

## Worship in Rajputana.

LAST year, writing of "Worship in Kenya," Mr Calderwood said, "Mental concentration is a new thing to a primitive people, and can only be obtained by giving them something to do." The Hindu idea of worship denies the rightness of the aim implied in this. The Hindu seeks to escape from all doing, even to the arrest of mental operations. He is satisfied in proportion as he attains a sense of blankness, or, better still, blankness without even the sense of it. It is the sanctification of self-obliteration. "Sometimes I sits and thinks; sometimes I just sits." That is the background—centuries old—of the Hindu attitude towards worship of God. Worship of the gods—idols, shrines, persons—the active doing of something with a view to the god being aware of it and responding in some way, is another matter.

The early missionaries to India, including such scholars as Duff, Carey, Abbe Dubois, found—not a people of primitive religion for the overthrow or development of which only the enlightening company of civilised friends was necessary—but a people deeply grounded in a metaphysic which was not only more than a thousand years older than Christianity, but was also a living, the living, force in their minds. It was anything but an exhausted religion. It held the people powerfully and vitally in its grip. Their social life was completely ordered by it; by it their mental operations were dictated. And this ancient system—religion, metaphysic—was in no way a basis upon which Christianity could be built, for its main principle was in direct opposition to the basic tenet of Christianity. If one may suppose that, in the great migration of nations which was taking place about 2000 B.C., Abraham represents that branch of humanity which at that time chose to believe in a Living God, of whom the predicate "Person" can, in our inadequate human language, be properly used, then the Hindu is the descendent of those who made the other choice, viz., that no attributes can be predicated of God at all, that the only answer to any search to "find out God" is "Neti, neti" ("not thus, not thus"). The early

missionaries, and all their successors, found themselves faced by a fundamental opposition both to the metaphysic on which Christianity is based and also, and therefore, to the conception of Man's being which the Gospel presupposes.

Therefore Missions early faced, and have never ceased to remember, the fact that in Hinduism Christianity has an opponent, not a "praeparatio", and that the task ahead was to change the mind of an ancient people steeped in a view of the cosmos and human life logical within itself—a people, moreover, to whom abstruse and subtle speculation was both the most congenial occupation and also the way of salvation. Even if one could weed out the colossal and the puerile absurdities which swell their Scriptures to unmanageable size and fill their thoughts to the exclusion of rational perception of probabilities, there remains, in their books and in their thinking, a clear principle which is diametrically in opposition to that which makes faith in the God of the Lord Jesus Christ possible.

Missions, therefore, formed and follow a plan, the object of which is to change this mind. Individual converts are a part of the plan, a part so necessary that, in a sense, there can be no objection to holding that conversions are the sole object of Missions. Nevertheless, in the circumstances in India, conversions are in the meantime only a part. The actual results in conversions during a hundred years in those regions of India which are the strongholds of Hinduism show that this is so. In such areas converts to an open profession are few. The other part, the "leavening," is being accomplished thoroughly and with greater speed than the pioneer missionaries ever expected. This, however, is an unpopular subject in Mission circles at home, chiefly, perhaps, because missionaries find it difficult to persuade their hearers that they are announcing a fact and not merely indulging in an "easy optimism" to cover failure.

The essence of the plan conceived by Missions is to demonstrate life lived abundantly and desirably. Hence Education to introduce knowledge and create love of it; hospitals to beget desire for healthy, full living; and in modern times industrial schools to foster ambition for better conditions. None of these is an activity in which Hinduism, if it is true to itself, can engage. A Hindu's "dharm" is to live in utter strictness by the rules of the caste into which (on account of his previous "karm") he has been born, with a view to escape ultimately, because

of his dutifulness, from conscious personal existence altogether. How that view of life could hold a people for 3000 years in face of the human instinct for happiness is one of the mysteries of the world. There are causes enough in India to account for a tendency to this line of thought. Malaria has a degenerating effect on body and mind. Most of India is geographically outside the tropics, but climatically inside owing to the mountain mass enclosing it on the north. Disasters, such as famine or earthquake, are always on a colossal scale. Man's struggle with nature is more unequal than elsewhere in the world. Still the writer holds after thirty years' study of the Indian mind that the root of the trouble is not in circumstances, though it is nourished by them, but in the religious choice made so long ago. Hinduism is essentially the great system of Pessimism. Life as man knows it is evil; the end of it the only good; and denial of it the only wisdom. The Christian metaphysic holds that truth is knowable, that the human mind can, within its limits, be on the lines of truth, and that, therefore, there are facts to be ascertained and used. One does not need to be a missionary to perceive that the mind of Hindu India has definitely taken the turn; nor does the missionary think it necessary to claim all the credit for that. The British occupation, trade, travel—everything has had its share.

