujanga-prayata* metre (suggestive of the snake's winding progress), or the verses so arranged as to have first letters corresponding to the order of the Sanskrit alphabet, and so on. It must not be forgotten, however, that a style of composition which looks artificial to the critic may have been spontaneous for the author; spontaneity relates to spirit more than to form; and what in a literary hack is artificial may be natural in a great poet; the former gets hold of the form and labours to thrust some matter into it; the latter gives forth his thoughts which embody themselves in a suitable form; there cannot be a universal or cut-and-dry standard of artificiality. One may agree, however, with Dr. Belvalkar that for the

most part these hymns contain but the conventional elements of description and praise; they have no special message of uplift; and one would lose little by rejecting Sankara's authorship of these. There is a question of some importance as to whether Sankara's system admits of a God to whom prayer and worship can be offered; this point will be discussed in the treatment of his philosophy; and the existence of hymns by Sankara will be evidence of some value in this connection. But even one genuine hymn will suffice as an indication, quantity being no criterion; and Dr. Belvalkar has mercifully spared us as many as eight. Ardent Saivaites may find that he has left out all *Siva stotras* with the exception of one to Dakshinamurthi; but that is a sectarian matter. Of the *prakaranas*, Dr. Belvalkar would admit first *Aparokshanubhuti*, *Atmabodha*, *Upadesasahasri* (the metrical, not the prose part), *Panchikaranaprakriya* and the *Satasloki*; some eight are

treated as doubtful and 112 dismissed as spurious. The genuine claimants among all three groups thus total to twenty-four, a very respectable number, if we look at the extent of some of the works, like the *Sutra-bhashya* or the *Brihadaranyaka-upanishad-bhashya*. The doubtful and the non-genuine total up to 384. Whatever the merit of some of these, one may not lose much by not ascribing them to Sankara.

Dr. Belvalkar dismisses without any discussion the Tantrik works, *Saundarya-lahari* and *Prapanchasara*. There is a strong body of tradition ascribing both these works to Sankara; and the latter of these has a commentary ascribed to Padmapada, Sankara's direct disciple. It is difficult to dismiss the tradition outright, though admission is even more difficult because of the well-known extravagances of tradition in other matters. Doctrinal differences there are not such as would compel the postulation of a different author; for such tantra as is taught in

these is clearly an aid to the realisation of the highest as taught in Advaita Vedanta. Internal evidence is sparse and unconvincing. It is not known for certain who is the *dravida sisu* mentioned in the *Saundarya-lahari*; whether the reference is to the author himself or to Tirujnana Sambandha or to some one else less known to posterity. Some claim that in the literature of Sankara's days there is no reference to nose ornaments and that therefore the *Saundaryalahari* must definitely belong to some period later than the 10th century A.D. No conclusive evidence is available; and the only tenable position is there has not yet been shown any intrinsic improbability in Sankara's authorship of the two works. The burden of proof, however, is on him who alleges the authorship; and by way of discharging the onus, he can do nothing more beyond pointing to tradition.

Fortunately for the student of Sankara's philosophy, the commentaries on the principal *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and

the *Vedanta Sutras* form a consistent whole. And the quintessence of the teaching is to be found even in the *bhashya* on the first four *sutras*. A study of the *chatussutribhashya* provides both a compendious and authoritative account of Sankara's position. The following pages will largely draw on this, while not failing to profit by reference to other accredited works.

III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SANKARA

THE GOAL OF ENDEAVOUR

LASTING happiness is the goal of endeavour. We work and play; we create and enjoy the beautiful; we strive to make our own or our neighbour's lot better; we seek to know our surroundings and consolidate our knowledge; we love and mate and usher in fresh generations. In every one of these ways we seek to find or perpetuate happiness, not the reverse of it. It may be that we willingly suffer or cause present unhappiness; that, however, is only because we hold it to be a necessary incident in the acquisition of greater happiness for ourselves or for others. Nor is there any genuine fear that we pursue a will-o'-the-wisp. In different ways and in different degrees we are happy. But that happiness is neithe

universal nor permanent. And our neighbour's unhappiness as well as our own in the past or future casts a gloom even over our present happiness. It is natural for us to endeavour after stainless happiness, one which will not suffer diminution by being shared, one that can extend infinitely outward in space and infinitely forward in time. Is not this search mistaken in spite of being natural? Perhaps it is; but we cannot declare it so without some examination. The belief in an infinite possibility of happiness should, however, be admitted at the root of all our endeavour. If knowledge can never be perfect, why do we constantly seek to extend its dominion? If goodness can never be perfect, why do we continually strive after improving ourselves or others? It is not as though such striving is natural; for laziness is also natural, and that comes easier than striving.

Happiness as the urge of endeavour has, therefore, to be admitted. And to be

truly potent, that urge must be non-finite in character. If our highest achievement even in a distant future is to be but perishable, there is not much of a stimulus to strive after it; for such a goal is only relatively better than what comes our way without endeavour; and to seek the former, we may have to miss the latter; is not a bird in the hand worth two in the bush? If nevertheless we do strive, it must be because we look on the goal as infinitely and absolutely valuable, as that on attaining which we shall have no more desires and disquietudes. Two birds *may be* better than one; but the fowler's satisfaction in catching two can come nowhere near infinitude. He may get more money for two birds; but even if it is twice the amount he would have got for one, the money will not last indefinitely. The very next day if not earlier he will have to start again his profession of bird-catching with all its uncertainties. But all through he is

inspired by a hope that he *will* be happy in a way that knows no diminution or satiety. Coupled with this, of course, is a realisation more or less clear of the comparative triviality of what he has already achieved.

HAPPINESS THE VERY NATURE OF THE SELF

Now, a little analysis will reveal the presupposition of this latter awareness. We are aware of the finitude of our achievements. But how can this be unless we, who judge, are greater than that which we judge? We know we are hedged in by limitations; we live in a limited portion of space and a limited span of time; we cannot do what we will or as we will, but have to submit to causal and other laws with physical, mental or moral consequences; but all the time we realise that we are thus limited; and this realisation would be impossible if we were merely limited. We are not merely finite; were we so, we would not know our

finitude; we are rather, in the words of a Western philosopher, finite-infinite. Or if that appears too blatant a contradiction, we shall say that we are neither finite nor infinite; for mere finitude cannot account for the realisation thereof, while mere infinitude would seem to make no room for our experience that we are in fetters. To put it in other words: the endeavour after lasting happiness presupposes a realisation of the limitednesss of present happiness; and this realisation would be impossible but for our being more than finite.

Let us look for a moment at another aspect of the question. Our experiences come and go; they change in content and quality; we see where we heard; we touch a rope where we seemed to see a snake; we find painful what was pleasant or indifferent; but we, the witnesses, are constant in all this change; we are like the string on which are strung the multi-coloured beads of a necklace. Our nature as subjects

seems to be constant, though the objects vary. Experience is constant, though there is variation in what is experienced or is experienceable. The seeing is common though the sights are different. If then our happiness as achieved is trivial and perishable, is it not likely that is because we have tried to find it in objects rather than in the subject, in the varying rather than in the constant, in the manifold objects of consciousness rather than in consciousness itself, in matter rather than in spirit? For it is matter, the object of consciousness, that is ever changing from form to form; consciousness itself is uniform. And we are the consciousness that apprehends, not one or other or all of the objects apprehended. About the latter there is doubt, as to their nature and their very existence. About consciousness, however, no doubt is possible, for it is the very self of the doubter. Can any one ever ask himself: "Is this I or not I?" If therefore we turn away from objects which are uncertain

and perishing to the self or consciousness that is indubitable and constant, with that we shall have achieved lasting happiness. For consciousness is immutable and imperishable. When we say something has been but has now changed or perished, we refer to a change not in, but for, consciousness in respect of an object. If consciousness could itself perish, that change must be made known or presented to another consciousness; and thus what perished would have been not consciousness, but a particular form of it. Change must be perceived; and though particular forms of awareness may originate and pass away, awareness itself knows neither birth nor death. Nor is it subject to such limitations as those that divide you from me. For, whatever we take to be the divisions or barriers, be it bodily configuration, mental disposition, moral training, physical location, or a host of other things, all these are seen to be objects of consciousness. We are aware of them; they

are not awareness, not ourselves. It is we who calculate space and time and predict events whether in the future or in the past. Those of which we are conscious are not of the stuff of consciousness; much less do they exhaust it. We thus seem to have on one side consciousness which is one, infinite, undivided and, on the other, objects of consciousness, which are multiple, limited, divided and mutable. We are the former, not the latter. If we but realised our nature, we would be absolutely happy, not merely seeking happiness through the acquisition of what is essentially transient.

