CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS IN LATER KRISHNAISM AND IN OTHER HINDUISTIC SECTS.*

KRISHNA AND CHRIST.

WE are treading on solid ground when, in the question of Christian contributions, we turn to that particular phase of Krishnaism which we meet in the literature of the Purânas, of works similar to the Purânas and of writings intrinsically connected with the Purânas.

Of all Indian religions Krishnaism (as Hopkins correctly observes)¹ was by its nature most easily accessible to Christian influences. Buddhism, at least in its original form, was a religion which recognized neither God nor soul; Shivaism places greatest weight upon rites and self-mortification, whereas Krishnaism in its popular form is a religion of joy; it rejects bloody sacrifice and preaches love. To these fundamental features of Indian religions which Hopkins has emphasized, we might add that Jainism also, which is so closely allied to Buddhism and which has continued in India to the present day, possesses no similarity to Christianity in its religious character. On the other hand there exists between Christianity and Krishnaism an intrinsic relationship which explains the susceptibility of the latter to Christian influences. To this intrinsic

* Authorized translation from the German manuscript by Lydia G. Robinson. In the bibliographical references the following abbreviations will be observed: ERE, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*; IA, *Indian Antiquary*; JAOS, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; JRAS, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.

¹ *India Old and New*, 162.

relationship may be added an external reason to which attention has often been called, namely, that the similarity of the names Christ and Krishna, which is often in evidence to-day in the religious conversations and writings of Indians, has certainly facilitated the adoption of Christian features. In some localities of India the word Krishna is pronounced Krishta.²

THE GOD'S BIRTHDAY.

I shall begin with an element of the worship which in all probability is the oldest Christian possession in Krishnaism and moreover renders it possible to recognize Christian influence with such distinctness that it supplies an appropriate basis for the investigation of the other effects of Christianity upon Hinduism. This element is the celebration of Krishna's birthday concerning which we have the learned and circumstantial—I might say the too detailed—treatise of A. Weber,³ the main results of which are unassailable, although in some particulars it is not quite correct.

We have seen above⁴ that the conception of Krishna as a divine child which has contributed so much to the spread of Krishnaism all over India is autochthonous. The celebration of Krishna's birthday, however, is an imitation of the Christian festival. Weber⁵ describes twelve texts, which he dated from the thirteenth century on, in which the Janmâstami (Krishna's birthday), or a variant of it bearing the name Jayantî, is treated in more or less detail;

² Grierson, JRAS, 1907, 316.

³ On the Krishnajanmâstami (Krishnas Geburtsfest) in the *Abhandlungen der K. Akademie der Wiss. zu Berlin*, 1867, 217ff. The earlier literature on the question of the connection between Christian and Krishnaistic legends which has been so much discussed since the middle of the eighteenth century is mentioned on pages 3-10ff. Cf. also Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 430ff.; *India Old and New*, 162ff.

⁴ See "Christian Elements in the Mahâbhârata," *The Monist*, July, 1913, pp. 343ff.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, 218ff.

and adds, what is more important historically, a list of the Purânas which mention the festival and of the Purâna passages quoted.⁶ From this we learn that almost all the Purânas contain such mention⁷ and that most of all the Bhavishya and Bhavishyottara-Purâna come into consideration,⁸ according to which Krishna himself is said to have established the festival as soon as he had slain Kamsa, and indeed in the midst of universal jubilation for all castes, even for the Shûdras.⁹

When from the quotations out of the Purânas, Weber¹⁰ explains the Krishna festival to be positively authenticated for about the eleventh century, this late date rests upon the low estimate of the age of the Purânas which was generally prevalent among Sanskritists at the time when Weber's treatise appeared (1867) and still later. Nevertheless Weber at once adds this sentence: "*The unanimity of so many works* of this kind in the meantime may lead us considerably farther upwards, since such a *universal* recognition of the festival indeed demands the conclusion that at the time of their composition it was generally accepted, whereupon *eo ipso*, the farther assumption naturally follows that its *adoption* or *introduction* goes back to a *still earlier* time." This "earlier time" he seeks to determine more exactly by succeeding passages, always under the spell of his conviction that Christian influences had penetrated to India from Alexandria in Egypt.¹¹

⁶ *Ibid.*, 221ff., especially 239. The quotations from the Smṛiti are rather unimportant since these versified texts are "modern compilations of secondary significance" in spite of the ancient names Parāshara, Pāṭhinaśi, Bhrigu, Vasishtha, Viṣṇu, Vyāsa. See Jolly, *Recht und Sitte*, 24.

⁷ Strangely enough not the Bhāgavata-Purāna in spite of its sectarian Krishna character which is especially distinct in the tenth book. To be sure it describes in detail the time of Krishna's birth (10, 3, 1-8) but says nothing of the festival. This must certainly have a definite reason which according to Weber (page 241) may be sought in the fact that "in the Bhāg. Pur. we have the modern interpretation of the worship of Krishna which is occupied mainly with the *love affairs* of Krishna and in which the *mother* of God withdraws more and more into the background."

⁸ Weber, 242ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

¹¹ Compare *The Monist*, July, 1913, p. 324.

Weber starts from the fact that Christ's birthday has been celebrated in the Christian church since the middle of the fourth century and that in Alexandria a festival of the birth of Christ existed in connection with that of his baptism on January 6, which "was supplanted shortly before the year 431 by an independent and exclusive celebration of the Christmas festival on December 25."¹² Now because the naming of Krishna forms an integral part of the celebration of his birth, it seems to Weber extremely obvious that the Hindus adopted the festival in the period "during which that peculiarly Egyptian custom, to celebrate the birth of Christ *at the same time* as his *baptism* on January 6, prevailed, i. e., in the time between the *second half of the fourth century and the year 431* when the celebration of the *birth alone* on December 25 replaced it."

It is clear that this conjecture of Weber's and the reason for it stand upon a weak foundation. But J. Kennedy is mistaken when he says¹³ that "Weber's chief arguments are drawn from the history of the legends regarding the Virgin and the representations of the *Madonna lactans*; on this basis he assigns the period 350-431 A. D. as the period to which the rise of the Krishna festival must be assigned," and when he opposes this alleged proof of Weber's with the words: "The legends of the Madonna were not known in Egypt until towards the close of the fifth century, and were probably derived from Italy," etc. Weber's main arguments for assigning the date 350 to 431 are in no wise founded upon the legends of the Madonna and her earliest representations with the Christ-child; he expressly characterizes these legends and pictures¹⁴ as only a part of the material to be taken into consideration for the whole of the investigation; instead he has based the date 350-431 solely upon the reasons I have just cited. Hence Kennedy has here been guilty of hastiness.