Now, in this atmosphere and out of this hoary erring lineage, a Christian Church has appeared—strong in numbers in certain parts of India, but in most areas represented by small communities with great gaps between them and their Christian neighbours. The thing to grasp is that those Christians are overwhelmingly surrounded by Hinduism in all their contacts except in the services of the Church. It is their daily breath. In Rajputana the 5000 Christians are scattered here and there in congregations among twelve million Hindus. Their existence is the "survival of the fit" and the "prevailing of truth." The third generation is now just beginning to make its presence felt, while the first is not extinct. Naturally so young a Church, drawn from such unpromising origins, has depended for guidance, in so new an idea as the worship of a Living God, upon its teachers. So far, in North India anyhow, no genuinely indigenous form of worship has evolved. The Mission Churches are Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, not only in government but in ritual. That is natural and need not be disappointing. What can be

disappointing in this present condition, and will be so if it continues, is the fact of a too ready acquiescence in whatever is suggested as fitting by foreign missionaries. It almost amounts to indifference, one of the surviving Hindu tendencies.

So what the times require is an estimate as to what forms of worship, out of those they have learned of necessity, have permanent value for Indians, and also along what lines the more free mind of the fourth and succeeding generations is likely to move. The latter point really comes first, for it conditions the other.

Let us picture a Hindu worshipping. He is in a temple with an idol—a god, not God except in so far as everything is God pantheistically. The temple ritual is wholly carried out by the priest, not any part by the worshipper. He stands, or preferably sits (for the worshipping attitude of mind takes time to evoke) in rapt adoration, meditation (many words are used for it). The act of worship to his mind is attained when he has rid his mind of all activity. Oblivion is what he seeks. He is not concentrating in thought, but seeking the trance state in which all activity is suspended. In due time he is beyond being distracted or disturbed. Finally he makes his way home satisfied in soul. But he cannot tell you of an experience because it is release from experience that he has achieved. (We are not at this point considering idolatry. That is everywhere throughout India, with all its attendant evils—superstition, fear, abominations. We are considering the Hindu in respect of God, not the gods. And in respect of God he does not admit that he is an idolator. The idol is as if one took a fragment of God and adored complete God by means of it. It is the genuine Pantheism—not that all things are gods, but that the whole is God.)

It might be expected that the Indian Christian would have a leaning towards this form of worship. But, of course, that cannot be because he is a Christian, as he has accepted a wholly different view of God's nature. There is a great difference in personality between an "enquirer" who has practically made up his mind against Hinduism and the same man after he has clinched the matter by accepting the Sacraments of the Church. His mind then is filled with the liveness of God and its great corollary, the value of personality and life. He is a liberated soul, and the old contemplation of emptiness is almost always replaced by active study. So whether he is introduced to the rich,

quickenings liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer, or to the searching preaching of the Word of the Presbyterian pulpit, he finds food for his soul. Naturally he is more than content, and it does not occur to him—in fact he is disinclined—to carry over from Hinduism any of its forms.

However, the other process, the leavening, the change within Hinduism, is already affecting the situation. The Christian Church has now a standing and also, many judge, the day of orthodox Hinduism is at long last done. The Indian Christian does not now ape the foreign missionary in dress. The observance of Christmas is very common among educated Hindus. The Christianising of Hindu festivals has begun among the Christians. Indian festivals are colourful. The people have an instinct for poetry and symbolism. The Roman Catholic Church makes a strong appeal with its observance of the Christian Year and its use of the ornate. Hence the time seems ripe for the wise guidance of the Church in India into a form, or forms, of worship which will both satisfy Christ-motivated souls as adequate exercises of a rational soul towards the Living God and also give scope for national characteristics. The time has come for something different from the ordinary form of Presbyterian Service, where the sole vocal part taken by the congregation is the singing of hymns, although even that is a great advance on the teaching service as conducted by the Hindu "guru". (A Hindu audience will sit for hours hearing interminable lectures. How much they listen is another matter.)

In estimating the probabilities of the future, experience has much to teach. For instance, a church which is architecturally correct, and still more if it is beautiful, produces a response which the wrong style of building fails to evoke. The Indian has not naturally much reverence, but it can be created. Also he is indifferent to noise, so much so that one might judge (mistakenly) that he requires pandemonium in order to be able to think. But school work soon teaches one that much of the mental dullness in India is due to incessant, purposeless noise. And the Indian can be taught to prefer quiet. So in place of the Hindu temple with its narrow internal dimensions, where the worshipper, after offering his small gift, sits down to lose himself for a little amid the din of gongs, bells and drums, the Christian requires a place of peace in which his spirit is helped to undertake the act of realising God as He is in truth. The positive content of Christian worship demands

a mind in action. Meditation, contemplation, adoration, are to be directed to a Living One whose qualities are to be absorbed through the mind and spirit, not to be annulled in a sort of cosmic trance. For that a real church is of great value. In Rajputana there are no church buildings of indigenous design. Nor is it likely that a design materially different from what the West has found so suitable will appear. A church, as we usually mean it, suits India for its purposes as well as anything could. Moslem architecture, catering as it does for large congregations, has some beautiful buildings whose plan might well find favour in the Christian East, but the Christian will always want something distinctively Christian.

In such a building, as simple as you like, but artistically helpful to devotion, the internal arrangements are of importance. A massive pulpit occupying the forefront is less in favour in Scotland than it used to be, and it is noteworthy that wherever renovations in a Mission Church have led to the removal of the pulpit to a side the Indian congregation has approved. Such approval implies an idea as to the proper use of the transept-centre and choir. Experiments in the use of this space produced an immediate response in Udaipur. At the Baptism of infants and of adults, at the receiving of new Church members, at the Ordination and Induction of Elders, instead of the usual questions and assent, the minister and those concerned have recited before the congregation a Creed or Confession of Faith. All were very ready to agree to do this and the congregation have liked it. Obviously, therefore, that form of Service appeals to them. The "Forms of Service" published by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in India for voluntary use gives model Orders of Service; it is not a service-book for use by the congregation. But in a young Church, for which the providing of a trained pastorate is a very great difficulty, some authorised Order for Worship, to be in the hands of the whole congregation, would be most helpful. It is in the evolving of such an Order that one would expect to see native predilections showing themselves. Indians are very fond of music. Their performance is rarely equal to their zeal, but they all like both listening to song and singing. There are in existence, in addition to translated Western hymns, many collections of genuine Indian Christian hymns. The Rajputana Presbytery, moreover, has recently set up a Committee to get together a collection of songs

suitable for Christian lips on festive occasions. What seems likely to happen now, with a new generation of Christians growing up in amity with greatly-modified-Hindu neighbours, and all with a growing national consciousness, is that what is being done with regard to secular songs will next be done for Church Services. Some Order for Prayer and Worship which can be used to edification by untutored congregations in the occasional event of their being without a minister is already needed. The willingness of Presbyterians in South India to consider a scheme of union with the Episcopal Church may be due partly to a liking for the Church of England Service. I have found the Catechism of the English Prayer Book more than useful. The elaborate doctrinal Catechism of the Westminster Confession ought also to be made use of. The suggestion offered is that the Indian Church would not only profit from, but heartily enjoy, periodic Catechism or Creed Sundays when, instead of the sermon, a form of Confession of Faith would be said by the congregation led by the minister. Attention would be held partly by the necessity of repeating correctly what is prescribed, but very largely because the congregation would be grateful for having the Faith taught to them clearly and comprehensively. Services of this nature would induce the growth of native forms, for much would lend itself to musical setting. There is a great deal of repetition in native song. The best loved songs are those in which there is the minimum of variation in the verses. Very probably, therefore, what a Westerner would judge to be a suitable Confessional Service would, in Indian hands, develop into a series of services. The Church in India may develop on these lines. In Hindu worship teaching has no part; that is done on other occasions when there is no worship. Scottish Missions have taught their daughter Church to count the Preaching of the Word an integral part of worship. That is right doctrine, but it has its possibilities of misuse. A proper use of the Christian festivals throughout the year, in addition to occasions of Communion, might occupy many of the fifty-two Sundays, and still leave enough for systematic preaching to a listening congregation. This is particularly worth attention in view of the fact that not a great proportion of professional preachers have genius. Frequent breaks in the duty of sermon-writing would help the preacher. His sermons would acquire in quality more than they lost in number. Moreover, a pastor, himself one of a community very young

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and recent in the Faith, requires to remind himself of the articles of the Faith. Periodic diets of worship consisting of set forms of Prayer, Confession, Creed, would be as refreshing to him as to his congregation. What the future holds one does not know, but for a long time to come, in Rajputana anyhow, such services would run no risk of being "vain repetition." The ideal pastorate has yet to come into being; moreover, there are scattered congregations which have only occasional visits from a pastor or a missionary. In both kinds of congregations, the organised and particularly the unorganised, such services not only would be useful and welcome, but are very necessary. The thing to do is, for those who have ideas on the matter—missionaries, if Indians do not rise to the occasion—to make a beginning. Even if inadequate to begin with, it would provoke ideas. It would lend itself to development and adaptation, and even in its beginnings it would be better than the services often are now, when, in the circumstances—a new Church without traditions to guide its thought and interpret its experience—what should be worship in the fullest sense is dreadfully near the fringes of boredom.

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