It is also clear on some further reflection that what we seek cannot be really an acquisition. For what is acquired is something produced. It was not, but now is; and the same logic which permits the non-existent to come into existence would demand that it should become non-existent again. Whatever is produced is, in other words, finite; it is limited by the cause

which preceded it and by other conditions that may impinge on it, in the present or in the future; and the finite is perishable. Not as a produced effect, therefore, can we find the happiness that is our goal. It should be infinite and therefore eternal. It cannot be a non-existent that has to be brought into existence. It should be already real, though, perhaps, not realised. Our endeavour should then be directed not to produce happiness but to make manifest what is already real, like the discovery of a gold ornament which one wears around one's own neck, but, in forgetfulness, is looking for high and low. Such happiness cannot be anything other than our own nature as consciousness, pure, homogeneous and untrammelled.

THE SELF AS AWARENESS

The self is thus one, pure and unfettered. It is pure awareness. Of its reality, as we have said, there can be no doubts. Whatever appears to divide it is of a nature contrary to that, not consciousness, but the

object thereof. And the self is happiness. For just as an object is desired for the happiness it will bring, and not merely because it is an object, so too, everything in the world is dear not for its own sake, but for the sake of the self. Husband or wife, parent or child, wealth or power, not one of these is desired for its own sake; for as objects they are sometimes dear, and sometimes the contrary; for the sake of the self in them, however, they are all dear. The self, as thus the supreme object of love, cannot be other than happiness, as the supreme goal of endeavour. It is the infinite plenitude, the *bhuman*; as compared with it, all else, that is to say, the not-self is petty and trivial. The contrast between the two is as great as that between light and darkness. And no confusion between the two should be possible.

SUPERIMPOSITION

Yet a persistent confusion is a fact of every-day experience. Not merely the

body that we are aware of but the very sense-organs through which we know and the mind which knows through the senses, all these are part of the not-I; for we know that the senses exist and function, and that their functioning is for a mind which is known to utilise them; all these are objects of consciousness, not consciousness; they are part of the not-self, in much the same way as any piece of external matter. Their identification with the self should not be possible; but it is actual all the same. When the body is well or ill, one says: "I am well or ill." When the body lacks a sense of sight or hearing, one says: "I am blind or deaf"; when the mind is distracted one says: "I am distracted." The self is identified with the not-self; what can never be an object of consciousness and spoken of as "this" is treated as though it were such an object; there is a confusion of identity between the self and the not-self and a consequent confusion of characteristics;

there is an intermingling, a tying-up, as it were, of the "not-this" and the "this", of the self and the not-self. This erroneous identification, otherwise called the reciprocal superimposition of the identities and characteristics of the self and the not-self, is the cause of all our woe. Consciousness which is unlimited freedom and happiness appears as if bound and subject to misery. Hence this bondage and transmigration, which in Hindu philosophy is called *samsara*.

This superimposition or confusion is beginningless, but not endless. If we postulated a beginning, it would be unintelligible. For any present error presupposes as one of its causes a trace of past experience. We could not see a snake in the rope if we had no previous experience of a snake to serve as the basis of the present recollection. Now, if consciousness is infinite and unlimited, it must be the only real; the not-self which is an object of consciousness can be no more real than the snake seen in the rope. Since,

however, the not-self *is* experienced, there must be postulated, for the explanation of present experience, a prior experience of the not-self and a memory-impression thereof. Though the body is not real, the awareness of it has to be explained; and the explanation calls for a previous awareness of the body and a residual trace of that experience to serve for recall now. Since in that prior experience too, the body, the object of consciousness, has no greater claim to reality, we have to assume a still earlier experience with a memory-trace; and so *ad infinitum*. Thus we are forced to the conclusion that no absolute beginning may be assumed for this confusion or the *samsara* that is its consequence. Further, the self is pure and unlimited even by time, while the not-self is limited in every way. To say that superimposition has a beginning in time would be to say that the timeless is related in time to the temporal, or, in other words, that time has a beginning in time. But this is absurd.

Because of this superimposition, the timeless appears as limited in time, the perfect appears as imperfect, the one appears as many, the homogeneous appears as heterogeneous, bliss appears diversified as alternating pleasure and pain; or in a word, the self appears as the not-self. The effect, however we describe it, is something positive; evil, error, diversity are facts of immediate experience. Their reality may be denied, but not their existence or manifestation. They must, therefore, be based in the last resort on the one reality that is also consciousness and bliss. If this reality were not the substrate, evil would be wholly un-real and not experienceable at all. Hence superimposition is of a peculiar nature, not exclusively determinable either as real or as unreal. If it were wholly real, we could never hope to get over it; for the absolutely real is the absolutely permanent. If it were wholly unreal, we could never be aware of it, to say nothing of overcoming

it; for there is nothing to know or overcome. Hence it is that bondage and evil are said to be indeterminable as real or unreal, to be *anirvacya*, whether as *sat* or as *asat*. And the cause of this bondage, if we look for any, other than the reality that is the substrate, must share the indeterminable character of the effect.

We have already seen that the happiness attained on release from bondage cannot be a product, a novel acquisition, since that, like all other products, would be impermanent. It is a manifestation rather of what is already real, a making known, not a bringing into being. The process of release or the acquisition of happiness would thus seem to be more one of knowing than of earning. Release is knowledge; and *per contra*, bondage, its opposite, must be non-knowledge, nescience, *avidya*, functioning first by veiling or suppressing (*avarana*) our real nature, and then projecting (*vikshepa* what is not real. Hence it is that

Advaita speaks of the world as the product of nescience (*avidya*), by which is meant a positive entity removable by knowledge, just as physical darkness is removed by physical light. The cause of this limited, diversified world that appears to our awareness, the cause of the phenomenal world in short is an entity other than consciousness; since it is removable by knowledge it is called nescience (*avidya*); since like its effect, the world, it is not determinable as *sat* or *asat*, it is called *maya*. He who seeks the highest human goal, *viz.*, lasting happiness or release, has to get rid of this *maya* by the cultivation of knowledge which is its sole foe.

THE REAL AS EXPERIENCE

It is necessary to be clear as to what it is of which we are certain. Other philosophers besides the advaitin have claimed to reach certitude about the doubter, though the whole of the external

world may be subject to doubt, because of inconstancy and delusiveness. The object may be uncertain, they say, but never the subject; the doubter cannot be doubted away. To such a position it is objected legitimately enough that our experience is a whole in which three facets may be distinguished: the experiencer (or experient), the experienced (object) and the experiencing (process). If in this whole, we seek to do away with the reality of one or other facet, the reality of the other facet or facets will not stand bare and unaffected. Subject and object are correlative. If the status of the object is in question, that of the subject will also be affected in some if not in the same measure. When Sankara stresses the indubitable certitude of the self, he means not an experient or subject, but experience itself. There may or may not be a doubter, but the doubt itself is undoubtedly there, as experience. The object we see depends on awareness for

its manifestation; the subject may depend on the object and a manifesting process; but experience itself, as the whole wherein we later distinguish these three, does not depend on anything else for manifestation. Experience, in other words, is self-manifest, *svayamprakasa*. It is this self-luminous nature which constitutes reality. Negatively we define the real as that which is unsublated, not nullified and transcended in a subsequent experience, as the experience of the snake is transcended in the subsequent awareness of the rope as rope. This non-sublation is due to the real not being dependent on any other for its manifestation; the rope is perceived as snake, because it has to depend on physical light, a sense-organ and a mind for its manifestation; and a defect in any of these leads to an erroneous apprehension thereof, sublated subsequently when the defect is remedied. The real being self-manifest is not subject to such vicissitudes.