¹² *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 337.

¹³ *JRAS*, 1907, 483.

¹⁴ *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 336.

In reality Weber's attempt to supply a date fails for the reason that Alexandria can not be taken into consideration as a medium of Christian transmissions, because by the beginning of the third century it has already lost its significance for the commerce of the world and especially for direct intercourse with India. Moreover, Christianity could not from a remote distance have exercised so strong an influence as is noticeable in Krishnaism. For this, direct contact was requisite. Weber also surrenders his date at once¹⁵ and goes down to the year 640 as a date which would harmonize particularly well with the conclusions drawn from the age of the texts describing the birth festival of Krishna, or from their place in the history of literature. As is shown from an earlier passage,¹⁶ Weber considers the year 640 as the *terminus ad quem*, because in that year Alexandria had been captured by the Moslems. Here again therefore we have Alexandria as the basis for argument.

Although Weber's *argument* in favor of the time shortly before 640 is untenable, yet this date agrees remarkably with the one which we must admit for a different reason. We have proof that the first Nestorian mission into central north India took place in the year 639;¹⁷ and since there is no doubt that the Christmas festival and other Christian elements had been brought by the Nestorians into that region, that is, into the home of Krishnaism, the time (the first half of the seventh century) agrees very well with the age of the Purâṇas which are our earliest sources for the observance of Krishna's birthday. In this period, accordingly, occur the earliest Christian influences on Brahmanism, if we disregard the remote suggestion about the Christian religion which seems to be present perhaps a century earlier in the Shvetadvîpa legend of the Mahâbhârata.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, 338.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹⁷ "Contributions of Christianity to Buddhism, *Monist*, April, 1912, p. 179.

Before I enter upon the details of the Krishna festival, the fact deserves mention that the *season* in which this festival was and still is celebrated in India does not belong to loans from Christianity. The birthday of Christ was at first set for January 5th or 6th, March 28, April 19-20, May 20, November 19, and not until later for December 25; on the other hand Krishna's birth festival according to our sources was celebrated on different days, to be sure, yet always in the period between June and September.¹⁸ Whether we have here a reminiscence of the actual time of Krishna's birth must remain unsolved.

The celebration of the birth festival does not pertain to Krishna alone but also to his mother Devakî, and he is represented as lying upon her breast in unmistakable imitation of Christian pictures of the *Madonna lactans*. The question with regard to the earliest appearance of Christian pictures of this kind, to which Weber¹⁹ gives detailed attention, does not concern us here. For our purpose it is enough to know that the veneration of Mary and the representation of the Virgin and Child were current since the beginning of the Nestorian controversies in the fifth century.²⁰ Christian influence upon the Krishna festival is further very distinctly betrayed by the fact that in it the scene of the ancient Krishna legend—according to which Krishna was born in prison under circumstances of poverty and danger and was made away with in great haste and rescued by his father—appears in a completely altered form. The place of Krishna's birth has become a peaceful cattle stall (*gokula*) in which form for the festive purpose a confinement home (*sûtikâgriha*) is set up and is fitted out with a picture of the mother lying upon a bed with the divine child at her breast, and also with paintings or

¹⁸ Weber, *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 338, Note 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 324ff.

²⁰ In spite of Kennedy, *JRAS*, 1907, 483, 484.

sculptured representations of Krishna's father, of shepherds and shepherdesses, cattle, asses, etc., including all sorts of deities and demigods in the air.²¹ Hence exactly the same as the scene among the shepherds after the birth of the Saviour is represented in Christianity for purposes of edification.

After the manger is set up and adorned as just described, the Krishna festival itself begins with the supplication and worship of the holy family at which many kinds of vegetable offerings are made, and the invocation of the mother of God (*devamâtar*) plays an important part.²² The result of the whole festival is that the Christian stories of the birth of Jesus are widely known in their Indian garb among the Hindus down to the present day, even if otherwise they know nothing of Christianity.

PARALLEL MIRACLES.

In addition to the birth celebration, other features of the Christian legend have entered into the history of Krishna's childhood and later life. Here belong the tales of the Vishnupurâna, that the shepherd Nanda, the fosterfather of Krishna, was journeying by wagon at the time of the latter's birth with his pregnant wife Yashodâ to Mathurâ to pay his taxes (cf. Luke ii. 4, 5),²³ and that Krishna shortly before his entry into Mathurâ received a box of ointment from the crippled Kubjâ and as a reward healed

²¹ Weber, *op. cit.*, 248, 252, 272, 273, 280, 281.

²² *Ibid.*, 284, 310.

²³ *Ibid.*, 338. Shortly before, Weber erroneously cites as Indian texts in which these loans exist, besides the Purânas and the Jaiminibhârata, the Hari-vamsha also and "some interpolated passages of the Mahâbhârata." The Mahâbhârata (according to Weber, 318, Note 5) treats Krishna's miracles in his childhood and youth in only *one* passage belonging to the latest interpolations (II, 1436-1445). Nevertheless, one who consults the text will not find there any parallel with Christian tales. Hopkins in *India Old and New*, at the bottom of page 165, has obviously made use of the above mentioned statement of Weber. But when he observes that in that passage of the Mahâbhârata the only deed of the *child* Krishna that is mentioned is the killing of a hawk, that is not correct; for in verse 1440 it is also mentioned that the babe overturns a loaded wagon.

the donor of her infirmity.²⁴ In this second story which is wrongly assigned by Weber²⁵ to no earlier source than the Jaiminibhârata, two or three familiar stories from the New Testament seem to be combined.²⁶ Krishna performed the cure by touching the crippled girl with his thumb and two other fingers on the chin, by lifting her head high while at the same time he pressed down her feet with his feet and so pulled her straight.²⁷

With these tales belong the following which Weber has brought forward from the Jaiminibhârata, a Krishna-istic work of Purâna character, of whose age we can only say that it must have been composed before the beginning of the thirteenth century because at that time it was translated into Canarese.²⁸ The legend there given of the raising of the dead son of Duhshalâ by Krishna must be referred to Christian influence, because the older form of the story of Duhshalâ as it appears in the Mahâbhârata, XIV, 2275-2297, knows nothing of the awakening of the son.²⁹ Christian influence is at least very probable, because such things are not related of Krishna in the older sources, and in part it is certain in the accounts of Krishna's feeding large throngs of ascetics by a single vegetable leaf left

²⁴ Vishnupurâna, 5, 20. Kubjâ means "the deformed one"; the proper name according to the Vishnupurâna is Naikavakrâ, "She who is crippled in different places"; according to the Bhâgavata Purâna, 10, 42, 3, where the story is told in a similar fashion, Trivakrâ, "She who is crippled in three parts of the body" (back, breast and hips, according to Shridhara's commentary). Cf. Vishnupurâna, translated by H. H. Wilson, edited by Fitzedward Hall, Vol. V, p. 21 note.

²⁵ *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 339.

²⁶ Matt. xv. 30, 31; ix. 20ff. (Mark v. 25ff.; Luke viii. 43ff.); Luke vii. 37, 38.

²⁷ J. Kennedy, JRAS, 1907, 978, note 2, says: "The manner in which Krishna pulls the unguent-maker straight is exactly the way in which the youthful Christ makes two pieces of wood equal by pulling them out to the same length (Pseudo-Matthew, c. 37)." But here to be sure two very different things are made parallel.

²⁸ "Ueber eine Episode im Jaimini-Bhârata," *Monatsber. d. K. Preuss. Akad. d. Wiss. zu Berlin*, 1869, 12, Note 3; 34ff. The loans from Christianity, assumed by Weber, are to be found in the passages of the Jaiminibhârata. See pp. 37, 38.

²⁹ Weber, *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 315, Note 1; 318, Note 5; 339. *Indische Streifen*, II, 392, Note 2.

over in the corner of a pot; of the woman with an issue of blood who came to his feet seeking to be healed; of touching his foot as a means to avoid death; of his coming at once to bring help as soon as he is prayerfully besought; of the wish of a pious man not to die before he has seen him; and of the sin-redeeming power which Krishna's glance (or aspect), or the thought of him, or merely naming his name is supposed to have. The idea of the healing power of the water he washed in is at all events a transmission from an apocryphal Gospel.³⁰

Thus far can we go with Weber. But we have shown above³¹ that he is mistaken when he explains the narrative of Kamsa's persecutions and slaughter of children in this connection as a loan from Christianity. A similar judgment is to be passed upon what Weber says directly afterwards "of the carrying across the river (Christophoros)" without giving any explanation or proof of it. Hopkins³² simply says it after him: "We find too in the history of Krishna the late Christophoros legend," and yet here, where we must reflect as to what after all Weber meant, an investigation would have been in place. Weber can not very well have had anything else in mind than that feature of the legend which treats of the rescue of the newly born Krishna whom his father Vasudeva carries across the Yamunâ in order to bring him to the shepherdess Yashodâ and to exchange him for her newly born daughter.³³ That on this occasion Vasudeva is obliged to ford the Yamunâ which readily lets him pass through its waters, accordingly, is the only ground upon which Weber here bases a transmission of the legend of St. Christopher! The pictorial representa-

³⁰ Weber (339, Note 2) refers to a passage in the Arabian Gospel of the Infancy.

³¹ See *Monist*, July, 1913, p. 347.

³² *India Old and New*, 166.

³³ Cf. the contents of Harivamsha in *The Monist*, July, 1913, p. 346, and Weber, *Kr. Geburtsfest*, 251 note.

tion of the scene on the accompanying plate should have served as a warning against such a hasty statement. A newly born child whom his father is rescuing from certain death by a hasty removal and exchange is certainly something very different from a boy placed upon the shoulders of a gigantic ferryman. I have previously shown³⁴ that the Christopher legend belongs in an entirely different connection in the relations between Indian and Christian religious literature.

THE SYSTEM OF AVATARS.

As with the two details just discussed, the case is the same with Weber's conjecture "that the entire Indian sect organization, in so far as it is founded on the exclusive worship of a single personal God, owes its origin to Christian influences," and with his assumption "that even the whole avatâr system has originated in an imitation of the Christian dogma of the descent of God."³⁵ This last assumption has already been contested by Lassen³⁶ on the obvious ground that Krishna was known as an avatâr of Vishnu even to Megasthenes, hence about 300 B. C. But still other points may be arrayed against it which are at the same time directed against Schroeder's conception.³⁷ According to his view the Brahman avatâr theory has been influenced by, and has indirectly arisen from, the Buddhist doctrine of the previous existences of Buddha according to which he had often been a god before his last birth (twenty times Indra and four times Brahman) and otherwise had appeared in the most divergent forms of existence. But the Brahman theory of avatârs is older than the stories of Buddha's previous existences which have their origin in

³⁴ "Contributions of Buddhism to Christianity," *Monist*, XXI, 550 ff.

³⁵ *Indische Studien*, II, 169.

³⁶ *Indische Altertumskunde*, 2d ed., II, 1126.

³⁷ *Indiens Literatur und Kultur*, 330.

the general belief in the transmigration of souls. This we know from the story in the Shatapatha Brâhmana of the supernatural fish that saved Manu from the deluge and in which, according to later interpretation, the god Brahman or Vishnu was incarnated.³⁸

Vishnu's incarnation in the form of a fish stands at the head of the ten (later twenty-four or twenty-eight) avatârs, and because of its connection with the fish in the Shatapatha Brâhmana must be looked upon as the oldest idea in this cycle of myths. It certainly is not an accident that Vishnu appears in exactly the first four incarnations in animal form and in the six following in human form. The primitive worship of totem animals which merged into the Vishnu cult underlies the first forms, the fish, the tortoise, the boar and the (man-)lion. But it is not from this source alone that the avatâr theory is derived but from a combination of several. In the Rigveda all light phenomena are frequently conceived as forms of the fire god Agni. In 5, 3, 1, it is even said: "Thou art Varuna, O Agni, when thou art born; thou becomest Mitra when thou art kindled; in thee exist all gods, O Sun of power, thou art Indra to pious men," and in later portions the most different gods are explained to be only names for the *one* god. In the Yajurvedas and in the Brâhmana literature a number of gods are identified with earthly objects and existences: Pûshan with cattle, all gods with water, Agni Vaishvânara with the year, the earth, the sun; Prajâpati with the sun, the earth, the sacrifice; but mainly Vishnu with the sacrifice.³⁹ This ancient and genuinely Indian tendency towards identification—especially in its later manifestation in Vedic prose where it luxuriates in unrestrained fantastic, yea even idiotic, fashion—is

³⁸ Pischel, "Ursprung des christlichen Fischesymbols," *Sitzungsberichte der K. Preuss. Akad. der Wiss.*, 1905, 512ff.

³⁹ Schroeder, *op. cit.*, 134.

surely only a direct preliminary step of the train of thought which has brought forth the doctrine of Vishnu's avatârs and of the incarnation of other gods in remarkable men. There can here be no question of Christian influence.

CONCEPTION OF THE TRINITY.