TRUTH, BEAUTY AND GOODNESS

In respect of its texture the real is experience, the experience that is Truth, Beauty and Goodness. But we have to exercise caution in the understanding of these terms, which we generally apply to the relational. We predicate truth of a relation between subject and predicate; we judge of the goodness of an act in relation to an ideal. If the real is one and homogeneous, such distinctions as subject and predicate, act and ideal, will not as such be there; and the values of truth and goodness will be characteristic, not of reality, but of something less. In the language of the advaitin, they would relate not to the Absolute or *Nirguna Brahman*, but to *Isvara* or *Saguna Brahman*. The advaitin does, however, say that Brahman is reality (*sat*), knowledge (*cit*) and bliss (*ananda*). What he means is not the assertion of these as qualities of Brahman, but the understanding of these as constituent of it. That is to say, Brahman *is*

reality, not the possessor thereof, knowledge, not the knower, and bliss, not the blissful. Though Brahman is one, its constitution is described in a threefold way, because the defects of our world may be roughly grouped under three heads, *viz.*, falsehood, inertness (non-manifestation) and misery; and each of these is meant to be excluded by one element of the threefold description of Brahman. Our finite experience is inconstant and deceitful; sometimes what we seek exists already but is of no value to us as there is no awareness of it; and because of these defects, and sometimes in spite of their absence, but because of finitude, there is misery. The real is beyond all these defects. It is permanent reality, constant manifestation, the plenitude of bliss.

UNINTELLIGIBILITY OF RELATIONS

For yet another reason we should not take truth, etc., to be *characteristics* of the real. That would mean a relation, as of subject and attribute, between reality and

its predicates. But no relation can be intelligible or in the last resort real. Let us take this very relation of subject and attribute. We have a subject, say "roses" on one side and an attribute, say "redness" on the other; between the two there is a relation. The subject must obviously be different from the attribute; else there is no need for a relation; I do not think or speak of myself as related to myself. That being so, what is the nature of relation itself? Is it different from the subject or not different? Suppose it is not; then it will be identical with the subject; instead of three elements, subject, attribute and relation, we have only two left—subject and attribute; and the relation which has merged in the subject would seem to have done nothing to link subject and attribute together. Suppose, however, the relation *is* different from the subject. Now just as the attribute which is different from the subject requires a relation to link it up, would not relation

too require a link between itself and the subject? If you say no, why should the attribute alone stand in need of a relation? If you admit the need for a fresh link, you begin at once an infinite regress. For that link would require another link and so *ad infinitum*. And the problem repeats itself when we look at the bearing of the relation not merely on the subject, but on the attribute as well. One concludes therefore that relations, which are so self-contradictory, are not real. Though characteristic of finite experience, they do not apply to Infinite Experience, *i.e.*, *Brahman*. This applies to all relations whatsoever, whether merely conjunctives, like that between a thing and its locality, or organic, like that between a substance and attribute or cause and effect. We shall have occasion to revert to this latter relation lower down.

THE NATURE OF DELUSION

Relations then are delusive. "How does it help," we may be asked, "to be told

that they are delusive? The delusion itself calls for explanation". To this the advaitin attempts an answer by explaining the nature of delusion. It is a case of something appearing as other than what it is; the shell appears as if silver; the one moon appears as if two; the real appears as if relational. Philosophers both in the East and in the West have offered divergent analyses of error; but they all agree in this, that it is a case of something appearing as if of a different nature. Some say it is a case of what is internal, a state of awareness, appearing as if it were an external object; others say that it is a case of a present object (say, mother-of-pearl) being cognised as possessing the characteristics of an object present not here, but elsewhere (silver in the shop); yet others say that in such cases we have two awarenesses: a perception (of the 'this') and a memory (of 'silver'), each of which is correct as such, though because of a failure to

distinguish between the two, we make the practical mistake of putting forth our hand towards the perceived "this" (a piece of shell) as though it were itself the remembered ("silver"). Analysis will show that these and all other such theories are inadequate. In the last resort, the erroneous is inexplicable, for all that it is a fact. For, if it did not exist here and now, it would not be perceived; but if it really existed here and now, it would not be erroneous. The silver in the shop cannot be perceived here; and a merely remembered silver cannot prompt me now to put forth my hand; the silver *is* out there, now; else I could not see it or reach for it; but it is not real, else I would successfully grasp it and utilise it, without any subsequent contradiction or sublation. The content of error, what is known delusively, is thus *anirvacaniya*, not determinable as solely real or as solely unreal.

What about error itself, as distinct from its content? Why should there

be error at all? We can give no answer, except ascribe it to *maya*; and that is to explain one inexplicable in terms of another. There is, however, this advantage, that for our errors which are *innumerable* we have provided an underlying *unitary* principle, in the shape of *maya*. The fundamental inability to explain is bound to continue. For, to explain is to relate, either to what goes before or to what is to come after; in the former case, we have an explanation '*how*', and in the latter an explanation '*why*'; but in either case, we have only a relation; and relations, we have seen, are not real. Whatever explanation we may attempt of error, none can ultimately satisfy. Of error we can only say that it exists; but in the very awareness of its existence, we pass beyond it to the real that is above relations. If we had not this knowledge, we could not be aware of error as error; but if we had that knowledge solely and fully, we would make

no error at all. We have a dim and imperfect apprehension of Brahman; to clarify and consolidate it is the task of any *moksha-sastra*, any revelation or subsidiary discipline, whose object is release.

ELIGIBILITY FOR BRAHMAN-INQUIRY

Such knowledge is to be sought through that inquiry into Brahman, which is called Vedanta-study. One would naturally expect as a preliminary the learning (*adhyayana*) of the Vedas, inclusive of the Vedanta texts. Though this was barred by tradition to some classes of people, these were nevertheless held eligible for the inquiry into the ultimate real. The pursuit of the philosophic quest depends on the attractiveness of the subject matter; given the existence of attraction, the closing of one channel will only lead to taking up other channels of pursuit, not the abandonment of the pursuit altogether. Besides the *agamas* which are declared open

to all castes and both sexes, there are also the *itihasas* and *puranas* whose object is to expand, expound and popularise the teachings of the sacred scriptures. Every one is at liberty to read these; and if the student has a critical mind he will understand Brahman to be what is taught even in such works. And such Brahman-knowledge will result in release. What philosophy requires above all is a discrimination of true values from false and an unremitting pursuit of the true; these will not normally be possible for those who are preoccupied with acquisition and conservation, getting and saving, *yoga* and *kshema*; this, however, is a passing phase of all beings, whether men or women; for, does not the Upanishad itself say of Katyayani, the elder wife of Yajnavalkya, that "at that time (*tarhi*)" she had only a woman's wit?

Further, this formal study (*adhyayana*) is a preliminary to the inquiry into *dharma* too, the investigation of the nature and

details of ritualistic acts, the inquiry known as *karma-mimamsa* or *dharma-jijnasa*; hence, it cannot be the distinctive preliminary to Brahman inquiry. The suggestion is made and sustained by many that the inquiry into ritual should precede the inquiry into the self. One of their grounds is a textual tradition that the whole of the *mimamsa* in twenty chapters is a single *sastra*, of which the first sixteen are concerned with ritual and the rest with Brahman. Besides conflicting with the traditional ascription of the two sets of sutras to different authors (the aphorisms about dharma to Jaimini and the others to Badarayana), there is also the difficulty pointed out and insisted on by Sankara, that between karma and Brahman there is not such organic unity as to call for the recognition of a single science pertaining to both. Ritualistic knowledge relates to what is to come into being, an act to be done, with a result still further in the future; and the knowledge does not obligate the act,

which may be done, not done or done differently. Brahman-knowledge is of what is eternally; it is objective and necessary, not subject to option at the will of the knower or any other. Whence then the propriety of linking the two together in a single body of teaching?

Has Brahman-inquiry then no preliminaries? It certainly presupposes a desire, one not on a par with worldly desires; for these latter are content with the fleeting and the perishable, the temporary results of transient activities, while the former is a desire to realise lasting happiness. The discrimination of the eternal from the non-eternal is thus the first requisite. This does not of course mean a knowledge of the eternal or Brahman, in other words, since then no further inquiry would be needed; but there should be present the discrimination of eternality as somehow real but not realised in the finite world. Then commences a search for this reality; if the inquirer should be

distracted by desire for the enjoyment of fruit whether in this world or in a next, there would be a strong tendency to stop short of the ultimate goal of the inquiry, and rest content with the idols of magic or science or uninformed religion; the powers that we can command or understand or implore for beneficent results, would appear absolutely supreme, instead of revealing their nature as appearances. But none of these can be real as such, since none is self-luminous, all being objects of awareness, liable to be surpassed in proportion to the expansion of our apprehension. Desire for enjoyment blinds us to their finitude and leads to their acceptance at face value until there is an awakening, more or less rude. Non-attachment to fruit, *vairagya*, is therefore another essential preliminary. But desire is difficult to remove so long as there is lack of discipline. If the external senses ever reach out, or if the mind wanders, if the body is easily affected by variations of

heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and such other correlative pairs of opposites (*dvandvas*), if there is neither quiescence nor contentment nor forbearance, desire for fruit is bound to be present, whether for our own gain or loss to an adversary; we may long for air-conditioning, the bliss of a hill station, the charms of radio and television, the powers of the yogin and the magician, the ability to vanquish opposition by physical means or by spells, the capacity for infinite enjoyment of the pleasures of life at least in a heavenly life and so on. Proper discipline resulting in the control of the body and the senses is therefore the pre-requisite for non-attachment. Added to these three, discrimination, non-attachment and discipline, there should be the desire for lasting happiness or release; that is called *mumukshutva*. Many a man longs for release from the body, vaguely hoping that death will solve all his problems; he is a *mumurshu*, not a *mumukshu*. The latter knows what he wants, not the former; to the *mumukshu*

death is neither a terror nor a mystery; to the other it is both. The longing for release is due to the conviction that all produced enjoyments are finite, even those of a future life; the longing for death is due merely to the experiences of the finitude of present enjoyments, without any realisation of the principle of finitude, *viz.*, their being produced, instead of being natural and eternal. This principle of finitude is given expression to even in the scriptures which one is expected to have studied before entering on the performance of religious duty. Scripture itself says that just as the enjoyments produced by acts in this world perish, even so perish the enjoyments procured in another world through religious merit. Thus are to be understood the words "Then therefore" of the first aphorism of the *Vedanta Sutras*, as laying down the preliminaries for Vedanta study.

NEED FOR RENUNCIATION

It will be seen from the discipline insisted on that renunciation (*sannyasa*) is

indispensable for the serious student of the Vedanta. The inquiry should be prosecuted with singleness of purpose and without paying heed to numerous distractions on the way. How can that be possible for one caught up in the whirl of numerous duties and obligations to the family, to the fathers, to the gods? The non-neglect of these is certainly enjoined; but as certainly it is not for him who seeks beatitude instead of worldly welfare; and the postponement of enjoyment to another world does not of itself avail to *exalt* that enjoyment or its instrument. Further, the seeker of release seeks the eternal and the infinite; the round of duties, however, presupposes an agent, an actor working here and now, identifying himself with and thereby actuating bodies and other finite instruments. How could such pursuit serve the realisation of the infinite? Will it not tend rather to keep him immured in the round of finite causes and consequences, act and fruit, however wearisome it may

be felt to be? Renunciation, therefore, is a supreme need, even for the seeker of knowledge. That he who has attained knowledge will be a *sannyasin* goes without saying; for with knowledge ceases the delusion of being finite, an agent in relation to deed and fruit; how then can he be a fulfiller of obligations? Is such knowledge possible in this life? If so, will the knower not be an actor at all? To these questions we shall refer later in considering the nature of release.

VALUE OF PRESCRIPTIONS AND PROHIBITIONS

The sastra-made prescriptions and prohibitions, have they then no value for self-knowledge? They do have value: As we are, we feel ourselves finite; though we are knowledge, we have yet to know through instruments, the mind and the senses. And the purer the instruments, the purer will be the resultant knowledge. The injunctions, positive and negative, laid down by the sastras have the object of

making the mind pure and clear. The exercise in a continual round of duties has the effect of freeing the mind from attachment and aversion, so that it becomes fit for the ultimate intuitive knowledge of the oneness of Brahman and the inner self of the inquirer.

And similar to the injunctions to perform or refrain there are also injunctions in the Vedanta, to study the self, to reflect on the teaching and to meditate on it profoundly. These of course apply if at all only to the inquirer, not to him who is content with the goods of this world or the next. But even in relation to the inquirer, they are not injunctions proper; for it is the nature of a *sastraic* injunction to make known what was not or could not be otherwise known; the inquirer has already started to learn about the self; hence the injunction to study the self does not establish what was not already established; it is also well known from ordinary experience that reflection and contemplation

result in clarifying and consolidating a piece of knowledge; hence there is not an injunction, properly speaking, even in respect of reflection and contemplation. The scriptures do, however, use language suggestive of prescriptions. These apparent prescriptions have one effect; where a man is primarily an extrovert, seeking and finding pleasure in the external, such injunctions dam the natural flow of his activity and turn it inward, causing him to seek the inner self; the extrovert is changed into the introvert.

PURPORT OF THE VEDANTA

The Vedanta, which is to be studied for the sake of self-knowledge teaches that the inner self of the inquirer is not other than Brahman, the sole reality, consciousness, bliss. We are repeatedly told that this reality was in the beginning undifferentiated by name and form, that all the diverse phenomena of this world are one with this reality, as pot, jug, basin, etc. are one with clay, name and form

alone being different, that this reality is the Brahman-self and that the Brahman-self is but the self of the inquirer. Just as when iron or gold is known, all that is made of iron or gold is also known, whether nail-scissors or garden shears, bangles or anklets, even so is the entire world known when Brahman is known. Such knowledge is not as of an object; for Brahman is the subject too; "that thou art" says scripture; and the knowledge also is Brahman. It is the knowledge whose attainment is the supreme human goal; it is the knowledge whence words and the mind turn back unable to encompass; it is the knowledge which rises above all the petty intellectual disciplines of our lives, the sciences, arts and even philosophy; it is the knowledge on the attainment of which one seeks nothing else, hears nothing else, is aware of nothing else; it is that plenum of bliss beside which there is nothing to compare, infinitely trivial as is all else; it is that

eternal beatitude, on the realisation of which, one no longer worries "Have I done aught that is sinful? or neglected aught that is good?" In that experience of oneness there is no more delusion, no more grief.

GOD IN ADVAITA

Is this the God of religion? The scriptures speak of a God who created this world, who maintains it and will destroy it periodically, to re-create it periodically. This same God is also the author of the sacred scriptures, the store of such knowledge as veritably lays claim to omniscience. A being that created the scriptures and the world with its extreme diversity and organisation cannot but be omniscient and omnipotent. And this conclusion of reason is reinforced by scripture which speaks of a supremely intelligent and powerful creator. Even though according to Advaita *maya* is the cause of the world, it is only the material cause, as clay is of pot; an efficient,

controlling, cause is needed for the world, as a potter is needed for the pot. What is merely non-consciousness like *maya* or the *pradhana* of the Sankhya philosophers cannot of itself give rise to orderly evolution; it requires a guiding spirit; and this is *Isvara*. Of course, mere reasoning may suggest a plurality of creators working in co-operation, whether simultaneously or in succession; houses are built by many agents; and factories work in shifts. But such arguments do not bother us since we take our stand on scripture which teaches a single creator, sustainer and destroyer.

In his world-operations *Isvara* does not act from any motive, selfish or altruistic. His activities are merely sportive, the overflow of His nature, caused with little or no effort, like normal respiration. He is the wielder of *maya*. But *maya* is nothing different from Him, being but His own potency or energy. That is why there is a three-fold definition of *Isvara* as creator, sustainer and destroyer; any one of these

functions individually may be exercised by the material cause alone or the efficient cause alone; the exercise of all three is, however, possible only for what is both efficient and material cause. And the declarations elsewhere that *maya* is the material cause do not conflict with this position; for *maya* is energy while *Isvara* is the *energiser*; and between energy and energiser there is non-difference. Those who have squarely faced the puzzle whether there is any substance other than its qualities, whether being the possessor of qualities is not itself a quality, and so on, will be ready to admit the non-difference of a potency (*sakti*) from the potent (*saktimat*); others may require a little reflection along the lines just indicated. And the history of the notion of "substance" in Locke, Berkeley and Hume may throw some light in this connection.

But what is the place of *Isvara* in the advaitin's scheme of the universe? Reality

is one, according to him, and non-different from his own inner self. Isvara, however, is neither man (*jiva*) nor Brahman. While Isvara is claimed to create the whole world, man creates, if at all, only very small parts of it; and while Isvara functions as agent of creation, destruction, etc., Brahman cannot be agent at all; for how can the infinite be an agent, to what purpose, with what instruments? Some say that while man is a reflection of Brahman in bits of *maya* or in products of *maya* or in impure *maya*, Isvara is a reflection in *maya* as a whole or in pure *maya*. Others say that while Brahman is neither reflection nor the prototype thereof, this relation of prototype and reflection somehow comes to be established therein, *Isvara* being one end, the prototype, of this relation, and man the other end, the reflection; the reflecting medium is *avidya* or *maya*, of which there are many, one for each (apparently) finite individual. Yet others hold that while Brahman is an

infinite expanse, like space, man is an apparently finite part of it; we speak of space as contained, for instance, in a pot; but when the pot is moved from room to room, the pot alone is moved, not space, this being infinite and incapable of being moved. While man, however is apparently under the dominance of *avidya* which limits him, *Isvara* dominates the *avidya* that seeks to limit Him. Whichever may be the view we adopt, *Isvara* comes in as a third entity between ourselves and the Brahman from which, we were told, we are non-different. Do the scriptures really demand such an *Isvara*? If so, what becomes of the claim that the non-dual Brahman is their purport?