Nor has the idea of the Trimûrti, the divinity manifesting itself in the three forms Brahman, Vishnu, and Shiva, which lies at the bottom of all Hinduism, anything to do with the Christian trinity; for it is pre-Christian and has reference to the ancient Indian idea of the sanctity of the number 3. Nevertheless the Christian doctrine of the trinity has exerted its influence on the later development of the Bhâgavata religion.⁴⁰

The monotheism of the Bhâgavatas developed in remarkable agreement with the Christian conception into a doctrine of the simultaneous unity and trinity of the divine being, composed of God, his incarnations and his operative power (*shakti*). Since the god of the Bhâgavatas, the Exalted One (Bhagavat), has become one with Krishna and he in turn with Vishnu, his consort Lakshmî has been explained as the operative power of the Exalted One. In this without doubt the Sâmkhya doctrine of the Prakriti, creative nature, which is opposed to the spiritual principle, had some part; but also the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost, and this latter, indeed, in the form in which it existed among the Nestorians. Since the Semitic word for spirit (Hebrew, *rûach*) is feminine the Syrian Christians regarded the Holy Ghost as a feminine being and identified it directly with the Virgin Mary. When this is taken into consideration the correspondence between the doctrine of the Trinity as held by the Nestorian Christians and by the Bhâgavatas is extraordinarily close. In the latter the

⁴⁰ For the following paragraph Grierson's article "Bhakti-Mârâga," ERE, II, 542b, has been utilized freely; cf. also JRAS, 1907, 323.

Shakti (or its mythological personification Lakshmi) is regarded as one with the Exalted One and yet as different from him: "She has done everything that he has done and if we speak of him we speak also of her." At the same time Shakti appears as the active disseminator of the true faith which she has learned from him—hence as a separate person.

The worship of Shakti as a separate deity plays the most conspicuous part in the Shiva cult but only in the later Shivaitic sects. Hence we may assume that worshipers of Shiva who belong mainly to the lower classes have received it from the Bhâgavatas as they have similarly done in southern India with the doctrine of bhakti. Nevertheless in the Shivaitic (and related) sects the bhakti yields precedence to an ugly asceticism, to a monstrous trade in sorcery, demons and witches; then too the Shiva-bhakti has hitherto been but little studied so that when later on I shall treat the question of Christian influence on the modern development of the bhakti doctrine I may limit myself to the Vishnuistic sects, that is, to Vishnuites and Ramaites.

RAMAISM.

Heretofore I have only once briefly alluded to the Râmaïtes (*Mon.*, July, p. 339). Like the Krishnaites they originally formed a monotheistic tribal community and later spread all over India. Their god Râma originated in the same manner as the god Krishna, by the elevation of a human hero to divine dignity. Already in the Râmâyana the admired hero of the epic is deified and explained to be an incarnation of Vishnu, but only in such parts as are distinctly later additions and whose interpolation follows the purpose of impressing upon the reader or hearer the divine nature of Râma.

Krishnaism is older than Râmaism and even to-day is

more widely disseminated in India; but Râmaism is more deeply religious and more spiritual and therefore has its adherents mainly among the more cultured classes of Hindus who are filled with a yearning for contemplation and philosophy, whereas Krishnaism dominates more the well-to-do middle classes inclined towards a merry enjoyment of life.⁴¹

Râmaism is split up into two different sects which are distinguished not only by clothing and stripes on the forehead—all religious confessions among the Hindus are indicated by colored stripes and marks upon the forehead—but which are also violently hostile to each other, whereas their sentiments towards their common opponents are much more friendly. This is an illustration of a law apparently applicable to all mankind. With regard to their theological views the two Ramaitic schools, the southern and the northern, differ from each other in that the former professes the “cat doctrine,” the latter the “ape doctrine.” According to the cat doctrine, God (Râma) saves man like the cat takes up her young, i. e., without any participation and free will on the part of man; according to the ape doctrine, man in order to be saved must strive after God and cling to him as an ape to its mother. Here we have an Indian counterpart to the controversy between Calvinists and Lutherans.⁴²

The two large religious communities of Krishnaites and Râmaites had not always been strictly separated from each other. The Bhâgavatas—or by their later name Pâñcharâtras which first denoted a subdivision of the Bhâgavatas—were originally so exclusively worshipers of Krishna that for the earlier period we may use the expressions “Bhâgavata religion” and “Krishnaism” as synonyms. This is made clear enough in my exposition in two previous

⁴¹ Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 427, 499; Grierson, *JRAS*, 1907, 501.

⁴² Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 500, 501.

articles (*The Monist*, July and October, 1913). But when the Bhâgavata religion was reformed by Râmânûja in the twelfth century it was either already Râmaized or became so through the influence of its reformer; and this took place to a still greater extent through the best known of Râmânûja's successors, Râmânanda, who lived in the fourteenth century. However, the other Bhâgavata schools (that founded by Madhva at least in its north Indian branch) again made Krishna the object of their worship.

THE BHAGAVATAS AND THEIR SCHOOLS.

At any rate the Bhâgavatas were the first real monotheists and the first proclaimers of bhakti in India. Their faith, which I have above ("Christian Elements in the Bhagavadgîtâ," *Monist*, Oct. 1913, pp. 507ff.) represented as the contents of the Bhagavadgîtâ, they have in the main kept pure down to modern times, though it has undergone many sorts of further development, the most noteworthy of which are the doctrine of the 24 incarnations of the Exalted One, the last being still looked for; the classification of souls; and the development of eschatological conceptions in which are mingled Sâṅkhya-Yoga and pantheistic ideas. But the fundamental doctrines of the personality of God, of the eternal and individual existence of souls and of the supreme value of bhakti, the Bhâgavatas have always firmly maintained. From the twelfth to the fifteenth century four different schools (*sampradâya*) were established whose founders were Râmânûja, Madhva (or Anandatîrtha), Vishṇusvâmin and Nimbâditya. The doctrines of these schools and their many subdivisions, which for the most part refer to the disputed question in what form the Exalted One is to be worshiped, cannot be separately discussed here.⁴³ We shall simply mention that in

⁴³ The best account of them is given by Grierson in the article already frequently mentioned ("Bhakti-Mârگا," *ERE*, II, 544ff.) to which I owe also

the third school whose principal representatives are the Vallabhâcâris, a love to God (Krishna) is demanded which does not bear the character of a son's love to his father but that between youth and maiden. By this means the sensual erotic element, which we have already met in earlier times and which matured some ugly outgrowths, has again been advanced in this branch of Krishnaism. It is interesting to see how the Vallabhâcâris reconcile with their own doctrines the Vedânta tenet of the absolute unity of the Brahman. They too ascribe its established attributes, existence, thought, and bliss (*Sach-chid-ânanda*) to the Exalted One as to the personally conceived Brahman; but the individual soul in its earthly existence they explain as the Exalted One in a condition in which the attribute of bliss is suppressed, and unsouled matter they explain as the Exalted One in a condition in which the attributes of thought and bliss are suppressed. Together with all other Bhâgavatas they reject the doctrine of cosmic illusion (*mâyâ*) and its consequences. At the moment of salvation the soul again obtains the attribute of bliss and becomes essentially equal with the Exalted One for all eternity. All other philosophical differences between the Bhâgavata schools are inconsiderable.

THE QUESTION OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

Those who wish to approach the question of Christian influence upon Hinduism must know as much about the religious currents which underlie it as I have here set forth. They must further know that Hinduism is in a constant flux and can absorb everything with which it comes in contact, as it has, for instance, absorbed the cults and deities of the Indian aborigines to the widest extent.

We have seen above (in *The Monist* of October, 1913)

much of my exposition in the following pages. Cf. also Grierson's essay "Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians," *JRAS*, 1907, 311ff.

that the doctrine of bhakti and the fatherly love of God is of native Indian origin. Christian influences could find no better prepared ground than the home of this doctrine. Let us see now under what conditions Christianity has made its influence felt.

The Bhâgavata religion, the religion proper of love in India, which before its reformation was the possession of a superior class of people and was proclaimed in the language of the cultured and educated, the Sanskrit, lost ground in the course of time, lacking contact with the broader masses. It almost fell into oblivion since the ninth century when the higher intellectual life of all India came under the spell of Shankara, the great Vedânta teacher who brought the ancient half theistic and half pantheistic Brahmanism of the Upanishads into a unified and consistent philosophical system. The political transformations also and the terrible sufferings which the Mohammedan conquests had spread abroad over India since the beginning of the eleventh century were conducive to the collapse of the bhakti religion. Thus it happened that in the twelfth century this religion numbered only a few adherents living in the southern part of India. Nevertheless it awoke there to new life and with such success that since that time everything which goes by the name of Vishnuism in India is at bottom only a form of the bhakti religion.

It certainly is not an accident that this resuscitation of the bhakti religion took place in the close vicinity of the Nestorian colony of St. Thomé, the alleged monument of the Apostle Thomas at Mylapore not far from Madras. The Christians there had given up baptism at that time (but not the Lord's Supper) and had adopted some religious customs of Hinduism. This goes to show a close friendly community life with the Hindu sects in that locality, and a *mutual* exchange of religious elements. At the present day Christian altars may still be found in southern

India before which both Christians and Hindus worship, each in his own way.⁴⁴

RAMANUJA THE REFORMER.

In the beginning of the twelfth century Râmânûja, the above-mentioned reformer of the Bhâgavata religion, was born at Perumbûr and received his education at Kâñchî-pura, now Conjeeveram. Both places are so near Mylapore that Râmânûja must have come in touch with the Nestorian Christians. I therefore agree with Grierson⁴⁵ that it must be due to their influence that Râmânûja, originally a follower of Shankara, the most important monist and scorner of bhakti, became converted to the Bhâgavata religion when a young man and devoted himself with great zeal to its propaganda, emphasizing, to be sure, the philosophical rather than the peculiarly religious side.⁴⁶ The Christian influence is clearly seen in some of his teachings which I shall discuss farther on. In his famous commentary on the Brahmasûtras, the main text-book of the Vedânta philosophy, Râmânûja sets forth very skilfully the conviction of all Bhâgavatas that the dogmas of their religion are in harmony with the main contents of the Upanishads.

A controversy in which Râmânûja refuted his old Vedântistic teacher engendered great bitterness towards the reformer, and persecutions compelled him to take to flight. But this proved of the greatest advantage to the faith he preached. Râmânûja's flight was the cause that the bhakti religion spread anew over the greater part of India from the most southerly point of the Himalayas.

⁴⁴ Grierson, JRAS, 1907, 312.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 317.

⁴⁶ Madhva also, the founder of the second principal school of the Bhâgavatas, to whose faith he became converted in later years, was originally a Vedantist and like Râmânûja had lived within reach of Christian influence. He was born on the western coast of India about 1200 in Udipi near Kalyâna, the ancient episcopal see. Grierson, ERE, II, 549b, note.

The fact that this religion revived in southern India to new vigor and was again brought thence to the north where it continued to receive fresh sustenance from the south, is illustrated in an allegorical tale⁴⁷ of the Bhâgavata Mâhâtmya, an appendix of the Bhâgavata Purâna. Nârada relates (I, 27ff.) that in the current eon, Kaliyuga, he had wandered through all India without being able to find Righteousness. Finally he came to the banks of the Yamunâ, to the former scene of Krishna's exploits. There he met two old men lying at the point of death and a young woman mourning for them. To Nârada's question who she was, she replied: "I am Bhakti. These two are considered to be my sons. They are Knowledge (*Jñâna*) and Freedom from Desire (*Vairâgya*), and are become decrepit through the influence of (the present) time. . . . I was born in Dravida [eastern Dekkhan]; I grew up in Karnâta [on the south-western coast]; I became old as I dwelt sometimes in Mahârâstra [in the Mahratta country], and sometimes in Gurjara [Gujarat]. There under the influence of the terrible Kali Yuga, my limbs were mutilated by heretics, and with my sons I fell into a long continued feebleness. Since I came to Vrndâvana [on the left bank of the Yamunâ near Mathurâ] I have recovered and am now young and beautiful." She goes on to ask why her two sons have not also become young. Nârada explains that she has been rejuvenated by the holy influence of Vrndâvana, but that Knowledge and Freedom from Desire still remain old, as there is no one who will accept them.

The author of this story means to say that the doctrine of bhakti first originated in southern India and that thence it came north especially to the vicinity of Mathurâ where it attained a remarkable vigor. But he does not seem to have known that the *original* home of the bhakti doctrine

⁴⁷ Communicated by Grierson, JRAS, 1911, 800, 801.

was in the exact locality where he makes her regain her youth.

From this legend I now return to Râmânuja. The charming enthusiasm with which he proclaimed the comforting doctrine that a personal God who once appeared on earth in the form of Râma now lived in heaven and bore a part in all man's cares and sorrows, everywhere won the hearts of the oppressed. Râmânuja's disciples also traveled through the country, living only for the extension of their faith in abject poverty and everywhere gaining disciples and followers. It was a time of high strung religious excitement in which ecstasies, visions and alleged miracles were daily occurrences. In many places cloister-like establishments (*matha*) arose in which the mendicant teachers found temporary refuge and where they could end their days after they had become old and feeble.