There is no doubt that scriptural texts speak of both [the non-dual *Brahman* and *Isvara*, the creator. Since both references cannot be taken at their face-value without convicting scripture of contradiction, it is said that the real purport is in respect of the non-dual *Brahman*, while *Isvara* is the

intermediate purport; the teaching about the latter is intended to subserve that about the former. This position is arrived at along many lines of argument. Plurality is a fact of experience; and the explanation of it in terms of cause and effect is familiar to us even without recourse to scripture. Revelation can claim authority neither in respect of the already experienced nor in respect of what contradicts experience; perception tells us that fire is hot and in respect of that a scriptural text can be only repetitive, not authoritative; and if any text says that fire is cold or that stones float, that is false; the statement has to be justified on some ground other than truth-value, e.g., that it is hyperbolical praise of the stones used to press the *soma* juice; the purport in such a case is the excellence of the stones, not their floating capacity. Since then the causal explanation is what we are already familiar with, we need not resort to revelation for an *Isvara*. It has been said that perception and inference

cannot give us a single, omnipotent, omniscient cause of this entire variegated universe. Not even on this ground can scripture have *Isvara* for its purport; for the notion of cause is itself in the last resort unintelligible and the unintelligible cannot be the purport of sound revelation.

ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSAL CONCEPT

We have already seen that the notion of "relation" does not make sense, since it is either identified with one or both of the terms to be related, or it falls outside of them, calling for a fresh relation; in either case, it fails of its obvious and only purpose, relating. The causal relation, being but a variety of relation, is subject to the same defect. It has also some special defects of its own. When an effect is produced from a cause, say oil from coconut, is the effect already present or not? Either way there are difficulties. We naturally say that it did not exist before the production, which brought it into existence. Now let us look at the process.

a little closely. Coconut was; it ceased to exist; oil was not, and it has come to exist; the immediate antecedent of oil is the non-existence of oil or non-existence of coconut. Now, while entities may be differentiated by their properties, non-entities cannot obviously be so differentiated; there is no difference between the non-existence of cocount and the non-existence of sand, since both are non-entities; why then does not oil result when sand has ceased to be, instead of when coconut has ceased to be? Again when coconut has ceased to be, not through being passed into an oil-expresser, but through being buried in the ground or in some other way, why is not oil produced? If, in other words, non-existence intervenes between cause and effect, why do we seek particular causes for particular effects? All this suggests that the effect is already present in the cause, but as latent; it is not yet manifest; for, if it were manifest too, no causal activity could be required. Though

this position is on the face of it more satisfactory, it does not take us far, since the question raised as to the effect has now to be raised as to "manifestation". "Being made manifest or patent," this too is a product; otherwise it would be eternal and every effect would be always manifest. Now, does manifestation exist before it is itself made manifest? That is absurd, asking us to swallow the combination of manifestation and non-manifestation at the same time. If, on the contrary, it does not exist, we have at least one instance of an effect, not pre-existent in the cause. Why then should not other effects have the same character? The effect thus can neither pre-exist in the cause, nor be non-existent therein. This paradox should make us realise that the causal notion is inadequate for the apprehension of reality.*

* For a fuller analysis of the causal concept from the standpoint of Advaita as well as that of modern science, see the author's "Advaita, Causality and Human Freedom".—*Indian Historical Quarterly*, XVI, 113–151.

Nevertheless it is a convenient and a common notion, intended to explain change by exhibiting an underlying identity. The search for identity is ingrained in us; we look for it in one form or another. Even in respect of the universe as a whole, those who do not admit God, seek an explanation in the fortuitous concourse of primal atoms or in the spontaneous evolution of nature and so on. Such explanations err even more than the postulation of a God, since they are remote from the recognition of Spirit or Consciousness or *Caitanya*. The notion of Spirit as a cause is a poor thing; it is not finally acceptable; but it is certainly more intelligible than the rejection or ignoring of Spirit, since that is to ignore Intelligence itself. From Spirit as cause, we may pass to Spirit that is neither cause nor effect, the reality, of which cause and effect are partial appearances. Reality is not less but more than God; not by eschewing God, but by realising

and transcending Him, can we realise the Self; for, the world is God-dependent; and to ignore God may well lead to the world asserting itself as if independent, and weighing us down, as in *samsara*; release requires therefore the realisation first of the dependence of the world on God, and then of God being an appearance of Brahman. Not all can comprehend the absolute that is above relations and uncharacterisable as this or that (*nirguna* or *nirvisesha*); at least for their sake there has to be a preliminary teaching of *Isvara*, a Being characterisable as the creator, etc., of the universe. Further, we cannot make a sensible denial except of that which has been or may be affirmed; we do not say that "virtue is not a square" since there is no possibility of a confusion between virtue and a square. Now, the doctrine that *Brahman* is the sole real involves the denial of reality (not existence) to the world; and this presupposes the affirmation, actual or

possible, of the world's reality. Where can the world be real, if at all, except in *Brahman*, since, according to the advaitin, *Brahman* is all that is? Therefore, even to deny the reality of the world, we have to postulate a relative reality for it, that is to say, a relation to *Brahman*. While *Brahman* that transcends the universe is called *nirguna* or *nishprapancha*, that which is related to the world as its cause is called *saguna* or *saprapancha* or *Isvara*. The introduction of the teaching of creation is thus not an irrelevance; it is a step in the advance to Advaita realisation.

From this point of view, one is loth to reject many of the works ascribed to Sankara, though one is equally unwilling to accept as his all the works fathered on him. Those who are interested in the Tantras and Mother-worship, which hold ultimately to Advaita, will find no little significance in works like the *Prapancha-sara*, the *Saundaryalahari*, the commentary on the *Lalitatrisati* and so on. And the

followers of Sankara, the philosopher, have also owned religious allegiance not merely to *Isvara* but even to special forms like *Siva* or *Vishnu* and tried to make out that Sankara himself had a partiality for one form or another. One of the most successful attempts in this direction is perhaps that of Appayya Dikshita in the *Sivadvaitanirnaya*; for in making out Sankara's Saiva leanings, the author relies there not on minor apocryphal hymns, but on the *Sutrabhashya* itself.

An ancient maxim has it that what one intensely contemplates, that one becomes. The teaching about *Isvara* will lead to the contemplation of *Isvara*, a God wielding power for the sake of the world. Will this not fall short of the advaitin's ideal of Brahman-realisation? Perhaps, yes; but we do not avoid the conclusion, since, in technical language, it is a contingence of the acceptable. From our unrealised point of view, we have three entities, God, the material world and ourselves. In the

realisation of unity it will be something achieved if at least three is reduced to two, by our becoming *Isvara*. Further what limits *Isvara* is *maya*, or *avidya* (nescience), as it is variously called; nescience, we have already said, is a bond to us, not to God who wields it; we view Him as limited by it; He does not feel it as a limitation; indeed, if there were not men like us, apparently finite selves or *jivas* in bondage to nescience, God would not be aware of nescience at all; for only as binding us does nescience exist. Now, supposing that all of us become *Isvara* there will be none in bondage and nescience in entirety would have ceased to be or bind or limit even *Isvara*; then there would be no difference between *Brahman* and *Isvara*. But so long as there is even one *jiva* in bondage, *Isvara* will be aware of that nescience and so far forth limited by it; and as the supremely merciful ruler of the world, He will direct

Himself to help the *jiva* get rid of his fetters. Is this not a reasonable view to hold, that so long as there is even one unreleased *jiva*, the released shall not disport in a private heaven, but, in the realisation of themselves as *Isvara*, exert themselves for the redemption of the yet unreleased? Hence it is that later advaitins, like Appayya Dikshita, explicitly maintain that until the final release of all *jivas*, release for any one consists only in becoming *Isvara*; and as that author shows with not a little success, the germs of the view are to be found in Sankara's own teaching. Even for those who contemplate *Saguna Brahman* there is no return to this world of bondage and travail. And *Saguna Brahman* or *Isvara* is neither an irrelevance nor a concession to the mob; the worst that may be said of it is that it is a concession to ignorance or *avidya*; as we are, we are in *avidya*, bound by it; we can be free not by ignoring *avidya* (as that will be only a

variety of self-delusion), but by rising above it and controlling it so that it is no longer a fetter, mastering it instead of being mastered by it, realising it to be one's own potency or *sakti*, not something external; when this realisation comes, one becomes *Isvara* and the stage is set for final release as the realisation of pure consciousness, *Nirguna Brahman*. The highest knowledge that is the Vedanta can therefore be interpreted harmoniously as teaching both the *Saguna* and the *Nirguna*, the realisation of the former being both an inevitable step in the realisation of the latter and also in itself release from bondage (*samsara*) though not from nescience (*avidya*). It is true that Sankara has interpreted some Vedanta Sutras as teaching the *Nirguna* and others as teaching the *Saguna*; but, as Appayya says, his view would appear to have been that the whole body of Vedanta doctrine was susceptible of this dual interpretation. And of this, Sankara has given an indication, on the principle

of a single rice being tested to find if the pot of rice is cooked, in his two-fold commentary on the third aphorism (*sutra*).