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON RAMANUJA.

Christian influence seems to me to have been exerted on Râmânuja not only in his theological fundamental conception but also in the following points:

Before his time sin had been regarded as disobedience to divine commands as set forth in the sacred texts, and as something to be avoided because of punishment which was certainly to be expected in a future life. After Râmânuja, the higher conception became dominant, that sin is what is not done in faith; that sin is sin because it does not agree with the nature of the God of love become flesh.⁴⁸

Grierson⁴⁹ also considers as an imitation of Christian custom the extraordinary veneration which the Bhâgavata religion accords to the spiritual teacher. This veneration *might* have been strengthened by the Christian example, but at bottom it is genuinely Indian; for from time im-

⁴⁸ Grierson, ERE, II, 550, *ob*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* and JRAS, 1907, 323, 324.

memorial the teacher (*guru*) in India has always enjoyed just such an exaggerated regard.

On the other hand I agree with Grierson when he explains⁵⁰ the sacramental meal, which was celebrated in the Râmânûja community as well as in many other bhakti sects⁵¹ under the name Mahâprasâda, "great mercy," and played a very important part, as an imitation of the Christian celebration of the eucharist. To be sure the correctness of this conception has been contested by Berriedale Keith⁵² who with reference to Frazer's rich collections and to the investigations of Robertson Smith on the religion of the Semites, draws attention to the fact that such sacramental meals belong to the most widespread religious customs, that they are older than Christianity, and that they have been met with among peoples in a low stage of civilization who had as yet had no contact of any kind with Christianity. Without doubt this is right; but the manner in which the Mahâprasâda feast is celebrated shows a series of parallels with the Christian communion service which cannot rest upon chance. On the evening of the appointed day the community gathers together and the leading priest who is the celebrant (*mahant*) holds a discourse, after which the worshipers are given a short time for prayer and meditation. All withdraw who do not feel worthy to participate in the ceremony proper. The rest approach the celebrant in turn, and each receives in his right hand a small consecrated wafer and two other consecrated morsels. He then turns to another priest who pours a few drops of water upon his hand. This food and this water are thought to secure eternal life to those who partake and are worthy to receive it. Part of the sacra-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, and JRAS, 1907, 326.

⁵¹ An exact description of the ceremony as it is practised among the Kabirpanthis is given by Foss Westcott in *Kabir and the Kabir Panth*, 1908, 127.

⁵² JRAS, 1907, 492, 493, 939.

mental food is retained and carefully treasured to use for sick people.

Grierson is also right in referring the instigation of the introduction of the Mahâprasâda ceremony to the Nestorians in southern India instead—as others have done—to the Jesuits at Akbar's court. The following arguments contend against the latter assumption: (1) The wide dissemination of the Mahâprasâda celebration over all India; (2) its frequent mention in the Bhaktamâlâ (to be discussed later); and (3) the fact that among the Kabîrpanthis the ceremony is followed by a great love feast which is not a Roman Catholic institution but which was customary among the Christian communities of the early days and which was retained by the Christians of southern India who were shut off from the rest of the world.

Moreover Christian influences may be recognized in Râmânûja's doctrine of the equality of all castes. Nevertheless Râmânûja did not put into practice this humane fundamental principle, for in his time all teachers and leaders of the new community were exclusively Brahmans, and people of lower castes were not even admitted as pupils into the clergy. But exactly the circumstance that the principle of universal brotherhood remained a theory with Râmânûja may be looked upon as an indication that it was established at Christian instigation. When Râmânûja accepted from the Christians the doctrines which he heartily shared, he did not wish to reject that of the equality of all mankind although it was not sympathetic to him, a born Brahman. He adopted it but made no use of it.

THE REFORMER RAMANANDA.

His successor Râmânanda at the end of the fourteenth century was the first to take seriously the equality of rights of all castes. Like Râmânûja, Râmânanda was also under direct Christian influence, and like Râmânûja also he en-

tered into controversies with his teacher Râghavânanda, the head of the cloister founded by Râmânuja in Seringapatam. The occasion of the dispute shows how greatly this teacher and the band of scholars surrounding him were entangled in Brahman caste prejudice. Râmânanda had made extensive pilgrimages upon which, according to the opinion of his fellow pupils which Râghavânanda shared, he could not have observed punctiliously all the Brahman food regulations. He was therefore condemned to take his meals alone apart from the other pupils. This ridiculous quarrel was of extraordinary advantage for the religious life of India; for it resulted in an immense extension of the bhakti religion. Râmânanda was highly enraged at the indignity done him and determined to emigrate to northern India where he founded the sect of the Râmânandis.

The great service of this man for the advancement of the bhakti religion, which in the half-century following his death was the most widely spread in India, consisted of the following innovations. He departed from the prevailing custom of preaching and writing in Sanskrit, and by the use of the vernacular made the doctrines of his religion accessible to all classes of the population. At the same time he put into practice the principle of the brotherhood of man by admitting members of all, even the lowest castes, not only as members of his sect but even as teachers. Evidently borrowing from the details of primitive Christianity, Râmânanda gathered *twelve* disciples about him, among whom were a hair-dresser, a worker in leather,—hence men from greatly despised castes—and the Mohammedan weaver Kabîr who together with Mohammedan doctrines accepted Christian doctrines especially and rejected every sort of idolatry. Kabîr taught that all religious externalities are without avail and that everything depends upon the inner man. Some sayings of Jesus he translated

almost literally and spoke of the "Word" in expressions which can only be a paraphrase of the beginning of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was God alone, but from him went forth the Word. When God desired that creation should come into being, he gave command through his Word and so through the Word were all things made which exist. Although the Word proceeded from God, yet is it not different from God but abideth in him, as thought abideth in the heart of man. God's voice sounds in order that men may have knowledge of the Word; and so the Word is in the world and at the same time with God."⁵³

MODERN SECTS.

Like the number twelve of the disciples of Râmânanda, so the number ten of the commandments in the Bhâgavata school founded by Madhva is apparently an imitation of Christianity, even though their contents agree with the Christian ten commandments only in very broad outlines: "Thou shalt not lie, slander no one, use no harsh words, talk not idly, steal not, commit not adultery, kill not, think no evil, hate not, and be not proud."

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the influence of the modern Christian mission upon the spiritual life of India had already become so strong that religious disputations between Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians and Jews were a daily occurrence, as we learn from the *Dabistan*, a Persian work written in the year 1645.⁵⁴ Although obviously modern relations do not properly belong in the scope of my exposition yet I will mention two works of this period filled with Christian influences which have exerted and still exert a very important effect upon the religious life of India. I mention these works especially because the millions of Hindus who read them with enthusiasm do not

⁵³ Grierson, *ERE*, II, 550a; *JRAS*, 1907, 325 according to the communications of Foss Westcott.

⁵⁴ Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 510 note.

know that it is the Christian spirit which speaks to them from many passages of these books. These are the Hindî version of the Râmâyana by Tulasidâsa (Tulsidâs) and the Bhaktamâlâ of Nâbhadâsa (or Nârâyanadâsa) likewise written in the earlier Hindî dialect. Both authors wrote towards the end of the sixteenth century and were teachers of the Râmânandî sect; but their works are esteemed equally highly by the other Bhâgavata schools.

TULASIDASA.

Talusidâsa (1532-1623) in several works—but especially in his vernacular Râmâyana, which however is not a translation of the ancient Râmâyana of Vâlmiki but an independent exposition of its contents, with the proper title *Râm-charit-mânas*, “The Lake of Rama’s deeds,”—preaches a strict ethics and especially man’s duty towards his fellows, and in so doing has touched the note which speaks to the heart of the masses. If the atrocity and filth of Shivaism and the sexual licentiousness of later Krishnaism have been checked in modern India it is mainly due to the influence of this work and the teachings of Talusidâsa as a whole. His Râmâyana is found alike in peasants’ huts and Râjâs’ palaces, and in the market places are to be seen public readers of the poem surrounded by attentive listeners of all classes. The book has been made accessible to the Occidental public in an excellent English translation by F. S. Growse (three volumes, 5th ed., Cawnpore, 1891).

The fundamental features of the religious doctrine of Talusidâsa in which Christian influence is unmistakable may be summed up as follows:⁵⁵ Man is by nature thoroughly corrupt and unworthy to be saved from the consequences of sin, but the supreme being in his infinite mercy has descended to earth and has become man in the person of Râma in order to redeem the world from sin. Having

* With Grierson, JRAS, 1903, 456, 457; 1907, 320.

returned to heaven God knows from his own experience how great are the weaknesses and temptations of man, and he practices infinite mercy in constant readiness to help the sinner who invokes him. Even the worst criminal who earnestly repents is thereby purged from sin.⁵⁶ From these fundamental conceptions are derived the duties towards one's fellows and the doctrine of the brotherhood of man.

The other divinities of Hinduism are subordinate to God (Râma) and are thought of as standing in a relation to him which is comparable to that of the angels and saints towards God as it is conceived in the Roman Catholic church.⁵⁷ Particularly noteworthy in this connection is the position of Hanumat who always appears as Râma's personal servant in heaven. Grierson relates a beautiful legend which, though not told by Tulasîdâsa himself, may be traced to his direct influence.

A miserable crossing-sweeper suffering from a repulsive disease lay in a wretched muddy place and cried in his misery: "Ah Râm, ah Râm! (O God, O God!)." Hanumat was flying by at the time and angry at hearing the name of his Lord cried in such disgusting surroundings struck the man on the breast. That evening when according to his usual custom he was rubbing Râma's body he observed a frightful wound upon the god's breast. Horrified Hanumat asked what had happened. "Thou gavest a poor man a blow on the breast when he invoked my name, and what thou hast done unto the least of my children thou hast done unto me."

THE BHAKTAMALA.

The other work above mentioned, the Bhaktâmâla of Nâbhadâsa with the commentary of Priyâdâsa. Grierson calls the *Acta Sanctorum* of the four great Bhâgavata

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1903, 454, 455.

⁵⁷ Grierson, JRAS, 1903, 457-458.

schools.⁵⁸ Not only the main doctrines of this work but many details in it betray Christian influence as distinctly as can be. Thus we have the legends of Gopâla who when he received a blow upon one cheek offered the striker the other also (Bh. 106 = Matt. v. 39); of Vilvamangala whose eye offended him because he had looked at a woman with desire and who therefore blinded himself (Bh. 46 = Matt. v. 29); and of the anonymous king of Puri who for the same reason chopped off his right hand and cast it from him (Bh. 51 = Matt. v. 30).⁵⁹ In Bh. 204 are given examples of the kindness which the incarnate God has manifested toward his servants. One of these is that Krishna washed the feet of his servants. Even in Mahâbhârata II, 1295, it is related how Krishna demeaned himself to wash the feet of Brahmans; but in the Bhaktamâlâ we have instead of Brahmans "*santas*, i. e., the bhakti-filled." The original Indian legend therefore seems by this alteration to have been brought into harmony with the New Testament narrative (John xiii. 5).⁶⁰

AVENUES OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

That the Christian influences upon the various Bhâgavata schools which we have here discussed originated, as far as the time before the sixteenth century is concerned, with the Thomas Christians of southern India may be regarded as certain. After the sixteenth century the bhakti

⁵⁸ "It is a storehouse of legends regarding the saints, ancient and modern, of the Bhâgavata religion. The importance of this book for a just comprehension of the religious attitude of modern Hinduism cannot be overrated, and it is a matter for regret that the great difficulties of the text have deterred European students from its study. In its original form few natives can understand it nowadays, but numerous translations into modern Indian languages have made its contents familiar to every follower of the cult. For northern India, it and Tulasi-dasa's Râmâyana are the two text-books of modern Bhâgavatism." ERE, II, 546a. The contents of the work are given in detail by Grierson in his essays, "Gleanings from the Bhaktamâlâ," JRAS, 1909, 607ff.; 1910, 87ff., 269ff.

⁵⁹ Grierson, JRAS, 1907, 322, 496; ERE, II, 548b.

⁶⁰ Kâshiprasâ Jayaswâl in Grierson, JRAS, 1907, 322, Note 5.

sects of northern India may have gained new support from Christian missions. But almost all the notable bhakti teachers from Râmânuja to Nâbhadâsa—that is, from the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth century—were from southern India and must therefore have received their Christian impulse from the Thomas Christians in southern India who possessed a Christianity that was distorted in many respects.

This disposes of the assumption of J. Kennedy and others that Christian influences effected the revival and reform of the bhakti religion through the mediation of Persian sûfism. Sûfistic influence can be considered only for the bhakti sects of northern India that developed in Mohammedan surroundings, and for a later time. With this limitation, however, it must be recognized.⁶¹ The previously Mohammedan Kabir (beginning of the fifteenth century) mingled Christian and sûfistic doctrines; and the modern bhakti sect (founded towards the end of the sixteenth century) of the Râdhâsvâmins (or Râdhâvallabhis) is based upon Kabîr, the sûfis, and the Gospel of John.⁶²

Although several bhakti teachers have departed from those principles of Brahmanism which it has considered from time immemorial as basic pillars of the religious system, yet they have not severed connection with Brahmanism. Even the reformers of the present time, in spite of the closer relations to Christianity in which they find themselves, have held fast to certain elements of Brahmanism or have started from them.