GOD AS REVEALING THE VEDA

The said aphorism can be understood in two ways. One teaches *Isvara's* omniscience, on the ground of his being the author of the sacred scriptures (*sastras*). The *sastras* are the ocean of all knowledge; and judging from our experience, the author of a science should know more than what is contained in that science; hence *Isvara* must know more than what is contained in the *sastras*, i.e., he should be omniscient. There are some who say that the Vedas are uncreated. But our authority in such matters is scripture itself; and that declares in no uncertain terms the breathing forth, as it were, of the Vedas by the Supreme Being. All that we are concerned to preserve is the impersonality of the Vedas, not their non-origination. And we know that even statements made by ordinary human beings can be impersonal, when

they speak dispassionately and with a strict regard for fact. *Isvara* has no passions to affect Him, all His desires being ever fulfilled; and there is no limitation to His knowledge; what then can be the limitation to the dispassionateness or objectivity of His utterance? And the Vedas are objective in the sense that in revealing them, *Isvara* pays heed to their verbal structure in a previous aeon (*kalpa*) and reproduces them in exactly that form. Of course, if we were trying to *argue* to *Isvara's* omniscience from his authorship of the Vedas, we would be reasoning in a circle; for that authorship is itself known from the Veda and might not deserve credence except on the ground of the author being omniscient. We do not, however, depend on bare reasoning; we rely rather on reasoning to substantiate the revealed truth. And this is the only legitimate procedure in all quest of final truth. Reasoning can make connections and *test* truth, but never *establish* it; for it suffers from a

two-fold defect. The basis of an inference is not itself given by an inference ultimately; we may argue that if A is B, C is D, that A is B and therefore C is D; but how do we know that A is B? Possibly by another inference based on X being Y; but how do we know that X is Y? Either we set out on an infinite regress or we must come to rest on some basis other than inference. And this is re-inforced by a further consideration; in inference we accept the consistent and avoid the contradictory; reasoning proceeds on the axiom that truth cannot be self-contradictory; but how is this axiom established? Not by reasoning, since it is the presupposition of reasoning itself. Secondly, no mere argumentation can give final satisfaction: for cleverness in argument admits of degrees; and the accepted truth of to-day will become the exploded fiction of to-morrow, when a more able reasoner appears on the field; this is what is happening in the development of the

sciences. Philosophy is the quest of final truth and cannot be at the mercy of clever people. We have to rest not on the provable, but on the basis of proof, the self-evident. The Vedic utterances are the expressions of such self-evident truth; they are the expressions of dispassionate seers wedded to truth; and the whole body of doctrine is revealed by an omniscient *Isvara*. Hence our faith in scripture.

BRAHMAN AS REVEALED BY THE VEDA

The same *sutra* (I, i, 3) is given an alternative interpretation. Brahman is established, it is said, on the basis of scripture (the *sastra*), not on the basis of inference. There are systems (*darsana*) other than the Vedanta, *e.g.*, the Nyaya-vaiseshika and the Yoga, which believe in an omniscient God, but seek to establish this by inference. And since the second aphorism of the *Vedanta Sutras* refers to the creation, etc. of the world, one may imagine that the Vedantin too intends to establish by inference an author of the creation, etc. This, however,

is incorrect; for, in the first place, inference is defective; from known analogues such as pot and potter, or house and builders, we may infer a creator with limited knowledge, or a multitude of co-operative creators, not a single, omniscient, omnipotent creator. Even if inference could somehow take us to *Isvara*, it would just leave us there, while the Vedantin's faith in creation and the creator is only as a channel to the realisation of the ever-existent and uncreated. It is because the *Nirguna Brahman* is ever at the back of the Vedantin's mind that he very definitely rejects inference and upholds the *sastra* as the only source of valid knowledge of the truth, the non-difference of Brahman from the self. The two-fold interpretation is given of this *sutra*, not because Sankara was in two minds about it, but so that it may serve as an indication of the two-fold aspect of the entire Vedanta teaching, what one may call the trans-phenomenal and the near-phenomenal (the *nishprapancha* and the *saprapancha*).

CAPACITY OF LANGUAGE TO REVEAL THE NIRGUNA

The Vedantin does not have an easy task in establishing Brahman on the authority of scripture. He has to encounter difficulties, one common to all Vedantins and the other peculiar to the advaitin. Revelation is in language and language relates primarily to action and what is accomplishable thereby. If we look at the process of learning a language, we find that the learner sees a set of acts consequent on the hearing of one set of words, say, "bring the cow", another set of acts consequent on other words, *e.g.*, "tie up the cow", a third set of acts consequent on yet another verbal grouping, *e.g.*, "bring the horse" and so on; by putting the words and acts together, through a suitable process of addition and subtraction, he comes to know the meaning of "cow", "horse", etc. Though some words denote entities, *e.g.*, "horse" and "cow", their significance has to be

known only through their subservience to some act or other. It is intelligible that the words of the Veda signify certain courses of conduct and their results, *e.g.*, sacrifices, heavenly enjoyments, etc. But Brahman is not an act; nor is it the goal of an act, since it is eternally existent. How then can it be made known by language, even if it be scriptural? The answer consists in showing that there are other processes of learning language, *e.g.*, dictionaries, the teaching of elders, etc. When the parent indicates the moon to the child, and gives out its name, the child learns the word 'moon' to mean that entity, but not as subordinate to any act, such as touching it or tying it. And language is used to signify existents; *e.g.*, when one is told that a son has been born to him, the speaker, the hearer and the onlooker understand the entity as the sense, not an act that may or may not be consequent on the information. Further, we do make use of a large number

of negative statements, in the form of prohibitions; prescriptions may enjoin acts, but it is hard to conceive this in the case of a prohibition, like 'kill not'. The statement has reference to one who has not killed, but actually or possibly intends to kill, being moved thereto by passion; but the mere longing to murder does not make a murderer of that person; the non-killing is already there; and all that is required is the perpetuation of that state, not the performance of any act therefor. Language, even scriptural language, may, therefore, be significant in respect of what is neither an act nor what is accomplishable thereby; and *Brahman* may be the purport of the Vedanta.

But now the advaitin has to face another difficulty. In language, we assert something as a predicate *in relation to* something else, the subject; very often, if not always, this is the relation of an attribute to a subject. Whatever it be, the assertion is of a relation, while

Brahman, we have said, is above relations, inasmuch as all relation is unintelligible and non-real. How can the supra-relational Brahman be the purport of language which is relational? The difficulty is not insuperable; for we do use language to signify what is above relation. We are familiar with statements of recognition, *e.g.*, "This is the same man I saw yesterday at Madura." What we assert here is the identity of a person seen here and now with one seen yesterday at another place; today and yesterday, this place and another place,— these are not compatible qualifications; one and the same thing cannot be black and also white; no more can it be both now and then, both here and elsewhere, unless we treat the identity as essential, while the differences are irrelevant and accidental; that is just what we mean when we recognise some one and put it in words; the essence that is this individual is capable of being qualified by sets of incompatible and accidental attributes,

e.g., presence yesterday at Madura and presence here today; the words used signify on the face of them relation to both sets of attributes; but the sense meant to be conveyed is an identity which rises above both sets of relations. This is what is called the supra-relational or impartite sense (*akhanda artha*) of words; and because of this, language can make known the impartite Brahman, that is neither subject nor predicate.

CANONS OF INTERPRETATION

The *sastras* teach us that reality is one and that it is non-different from one's own self. But in some places they appear to teach difference also. We have therefore to inquire into the meaning of the texts. If a statement appears in a particular context, with a beginning and an end, we must try to interpret the whole context harmoniously. If a certain statement is made repeatedly there is a strong presumption that that is meant to be true. If the

sense conveyed is novel, neither established nor contradicted by other valid knowledge, that sense is presumably true; so too if that sense is fruitful, and not barren. Sometimes the scriptures praise or condemn; the existence of praise and the absence of condemnation are strong presumptions in favour of truth. Above all, one has to look for consistency and explicability. Though reason cannot establish, it can test what is offered as true; and intelligibility in the light of reason is an important determinant in the intepretation of texts. The application of these tests reveals non-difference to be the purport of the Vedanta. Wherever it is taught, it harmonises with the beginning and end of the context; it is repeated often; it is novel, unlike quality and difference, which are patent to ordinary experience; it is fruitful, since its realisation is release from all misery; it is praised and its opposite is frequently condemned; and it stands the test of reason.

BRAHMAN-REALISATION

The first understanding of the sense of the scriptures will not, however, suffice. It is assailed by frequent doubts; is it possible? On the contrary, is not the opposite, *viz.*, difference, the sole possibility? Such doubts have to be set at rest finally by continual reflection and uninterrupted contemplation, pursued with faith. As a result of these comes what is called the final psychosis, the last transformation of the mind, *viz.*, Brahman-realisation. It comes as transcending, sublating or sublimating all earlier and lower mental acts directed to the apprehension of plurality and difference. He, who has realised Brahman, no more apprehends duality. But even Brahman-realisation falls short of Brahman, since it is a mental act or psychosis relating to Brahman; it is knowledge *of* Brahman, not the knowledge that *is* Brahman; unlike lower psychoses, however, this does not require something other than itself for its

removal; after it has destroyed lower forms it destroys itself. When a forest fire is started by a couple of bamboos, it consumes not merely the rest of the forest, but even those very bamboos; when the powder of the clearing nut is added to muddy water, it precipitates to the bottom, both the other foreign matter and itself as well.

JIVANMUKTI

When this final intuition is achieved depends on the maturity of the individual. The realisation is of the eternal, not of what has to come into being; hence it is unnecessary to wait for any length of time. The seeker's mind must have become pure and capable of intuiting the supra-relational. How soon this happens depends on the *karma*, which had been accumulated by the individual and is responsible for his present embodiment. If that fetter is not too heavy, realisation may come even within the course of this life; and after realisation, no fresh karma (*agami*)

will accrue, while of the past karma, that which has been accumulated but has not yet taken effect (*sanchita*) will not cling to or affect the self, any more than water will cling to the lotus leaf. Only what has begun to be effective (*prarabdha*) will continue to exist, so long as this body lasts; for that *karma* is like an arrow which has been released from a bow and must go on till it hits the target or its velocity is exhausted. The persistence of this *karma* is no bar to realisation or release, which is a matter of knowledge and experience. If some one whose body continues should yet say that he experiences freedom, who are we to question it? No doubt release and the co-existence of nescience are incompatible; but the continuance of the body requires the postulation only of a part or aspect or trace of nescience. *Maya* no longer veils; only the world projected by it endures for a while. It is true that absolute and final release (*videhamukti*)

comes with death; but Sruti says that he is released even already; there is no reason therefore to make the final intuition coincident with or subsequent to physical decease. He who has had this vision, though embodied, is really disembodied; he is a *jivanmukta*; him pleasure and pain touch not; he sees no duality, but one-ness; whence then can there be delusion or sorrow?

SCIENCE, MORALITY AND RELIGION

Until this vision is gained, lower mental acts are not to be dismissed as merely useless or inimical to the truth; for error is the gateway to truth. In truth, the body is not the self; one is a perfect contrast to the other; but in all walks of ordinary life, we act as if the body were the self; we strive for and attain bodily satisfaction, as if it were real bliss; we educate the senses and the mind, though these are psycho-physical, while knowledge is spirit; we build up cities and communities, love

them, worship them, fight for them, though these are physical entities of greater or less subtleness; even the final intuition has to be achieved by the mind, a psycho-physical mechanism, perfected by psycho-physical discipline; true it is that son and wife are dear for the sake of the self, not for their own sakes; but if one did not start with love of son or wife, one would never arrive at knowledge or love of the self; the lower, though apparently opposed, is not inimical to the higher; on the contrary, it is serviceable to the higher and continues valid until the highest is realised. The good is not the enemy of the better, unless there is a blind clinging to the former; then, of course, the good becomes good-for-nothing. The obligations of self-preservation, the duties to kith and kin, the higher moral demands of community, nation and humanity, all these are good in their measure; they are partial goods which turn evil, only when they take up our

entire vision and energies, under the pretence that they are the whole good. He who cares not for his own body will not be there to do anything for his family; while from him who cares for his body alone the family can get nothing at all. The ultimate value is not a mere negation; in transvaluing it also fulfils the lower values. Hence there is a legitimate place for science, morality and even popular religion in the philosophy of Sankara.

AN ESTIMATE

Our presentation of this philosophy has sought to minimise technicalities and avoid points of controversy. It may continue to be dry but it is hoped that it is not altogether obscure. We shall close with a brief evaluation of the system.

Sankara was not the first expositor of the philosophy of non-dualism. His (alleged) *paramaguru* (preceptor's preceptor), Gaudapada, was a distinguished professor of that school. If Sankara's interpretation of the

Vedanta texts and *sutras* is correct, then the Rishis of the Upanishads, and Vyasa, the redactor of the *sutras*, should have been among the earliest advaitins. In later times we hear of a rather profound Advaita thinker called Bhartriprapancha. About Sankara's own time there was Mandana Misra, who made distinctive contributions to Advaita philosophy, such as were adopted by some later advaitins in preference to Sankara's own position. And the development of Advaita did not stop with Sankara. Points not touched on or touched on and not elaborated were discussed in great detail by later day advaitins; some of them are notable for the reconciliations they sought to effect between pure non-dualism and (1) the pluralism of ordinary experience, (2) the claims to recognition of worship and meditation (*upasana*), (3) the claims of intense religious devotion (*bhakti*). Those who cannot live in the intensely colourless light of pure Advaita may find themselves

in greater sympathy with some of Sankara's followers, like Vachaspati or Bharatitirtha or Madhusudana Sarasvati than with Sankara himself. Despite all this, Sankara occupies a pre-eminent place in Indian philosophy.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Tradition as we have seen attaches great importance to the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Vedanta Sutras*. It is one thing to have a vision of non-dualism for oneself; it is quite another to bring it home to others on the basis of a systematic interpretation of these scriptures, coupled with the use of argumentation as far as reason will take us. Sankara was the earliest of such expositors whose work has come down for us; and his successors have always tried to carry out or to supplement his programme, not to supplant his work. In clearness of vision, singleness of purpose, clarity and depth of the style of exposition (*bhashyam prasannagambhiram*), few, if any, can rival Sankara, while none

has excelled him. Added to all this was the romantic charm of the youthful ascetic, who renounced before he had lived, and had completed his life's work before many others are ready to begin theirs. Little wonder that myths gathered thick and fast about his life-story and the historic figure turned into a fabled hero.

The main strength of Sankara's position is also that of Advaita generally, that it seeks not to destroy but to fulfil. It has no quarrel with other systems; for, as has been said, one does not quarrel with one's own hands or feet. Our knowledge is defective, our affections are divisive, our goals are trivial. But they come as goods, when they appear on the scene, to the individuals suited therefor; by their very pursuit, they get outgrown and give place to larger ideals, broader visions, nobler pleasures; what has taken place, however, is a sublimation of the lower into the higher, not a fight between the two, resulting in the defeat of the former. To him who has

no vision of non-dualism, evil is uncompromisingly so; there can and should be no trafficking with it; if self be the sole reality, all pursuit of the non-self whether for economic gain, aesthetic enjoyment or religious ecstacy, is bound to be unreal and so far forth evil; it should be unhesitatingly opposed without fear or favour. The advaitin, however, holds a different view; to him all pursuit is of the *non-real* (he does not say *unreal* as that term has no meaning for him); for the real is above both seeking and finding, pursuit and reach, being the ever realised. Such being the nature of all pursuits, where is the ground for unreserved condemnation of some and the exaltation of others? No one of them can be wholly good, nor any wholly evil. Why not then condemn all pursuit as evil? That is no doubt true from the ultimate (*paramarthika*) viewpoint; but is not condemnation itself an activity in the pursuit of an apparently not yet realised truth? Then, like all

other pursuit (*vyavahara*) condemnation too is to be condemned, with the result that our other pursuits are left with their relative degree of value. Hence it is that the true advaitin does not go forth ravening for controversial prey; rather does he seek to conserve and ennoble. Not for nothing is Sankara glorified as the consolidator of the *six* religious faiths (*shanmatasthapana acharya*).

Besides tradition which links Sankara's name to almost every temple of repute in South India, and works like the *Manishapanchakam* which proclaims his willingness to accept the man of vision as his preceptor, be he a Brahmin or a Chandala, there are also some other indications of his relative catholicity and freedom from convention. His early renunciation in defiance of commonly accepted authorities calling for the preliminary stages of the householder's and the forest-dweller's life is not without significance. Almost alone among the

more important commentators, Sankara makes it clear that the *Sudra's* disabilities extend not to Brahman-knowledge, but only to the study of the Vedanta. And the insignificant word "*tarhi* (then)" in the *Brihadaranyaka* is specially commented on to show that woman's wit or *stribuddhi* is not a universal or ever-lasting bar to knowledge, but only for a time; Katyayani suffered from this disability only at that time (*tasmin kale*) while Maitreyi was free from it then.

The greatest of men, even if they are philosophers, have their weak points. When you are out to wage war against an adversary, it is very difficult to preserve poise and give some credit or quarter to the enemy. The Madhyamika Bauddha had formulated a doctrine very close to Advaita Vedanta; and there is room for a legitimate supposition that the doctrine of universal salvation (*sarvamukti*) possibly came over from Bauddha sources. Yet Sankara has no admiration to waste over the

Bauddha. The follower of Dharma with his cast-iron code of rituals mechanically effective through a mysterious *apurva* evokes rightly enough the indignation of Sankara; this, however, almost blinds him to the value that may be claimed legitimately for the performance of *karma*. The observance of *karma* need not be merely a preliminary discipline, as held by Sankara and his strict adherents, disappearing with the onset of knowledge, like clouds when the rainy season is over; that discipline, when perfected, may itself *be* the self-transcendence known as Brahman-realisation; it may, in the alternative, be a useful aid to knowledge-discipline, just as a horse is to the wayfaring pedestrian. The possibility of such value for *karma* whether by itself or in combination with knowledge, is rigidly discountenanced by Sankara, who thus lays himself open to the charge of intellectualist bias. And here a writer like Mandana Misra seems sounder. That is also the case in regard to the

doctrine of release in embodiment (*jivanmukti*). Mandana is aware of the logical impropriety of linking together realisation and bondage; he would therefore say either that release for the *jivanmukta* is not realised, but prospective, or, in the alternative, for him too *avidya* is gone, leaving behind only a trace, which, however, has not the power to bind; this is analogous to our continuing to tremble for a while even after a fully satisfactory assurance that the feared snake is but a rope. Sankara does none of these things, but just refers us to experience (possibly his own), an appeal that sounds singularly unconvincing in our day.

When all this has been said, we have still to turn and pay homage to Sankara without stint. When and by whom the threads that constituted the warp and woof of Advaita were spun, we do not know. We do know of decorations and embroideries of some value added on to the fabric, by some of Sankara's

contemporaries and successors. And some predecessors of his would seem to have worked out small pattern designs, calculated more to please or edify rather than to be serviceable. The main fabric of Advaita, the garment which has clothed Indian thought for so much of domestic as well as foreign service through these long centuries, that is essentially the handiwork of Sankara, the youthful preceptor of elderly disciples, the non-dualist champion of six faiths, the orthodox opponent of ritualism and the rational opponent of logicism. To him all eyes have turned and will continue to turn with loving reverence, so long as man retains his nobility and wisdom its prestige.

APPENDICES

I.

"Whenever the dharma decays, and when that which is not dharma prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, *for the firm establishment of the national righteousness*, I am born again and again." So says the Bhagavad Gita—and never was any prophecy more conclusively vindicated than this, by the appearance of Sankaracharya, early in the ninth century after Christ. . . . .

This wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty-two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most men are still dreaming of the future. The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary. By this form of literature the future is knit firmly to the past, and though the dynamic power of the connecting idea

may be obscure to the foreigner, it is clearly and accurately conveyed to the Eastern mind itself. . . . . .

By writing a new commentary on a given sutra, the man of genius has it in his power to re-adjust the relationship between a given question and the whole of current opinion. Hence it is not surprising to find that the masterpiece of Sankaracharya's life was a commentary on the Vedanta Sutra. . . . .

The whole of the national genius awoke once more in Sankaracharya. Amidst all the brilliance and luxury of the age, in spite of the rich and florid taste of the Puranic period, his soul caught the mystic whisper of the ancient rhythm of the Vedic chants, and the dynamic power of the faith to lead the soul to super-consciousness, became for him the secret of every phase of Hinduism. He was on fire with the love of the Vedas. His own poems have something of their classical beauty and vigour, and his books may almost be described as chains of quotations from the most piercing and comprehensive

sentences of the Upanishads, to which he has contributed links and rivets.

Sankaracharya wandered, during his short life, from his birthplace in the South as far as the Himalayas, and everything that he came across in his travels related itself to the one focus and centre, in his mind. He accepted each worship, even that from which he was at first adverse, but always because he found that the great mood of One-without-a-second was not only the Vedic, but also the Puranic goal. This is the doctrine that he expresses in his twelve epoch-making commentaries, especially in his crowning work, the commentary on the Vedanta Sutra. And this idea, known as the Adwaita Philosophy, constitutes, for the rest of the Hindu period, the actual unity of India.

Western people can hardly imagine a personality such as that of Sankaracharya. In the course of so few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the

present day; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy, and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to the foreign and unlearned ear; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant joy and simple pathos of the saints—this is greatness that we may appreciate, but cannot understand. . .

The work of Sankaracharya was the re-linking of popular practice to the theory of Brahman, the stern infusion of mythological fancies with the doctrine of the Upanishads. He took up and defined the current catchwords—maya, karma, reincarnation, and others—and left the terminology of Hinduism what it is to-day. At the same time, we must not neglect to remind ourselves that in all this, if he had been other than the expression of that which it was the actual tendency of the race to formulate, he would not

have found the scope he did. The recognition of a great man is as essential a factor in his history as his own power and character. His complete appropriation by his nation only shows that he is in perfect unison with its thought and aspiration."—*Sister Nivedita.*

"*The system of the Vedanta, as founded on the Upanishads and Vedanta Sutras and accomplished by Shankara's commentaries on them,—equal in rank to Plato and Kant—is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in his researches of the eternal truth*".—Paul Deussen.

II.

"The Advaitism of Sankara is a system of great speculative daring and logical subtlety. Its austere intellectualism, its remorseless logic, which marches on indifferent to the hopes and beliefs of man, its relative freedom from theological obsessions, make it a great example of a purely philosophical scheme. . . .

It is impossible to read Sankara's writings packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality. With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of spirit, his unswerving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Sankara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of the religious thinkers of medieval India. His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a

before nor an after. It has a self-justifying wholeness characteristic of works of art. . .

Through the massive and at the same time subtle dialectic of Sankara there shows forth a vivid, emotional temperament, without which philosophy tends to become a mere game of logic. A master of the strictest logic, he is a master of a noble and animated poetry which belongs to another order. The rays of his genius have illumined the dark places of thought and soothed the sorrows of the most forlorn heart. . .

Supreme as a philosopher and a dialectician, great as a man of calm judgment and wide toleration, Sankara taught us to love truth, respect reason and realise the purpose of life. Twelve centuries have passed, and yet his influence is visible. He destroyed many an old dogma, not by violently attacking it, but by quietly suggesting something more reasonable, which was at the same time more spiritual too. He put into general circulation a vast body of important

knowledge and formative ideas which, though contained in the Upanishads, were forgotten by the people, and thus recreated for us the distant past. He was not a dreaming idealist, but a practical visionary, a philosopher, and at the same time a man of action, what we may call a social idealist on the grand scale. Even those who do not agree with his general attitude to life will not be reluctant to allow him a place among the immortals."

—*Sir S. Radhakrishnan.*

"The only religion that can have any hold is the rationalistic religion of Advaita."

—*Romain Rolland.*

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