BRAHMA SAMAJ.

Râm Mohan Roy (1772-1833), the founder of the Brâhma Samâj, and his successors in the leadership of this philanthropical sect, are especially to be mentioned in this

⁶¹ Grierson, *ibid.*, 501-503; ERE, II, 550b.

⁶² J. Kennedy, JRAS, 1907, 487, unfortunately (as so often) without authorities.

connection. It is well known that the Brâhma Samâj endeavors to obtain man's higher happiness through a conciliation of the great religions by rejecting all special forms of worship. Râm Mohan Roy started with the pantheism of the Upanishads but later attained to faith in a personal God, and although he never relinquished his membership in the Brahman caste confessed in the course of his spiritual development more and more a leaning to the teachings of Christianity, which he declared to be the best of all religious doctrines. He came finally to believe in the last judgment, in the founding of the true religion by Christ and in the miracles ascribed to him. But the dogma of the trinity he resolutely rejected.⁶³

Of Râm Mohan Roy's successors we need only mention Keshab Chunder Sen who departed from all the prejudices of Hinduism and laid aside the sacred cord, the mark of his caste. As he did not succeed in introducing his far-reaching reforms into the Brâhma Samâj he founded in 1866 a new church under the name "Brâhma Samâj of India" which received its religious stamp from the ecstatic form of the bhakti. With his own peculiar ardor Keshab Chunder Sen in the year 1880 proclaimed his faith in the truth of Christianity in the following words: "It is Christ who rules British India, and not the British government. England has sent out a tremendous moral force in the life and character of that mighty prophet to conquer and hold this vast empire. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus, ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India, and Jesus shall have it. . . . Christ is a true Yogi."⁶⁴ But to Keshab Chunder Sen, in spite of this paeon, Christ was merely an ascetic corresponding to the Brahman ideal, and at a later time K. Ch. Sen set up a combination of

⁶³ Monier-Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, 488; Hopkins, *Religions of India*, 516.

⁶⁴ Monier-Williams, *op. cit.*, 516; Hopkins, *op. cit.*, 521.

Hinduism, Islam and Christianity as the true religion. Nevertheless in these progressive reformers Christianity formed a strong support for their religious conviction. It has on the whole exerted the most beneficial influence on the Brâhma Samâj in its various stages of development, not only in dogmatic but also in moral and social respects. In its Sunday services sections from the Bible are now read side by side with those from the Veda, the Avesta and the Koran.

J. M. Farquhar⁶⁵ gives the number of Brâhma Samâj congregations at the time of K. Ch. Sen's death in 1884, as 173 with about 1500 covenanted members and about 8000 adherents; the census of 1901 gives 4050 members (as against 3051 in the year 1891). These statistics show that there have always been only small congregations and that the whole movement, as was to be expected, has remained limited to the most intelligent classes.

Apart from this consciously eclectic movement it is not easy properly to estimate the strength and extent of Christian ideas which have entered into the Hinduism of to-day through various avenues. Grierson, the most competent judge of these imponderabilia and the best expert in the modern (vernacular) religious literature of northern India which is but little known in Europe, has given the following noteworthy statement: "I approached the terrain with a mind absolutely free from preconceived ideas, and with altogether different objects. At first I was struck with what I thought were coincidences, but as I went on and grew more and more familiar with the country, the Christian element in the atmosphere was more and more impressed upon me. There was plenty of nitrogen and carbonic acid, not to speak of argon, but the oxygen was identical with the teaching of our Gospels. This is a case of impression, which it is impossible to justify by formal

⁶⁵ In the extensive article "Brâhma Samâj," ERE, II, 821a.

proof; but there it is, and I offer it for what it is worth.”⁶⁶ With these words we must combine what Grierson has said in another passage⁶⁷ with special emphasis: “At the present time *it cannot be too emphatically stated that modern Hinduism is at its base a religion of monotheism.* (Foot-note to this passage:) The gross cloud of combined polytheism and fetishism which covers and hides this monotheism, is kept, even by the unlearned Hindus, upon a different plane of thought. The monotheism has to do with the future life and with what we should call ‘salvation.’ The polytheism and fetishism serve only for the daily needs of the material world. In a country where, as in India, the majority of the people are poor and ignorant, the material overshadows the spiritual; but even the poorest recognizes (even if he think them too high for him) the truth of the doctrines concerning the One Supreme Being, which have descended to him from the Bhâgavatas.”

It is not easy for me to contradict a scholar of Grierson’s eminence who has lived for a generation among and with the Hindus and for this long period has devoted much of his best strength to the investigation of their religious conditions. But here we have a judgment of a wholly subjective character. I therefore believe that although my stay in India extended only over a year and a half, I am not required to withhold my conviction that Grierson in his sympathetic enthusiasm overestimates the scope of monotheistic tendencies and the Christian elements in the Hinduism of to-day. I have throughout received the impression that polytheism and fetishism form essential characteristic features of Hinduism and do not merely lie above it like a fog concealing its true nature!

In the introduction to the exceedingly valuable article “Bhakti-Mârگا”⁶⁸ which I have frequently cited, Grierson

⁶⁶ JRAS, 1907, 500, 501.

⁶⁷ JA, 1908 262.

⁶⁸ ERE, II, 539a.

says that the doctrine of the bhakti forms the foundation of the modern Vishnuitic Hinduism, and that at least 150 millions of the inhabitants of India profess it. Now according to the census of 1901 the number of Hindus amounts to 207 millions, and this includes—besides eight and a half million animists—the rural population which still constitute the majority in India and whose religion consists in fact in the worship of a vast host of racial and local deities. Further deducting the great mass of Shiva-ites we find that Grierson has estimated the number of Vishnuites (Râmaïtes and Krishnaïtes) much too high.

Among the number of Christian elements demonstrable in Indian literature which I have collected in the last part of this essay probably nothing of importance is omitted. We must grant that these Christian additions are pretty considerable in number from the seventh century on and represent a valuable enrichment of Indian religious wealth; but it must not be maintained that they occupy any overwhelming place in their surroundings. *In the whole religious atmosphere* of the Hinduism of to-day Christian elements naturally play a less important part than in the literature belonging to the educated classes.

RICHARD GARBE.

UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN.