CHAPTER LV

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

In phrases like the above title, the word influence is easy and convenient. When we hesitate to describe a belief or usage as borrowed or derived, it comes pat to say that it shows traces of external influence. But in what circumstances is such influence exercised? It is not the necessary result of contact, for in the east of Europe the Christian Church has not become Mohammedanized nor in Poland and Roumania has it contracted any taint of Judaism. In these cases there is difference of race as well as of religion. In business the Turk and Jew have some common ground with the oriental Christian: in social life but little and in religion none at all. Europe has sometimes shown an interest in Asiatic religions, but on the whole an antipathy to them. Christianity originated in Palestine, which is a Mediterranean rather than an Asiatic country, and its most important forms, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, took shape on European soil. Such cults as the worship of Isis and Mithra were prevalent in Europe but they gained their first footing among Asiatic slaves and soldiers and would perhaps not have maintained themselves among European converts only. And Buddhism, though it may have attracted individual minds, has never produced any general impression west of India. Both in Spain and in south-eastern Europe Islam was the religion of invaders and made surprisingly few converts. Christian heretics, such as the Nestorians and Monophysites, who were expelled from Constantinople and had their home in Asia, left the west alone and proselytized in the east. The peculiar detestation felt by the Church for the doctrines of the Manichæans was perhaps partly due to the fact that they were in spirit Asiatic. And the converse of this antipathy is also true: the progress of Christianity in Asia has been insignificant.

But when people of the same race profess different creeds, these creeds do influence one another and tend to approximate. This is specially remarkable in India, where Islam, in theory the uncompromising opponent of image worship and polytheism,
is sometimes in practice undistinguishable from the lower superstitions of Hinduism. In the middle ages Buddhism and Hinduism converged until they coincided so completely that Buddhism disappeared. In China it often needs an expert to distinguish the manifestations of Taoism and Buddhism: in Japan Buddhism and the old national religion were combined in the mixed worship known as Ryōbu Shintō. In the British Isles an impartial observer would probably notice that Anglicans and English Roman Catholics (not Irish perhaps) have more in common than they think.

There are clearly two sets of causes which may divide a race between religions: internal movements, such as the rise of Buddhism, and external impulses, such as missions or conquest. Conquest pure and simple is best illustrated by the history of Islam, also by the conversion of Mexico and South America to Roman Catholicism. But even when conversion is pacific, it will generally be found that, if it is successful on a large scale, it means the introduction of more than a creed. The religious leader in his own country can trust to his eloquence and power over his hearers. The real support of the missionary, however little he may like the idea, is usually that he represents a superior type of civilization. At one time in their career Buddhism and Christianity were the greatest agencies for spreading civilization in Asia and Europe respectively. They brought with them art and literature: they had the encouragement of the most enlightened princes: those who did not accept them in many cases remained obviously on a lower level. Much the same thing happens in Africa to-day. The natives who accept Mohammedanism or Christianity are moved, not by the arguments of the Koran or Bible, but by the idea that it is a fine thing to be like an Arab or a European. A pagan in Uganda is literally a pagan; an uninstructed rustic from a distant village.

Now if we consider the relations of India with the west, we find on neither side the conditions which usually render propaganda successful. Before the Mohammedan invasions and the Portuguese conquest of Goa, no faith can have presented itself to the Hindus with anything like the prestige which marked the advent of Buddhism in China and Japan. Alexander opened a road to India for Hellenic culture and with it came some
religious ideas, but the Greeks had no missionary spirit and if there were any early Christian missions they must have been on a small scale. The same is true of the west: if Asoka’s missions reached their destination, they failed to inspire any record of their doings. Still there was traffic by land and sea. The Hindus, if self-complacent, were not averse to new ideas, and before the establishment of Christianity there was not much bigotry in the west, for organized religion was unknown in Europe: practices might be forbidden as immoral or anti-social but such expressions as contrary to the Bible or Koran had no equivalent. Old worships were felt to be unsatisfying: new ones were freely adopted: mysteries were relished. There was no invasion, nothing that suggested foreign conquest or alarmed national jealousy, but the way was open to ideas, though they ran some risk of suffering transformation on their long journey.

As I have repeatedly pointed out, Hinduism and Buddhism are essentially religions of central and eastern, not of western Asia, but they came in contact with the west in several regions and an enquiry into the influence which they exercised or felt can be subdivided. There is the question whether they owe anything to Christianity in their later developments and also the question whether Christianity has borrowed anything from them. Other questions to be considered are the relations of Indian religions to Zoroastrianism in ancient and to Islam in more recent times, which, if of less general interest than problems involving Christianity, are easier to investigate and of considerable importance.

Let us begin with the influence of Christianity on Indian religion. For earlier periods the record of contact between Hindus and Christians is fragmentary, but the evidence of the last two centuries may give a significant indication as to the effect of early Christian influence. In these two centuries Christianity has been presented to the Hindus in the most favourable circumstances: it has come as the religion of the

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1 The most learned and lucid discussion of these questions, which includes an account of earlier literature on the subject, is to be found in Garbe’s Indien und das Christentum, 1914. But I am not able to accept all his conclusions. The work, to which I am much indebted, is cited below as Garbe. See also Carpenter, Theism in Medieval India, 1921, pp. 521-524.
governing power and associated with European civilization: it has not, like Mohammedanism, been propagated by force or accompanied by any intolerance which could awaken repugnance, but its doctrines have been preached and expounded by private missionaries, if not always with skill and sympathy, at least with zeal and a desire to persuade. The result is that according to the census of 1911 there are now 3,876,000 Christians including Europeans, that is to say, a sect a little stronger than the Sikhs as against more than sixty-six million Mohammedans. Of these 3,876,000 many are drawn from the lowest castes or from tribes that are hardly considered as Hindus. Some religious associations, generally known as Somaj, have been founded under the influence of European philosophy as much as of Christianity: imitation of European civilization (which is quite a different thing from Christianity) is visible in the objects and methods of religious and philanthropic institutions: some curious mixed sects of small numerical strength have been formed by the fusion of Christian with Hindu or Mohammedan elements or of all three together. Yet the religious thought and customs of India in general seem hardly conscious of contact with Christianity: there is no sign that they have felt any fancy for the theology of the Athanasian Creed or the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church which might have interested speculative and ritualistic minds. Similarly, though intellectual intercourse between India and China was long and fairly intimate and though the influence of Indian thought on China was very great, yet the influence of China on Indian thought is negligible. This being so, it would be rash to believe without good evidence that, in the past, doctrines which have penetrated Indian literature during centuries and have found acceptance with untold millions owe their origin to obscure foreign colonists or missions.

Writers who wish to prove that Indian religions are indebted to Christianity often approach their task with a certain misconception. They assume that if at some remote epoch a few stray Christians reached India, they could overcome without difficulty the barriers of language and social usage and further that their doctrine would be accepted as something new and striking which would straightway influence popular superstition and philosophic thought. But Lyall gives a juster perspective
in his poem about the Meditations of a Hindu Prince who, grown sceptical in the quest of truth, listens to the "word of the English," and finds it:

"Naught but the world wide story how the earth and the heavens began,
How the gods were glad and angry and a deity once was man."

Many doctrines preached by Christianity such as the love of God, salvation by faith, and the incarnation, had been thought out in India before the Christian era, and when Christian missionaries preached them they probably seemed to thoughtful Hindus a new and not very adequate version of a very old tale. On the other hand the central and peculiar doctrine of dogmatic Christianity is that the world has been saved by the death of Christ. If this doctrine of the atonement or the sacrifice of a divine being had appeared in India as an importation from the west, we might justly talk of the influence of Christianity on Indian religion. But it is unknown in Hinduism and Buddhism or (since it is rash to make absolute statements about these vast and multifarious growths of speculation) it is at any rate exceedingly rare. These facts create a presumption that the resemblances between Christianity and Indian religion are due to coincidence rather than borrowing, unless borrowing can be clearly proved, and this conclusion, though it may seem tame, is surely a source of satisfaction. The divagations of human thought are manifold and its conclusions often contradictory, but if there is anything that can be called truth it is but natural that logic, intuition, philosophy, poetry, learning and saintship should in different countries sometimes attain similar results.

Christianity, like other western ideas, may have reached India both by land and by sea. After the conquests of Alexander had once opened the route to the Indus and established Hellenistic kingdoms in its vicinity, the ideas and art of Greece and Rome journeyed without difficulty to the Panjab, arriving perhaps as somewhat wayworn and cosmopolitan travellers but still clearly European. A certain amount of Christianity may have come along this track, but for any historical investigation clearly the first question is, what is the earliest period at which we have any record of its presence in India? It would appear

1 See Garbe and Harnack, Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums, n. Chrysostom (Hom. in Joh. 2. 2) writing at the end of the fourth century speaks of Syrians,
that the first allusions to the presence of Christians in Parthia, Bactria and the border lands of India date from the third century and that the oldest account of Christian communities in southern India is the narrative of Cosmas Indicopleustes (c. 525 A.D.). These latter Christians probably came to India by sea from Persia in consequence of the persecutions which raged there in 343 and 414, exactly as at a later date the Parsees escaped the violence of the Moslems by emigrating to Gujarat and Bombay.

The story that the Apostle Thomas preached in some part of India has often been used as an argument for the early introduction and influence of Christianity, but recent authorities agree in thinking that it is legendary or at best not provable. The tale occurs first in the Acts of St Thomas, the Syriac text of which is considered to date from about 250. It relates how the apostle was sold as a slave skilled in architecture and coming to the Court of Gundaphar, king of India, undertook to build a palace but expended the moneys given to him in charity and, when called to account, explained that he was building for the king a palace in heaven, not made with hands. This sounds more like an echo of some Buddhist Jātaka written in praise of liberality than an embellishment of any real biography. Other legends make southern India the sphere of Thomas’s activity, though he can hardly have taught in both Madras and Parthia, and a similar uncertainty is indicated by the tradition that his relics were transported to Edessa, which doubtless means that according to other accounts he died there. Tradition connects Thomas with Parthians quite as much as with Indians, and, if he really contributed to the diffusion of Christianity, it is more

Egyptians, Persians and ten thousand other nations learning Christianity from translations into their languages, but one cannot expect geographical accuracy in so rhetorical a passage.

1 Eusebius (Ecc. Hist. v. 10), supported by notices in Jerome and others, states that Panteenus went from Alexandria to preach in India and found there Christians using the Gospel according to Matthew written in Hebrew characters. It had been left there by the Apostle Bartholomew. But many scholars are of opinion that by India in this passage is meant southern Arabia. In these early notices India is used vaguely for Eastern Parthia, Southern Arabia and even Ethiopia. It requires considerable evidence to make it probable that at the time of Panteenus (second century A.D.) any one in India used the Gospel in a Semitic language.

likely that he laboured in the western part of Parthia than on its extreme eastern frontiers. The fact that there really was an Indo-Parthian king with a name something like Gondophares no more makes the legend of St Thomas historical than the fact that there was a Bohemian king with a name something like Wenceslas makes the Christmas carol containing that name historical.

On the other hand it is clear that during the early centuries of our era no definite frontier in the religious and intellectual sphere can be drawn between India and Persia. Christianity reached Persia early: it formed part of the composite creed of Mani, who was born about 216, and Christians were persecuted in 343. From at least the third century onwards Christian ideas may have entered India, but this does not authorize the assumption that they came with sufficient prestige and following to exercise any lively influence, or in sufficient purity to be clearly distinguished from Zoroastrianism and Manichæism.

By water there was an ancient connection between the west coast of India and both the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Traffic by the former route was specially active, from the time of Augustus to that of Nero. Pliny\(^1\) complains that every year India and the East took from Italy a hundred million sesterces in return for spices, perfumes and ornaments. Strabo\(^2\) who visited Egypt tells how 120 ships sailed from Myos Hormos (on the Red Sea) to India "although in the time of the Ptolemies scarcely any one would undertake this voyage." Muziris (Cranganore) was the chief depot of western trade and even seems to have been the seat of a Roman commercial colony. Roman coins have been found in northern and even more abundantly in southern India, and Hindu mints used Roman models. But only rarely can any one except sailors and merchants, who made a speciality of eastern trade, have undertaken the long and arduous journey. Certainly ideas travel with mysterious rapidity. The debt of Indian astronomy to Greece is undeniable\(^3\) and if the same cannot be affirmed of Indian mathematics and medicine yet the resemblance between Greek and Indian treatises on these sciences is remarkable. Early

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\(^1\) Nat. Hist. xii. 18 (41).

\(^2\) ii. iv. 12. Strabo died soon after 21 A.D.

\(^3\) It is seen even in borrowed words, e.g. hora = ὅρα; Ἰγυού = Ζέδ; Ἡλιος = Ἀτλ.,
Tamil poems\(^1\) speak of Greek wines and dumb (that is unintelligible) Roman soldiers in the service of Indian kings, but do not mention philosophers, teachers or missionaries. After 70 A.D. this trade declined, perhaps because the Flavian Emperors and their successors were averse to the oriental luxuries which formed its staple, and in 215 the massacre ordered by Caracalla dealt a blow to the commercial importance of Alexandria from which it did not recover for a long time. Thus the period when intercourse between Egypt and India was most active is anterior to the period when Christianity began to spread; it is hardly likely that in 70 or 80 A.D. there were many Christians in Egypt.

As already mentioned, colonies of Christians from Persia settled on the west coast of India, where there are also Jewish colonies of considerable antiquity. The story that this Church was founded by St Thomas and that his relics are preserved in south India has not been found in any work older than Marco Polo\(^2\). Cosmas Indicopleustes states that the Bishop of Kalliana was appointed from Persia, and this explains the connection of Nestorianism with southern India, for at that time the Nestorian Catholicos of Ctesiphon was the only Christian prelate tolerated by the Persian Government.

This Church may have had a considerable number of adherents for it was not confined to Malabar, its home and centre, but had branches on the east coast near Madras. But it was isolated and became corrupt. It is said that in 660 it had no regular ministry and in the fourteenth century even baptism had fallen into disuse. Like the popular forms of Mohammedanism it adopted many Hindu doctrines and rites. This implies on the one hand a considerable exchange of ideas: on the other hand, if such reformers as Râmânuja and Râmânanda were in touch with these Nestorians we may doubt if they would have imbibed from them the teaching of the New Testament. There is evidence that Roman Catholic missions on their way to or from China landed in Malabar during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and made some converts. In 1330 the

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\(^1\) See Kanakasabhai's book, *The Tamils 1800 years ago*.

\(^2\) Harnack (*Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, II. 128) says “Dass die Thomas-Christen welche man im 10 Jahrhundert in Indien wieder entdeckte bis ins 3 Jahrhundert hinaufgehen lässt sich nicht erweisen.”
Pope sent a Bishop to Quilon with the object of bringing the Nestorians into communion with the see of Rome. But the definite establishment of Roman Catholicism dates from the Portuguese conquest of Goa in 1510, followed by the appointment of an Archbishop and the introduction of the Inquisition. Henceforth there is no difficulty in accounting for Christian influence, but it is generally admitted that the intolerance of the Portuguese made them and their religion distasteful to Hindus and Moslims alike. We hear, however, that Akbar, desiring to hear Christian doctrines represented in a disputation held at his Court, sent for Christian priests from Goa, and his Minister Abul Fazl is quoted as having written poetry in which mosques, churches and temples are classed together as places where people seek for God.

Such being the opportunities and approximate dates for Christian influence in India, we may now examine the features in Hinduism which have been attributed to it. They may be classified under three principal heads. (i) The monotheistic Sivaism of the south. (ii) Various doctrines of Vaishnavism such as bhakti, grace, the love and fatherhood of God, the Word, and incarnation. (iii) Particular ceremonies or traditions such as the sacred meal known as Prasâda and the stories of Krishna’s infancy.

In southern India we have a seaboard in communication with Egypt, Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The reality of intercourse with the west is attested by Roman, Jewish, Nestorian and Mohammedan settlements, but on the other hand the Brahmans of Malabar are remarkable even according to Hindu standards for their strictness and aloofness. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the want of chronology in south Indian literature makes it difficult to sketch with any precision even the outlines of its religious history, but it is probable that Aryan religion came first in the form of Buddhism and Jainism and that Sivaism made its appearance only when the ground had been prepared by them. They were less exposed than the Buddhism of the north to the influences which created the Mahâyâna, but they no doubt mingled with the indigenous beliefs of the Dravidians. There is no record of what these may have been before

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1 For Akbar and Christianity, see Cathay and the Way Thither (Hakluyt Society), vol. iv. 172-3.
contact with Hindu civilization; in historical times they comprise the propitiation of spirits, mostly malignant and hence often called devils, but also a strong tendency to monotheism and ethical poetry of a high moral standard. These latter characteristics are noticeable in most, if not all, Dravidian races, even those which are in the lower stages of civilization¹. This temperament, educated by Buddhism and finally selecting Sivaism, might spontaneously produce such poems as the Tiruvâçagam. Such ideas as God's love for human souls and the soul's struggle to be worthy of that love are found in other Indian religions besides Tamil Sivaism and in their earlier forms cannot be ascribed to Christian influence, but it must be admitted that the poems of the Sittars show an extraordinary approximation to the language of devotional literature in Europe. If, as Caldwell thinks, these compositions are as recent as the sixteenth or seventeenth century, there is no chronological difficulty in supposing their contents to be inspired by Christian ideas. But the question rather is, would Portuguese Catholicism or corrupt Nestorianism have inspired poems denouncing idolatry and inculcating the purest theism? Scepticism on this point is permissible. I am inclined to think that the influence of Christianity as well as the much greater influence of Mohammedanism was mostly indirect. They imported little in the way of custom and dogma, but they strengthened the idea which naturally accompanies sectarianism, namely, that it is reasonable and proper for a religion to inculcate the worship of one all-sufficient power. But that this idea can flourish in surroundings repugnant to both Christianity and Islam is shown by the sect of Lingâyats.

The resemblances to Christianity in Vishnuism are on a larger scale than the corresponding phenomena in Sivaism. In most parts of India, from Assam to Madras, the worship of Vishnu and his incarnations has assumed the form of a monotheism which, if frequently turning into pantheism, still persistently inculcates loving devotion to a deity who is himself moved by love for mankind. The corresponding phase of Sivaism is restricted to certain periods and districts of southern India. The doctrine of bhakti, or devotional faith, is common to Vishnuites and Sivaites, but is more prominent among the

¹ See Gover, *Folk Songs of Southern India*, 1871.
former. It has often been conjectured to be due to Christian influence but the conjecture is, I think, wrong, for the doctrine is probably pre-Christian. Pāṇini\textsuperscript{1} appears to allude to it, and the idea of loving devotion to God is fully developed in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad and the Bhagavad-gitā, works of doubtful date it is true, but in my opinion anterior to the Christian era and on any hypothesis not much posterior to it. Some time must have elapsed after the death of Christ before Christianity could present itself in India as an influential doctrine. Also bhakti does not make its first appearance as something new and full grown. The seed, the young plant and the flower can all be found on Indian soil. So, too, the idea that God became man for the sake of mankind is a gradual Indian growth. In the Veda Vishnu takes three steps for the good of men. It is probable that his avatāras were recognized some centuries before Christ and, if this is regarded as not demonstrable, it cannot be denied that the analogous conception of Buddhas who visit the world to save and instruct mankind is pre-Christian\textsuperscript{2}. Similarly though passages may be found in the writings of Kabir and others in which the doctrine of Śabda or the Word is stated in language recalling the fourth Gospel, and though in this case the hypothesis of imitation offers no chronological difficulties, yet it is unnecessary. For Śabda, in the sense of the Veda conceived as an eternal self-existent sound, is an old Indian notion and when stated in these terms does not appear very Christian. It is found in Zoroastrianism, where Manthra Spenta the holy word is said to be the very soul of God\textsuperscript{3}, and it is perhaps connected with the still more primitive notion that words and names have a mysterious potency and are in themselves spells. But even if the idea of Śabda were derived from the idea of Logos it need not be an instance of specifically Christian influence, for this Logos idea was only utilized by Christianity and was part of the common stock of religious thought prevalent about the time of Christ in Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor, and it is even possible that its earlier forms may owe something to India. And were it proved that

\textsuperscript{1} rv. 3. 95, 98.

\textsuperscript{2} Cf. the Pali verses in the Therīgāthā, 157: "Hail to thee, Buddha, who savest me and many others from suffering."

\textsuperscript{3} See Yasht, 13. 81 and Vendidad, 19. 14.
the teaching of Kabir, which clearly owes much to Islam, also owes much to Christianity, the fact would not be very important, for the followers of Kabir form a small and eccentric though interesting sect, in no way typical of Hinduism as a whole.

The form of Vishnuism known as Pancarâtra appears to have had its origin, or at least to have flourished very early, in Kashmir and the extreme north-west, and perhaps a direct connection may be traced between central Asia and some aspects of the worship of Krishna at Muttra. The passage of Greek and Persian influence through the frontier districts is attested by statuary and coins, but no such memorials of Christianity have been discovered. But the leaders of the Vishnuite movement in the twelfth and subsequent centuries were mostly Brahmans of southern extraction who migrated to Hindustan. Stress is sometimes laid on the fact that they lived in the neighbourhood of ancient Nestorian churches and even Garbe thinks that Râmânuja, who studied for some time at Conjevaram, was in touch with the Christians of Mallapur near Madras. I find it hard to believe that such contact can have had much result. For Râmânuja was a Brahman of the straitest sect who probably thought it contamination to be within speaking distance of a Christian. He was undoubtedly a remarkable scholar and knew by heart all the principal Hindu scriptures, including those that teach bhakti. Why then suppose that he took his ideas not from works like the Bhagavad-gîtâ on which he wrote a commentary or from the Pancarâtra which he eulogizes, but from persons whom he must have regarded as obscure heretics? And lastly is there any proof that such ideas as the love of God and salvation by faith flourished among the Christians of Mallapur? In remote branches of the oriental Church Christianity is generally reduced to legends and superstitions, and this Church was so corrupt that it had even lost the rite of

1 The liberal ideas as to caste held by some Vishnuites are due to Râmânand (c. 1400) who was excommunicated by his coreligionists. I find it hard to agree with Garbe that Râmânuja admitted the theoretical equality of all castes. He says himself (Sri-Bhāshya, n. 3, 40, 47) that souls are of the same nature in so far as they are all parts of Brahman (a proposition which follows from his fundamental principles and is not at all due to Christian influence), but that some men are entitled to read the Veda while others are debarred from the privilege. All fire, he adds, is of the same nature, but fire taken from the house of a Brahman is pure, whereas fire taken from a cremation ground is impure. Even so the soul is defiled by being associated with a low-caste body.
baptism and is said to have held that the third person of the Trinity was the Madonna\(^1\) and not the Holy Ghost. Surely this doctrine is an extraordinary heresy in Christianity and far from having inspired Hindu theories as to the position of Vishnu's spouse is borrowed from those theories or from some of the innumerable Indian doctrines about the Sakti.

It is clear that the Advaita philosophy of Śankara was influential in India from the ninth century to the twelfth and then lost some of its prestige owing to the rise of a more personal theism. It does not seem to me that any introduction or reinforcement of Christianity, to which this theistic movement might be attributed, can be proved to have taken place about 1100, and it is not always safe to seek for a political or social explanation of such movements. But if we must have an external explanation, the obvious one is the progress of Mohammedanism. One may even suggest a parallel between the epochs of Śankara and of Rāmānuja. The former, though the avowed enemy of Buddhism, introduced into Hinduism the doctrine of Māyā described by Indian critics as crypto-Buddhism. Rāmānuja probably did not come into direct contact with Islam\(^2\), which was the chief enemy of Hinduism in his time, but his theism (which, however, was semi-pantheistic) may have been similarly due to the impression produced by that enemy on Indian thought\(^3\).

It is easy to see superficial parallels between Hindu and Christian ceremonies, but on examination they are generally not found to prove that there has been direct borrowing from Christianity. For instance, the superior castes are commonly styled twice born in virtue of certain initiatory ceremonies performed on them in youth, and it is natural to compare this second birth with baptismal regeneration. But, though there is here a real similarity of ideas, it would be hard to deny that these ideas as well as the practices which express them have arisin

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1 See Grieson and Garbe. But I have not found a quotation from any original authority. Mohammed, however, had the same notion of the Trinity.

2 But the Mappilas or Moplahs appear to have settled on the Malabar coast about 900 A.D.

3 Similarly the neo-Confucianism of the Sung dynasty was influenced by Mahāyānist Buddhism. Chu-hsi and his disciples condemned Buddhism, but the new problems and new solutions which they brought forward would not have been heard of but for Buddhism.
independently\textsuperscript{1}. And though a practice of sprinkling the forehead with water similar to baptism is in use among Hindus, it is only a variety of the world-wide ceremony of purification with sacred water. Several authors have seen a resemblance between the communion and a sacred meal often eaten in Hindu temples and called \textit{prasād} (favour) or mahāprasād. The usual forms of this observance do not resemble the Mass in externals (as do certain ceremonies in Lamaism) and the analogy, if any, resides in the eating of a common religious meal. Such a meal in Indian temples has its origin in the necessity and advantage of disposing of sacrificial food. It cannot be maintained that the deities eat the substance of it and, if it is not consumed by fire, the obvious method of disposal is for mankind to eat it. The practice is probably world-wide and the consumers may be either the priests or the worshippers. Both varieties of the rite are found in India. In the ancient Soma sacrifices the officiants drank the residue of the sacred drink: in modern temples, where ample meals are set before the god more than once a day, it is the custom, perhaps because it is more advantageous, to sell them to the devout. From this point of view the \textit{prasād} is by no means the equivalent of the Lord's Supper, but rather of the things offered to idols which many early Christians scrupled to eat. It has, however, another and special significance due to the regulations imposed by caste. As a rule a Hindu of respectable social status cannot eat with his inferiors without incurring defilement. But in many temples members of all castes can eat the \textit{prasād} together as a sign that before the deity all his worshippers are equal. From this point of view the \textit{prasād} is really analogous to the communion inasmuch as it is the sign of religious community, but it is clearly distinct in origin and though the sacred food may be eaten with great reverence, we are not told that it is associated with the ideas of commemoration, sacrifice or transubstantiation which cling to the Christian sacrament\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{1} The idea of the second birth is found in the Majjhima Nikāya, where in Sutta 86 the converted brigand Angulimāla speaks of his regenerate life as \textit{Yato aham ariydya jātiyā jātva}, "Since I was born by this noble (or holy) birth." Brahmanic parallels are numerous, \textit{e.g.} Manu, 2. 146.

\textsuperscript{2} It is said, however, that the celebration of the Prasād by the Kabirpanthis bears an extraordinary resemblance to the Holy Communion of Christians. This may be so, but, as already mentioned, this late and admittedly composite sect is not typical of Hinduism as a whole.
The most curious coincidences between Indian and Christian legend are afforded by the stories and representations of the birth and infancy of Krishna. These have been elaborately discussed by Weber in a well-known monograph. Krishna is represented with his mother, much as the infant Christ with the Madonna; he is born in a stable, and other well-known incidents such as the appearance of a star are reproduced. Two things strike us in these resemblances. Firstly, they are not found in the usual literary version of the Indian legend, and it is therefore probable that they represent an independent and borrowed story: secondly, they are almost entirely concerned with the mythological aspects of Christianity. Many Christians would admit that the adoration of the Virgin and Child is unscriptural and borrowed from the worship of pagan goddesses who were represented as holding their divine offspring in their arms. If this is admitted, it is possible that Devaki and her son may be a replica not of the Madonna but of a pagan prototype. But there is no difficulty in admitting that Christian legends and Christian art may have entered northern India from Bactria and Persia, and have found a home in Muttra. Only it does not follow from this that any penetrating influence transformed Hindu thought and is responsible for Krishna’s divinity, for the idea of bhakti, or for the theology of the Bhagavad-gītā. The borrowed features in the Krishna story are superficial and also late. They do not occur in the Mahābhārata and the earliest authority cited by Weber is Hemādri, a writer of the thirteenth century. Allowing that what he describes may have existed several centuries before his own date, we have still no ground for tracing the main ideas of Vaishnavism to Christianity and the later vagaries of Krishnaism are precisely the aspects of Indian religion which most outrage Christian sentiment.

One edition of the Bhavisya Purana contains a summary

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2. In spite of making enquiry I have never seen or heard of these representations of a stable myself. As Senart points out (Légende, p. 336) all the personages who play a part in Krishna’s early life are shown in these tableaux in one group, but this does not imply that shepherds and their flocks are supposed to be present at his birth.
3. Though the ordinary legend does not say that Krishna was born in a stable yet it does associate him with cattle.
of the book of Genesis from Adam to Abraham. Though it is a late interpolation, it shows conclusively that the editors of Puranas had no objection to borrowing from Christian sources and it may be that some incidents in the life of Krishna as related by the Vishnu, Bhāgavata and other Puranas are borrowed from the Gospels, such as Kamsa's orders to massacre all male infants when Krishna is born, the journey of Nanda, Krishna's foster-father, to Mathurā in order to pay taxes and the presentation of a pot of ointment to Krishna by a hunchback woman whom he miraculously makes straight. In estimating the importance of such coincidences we must remember that they are merely casual details in a long story of adventures which, in their general outline, bear no relation to the life of Christ. The most striking of these is the "massacre of the Innocents." The Hari-vamsa, which is not later than the fifth century A.D., relates that Kamsa killed all the other children of Devakī, though it does not mention a general massacre, and Pātanjali (c. 150 B.C.) knew the legend of the hostility between Krishna and Kamsa and the latter's death. So if anything has been borrowed from the Gospel account it is only the general slaughter of children. The mention of a pot of ointment strikes Europeans because such an object is not familiar to us, but it was an ordinary form of luxury in India and Judæa alike, and the fact that a woman honoured both Krishna and Christ in the same way but in totally different circumstances is hardly more than a chance coincidence. The fact that both Nanda and Joseph leave their homes in order to pay their taxes is certainly curious and I will leave the reader to form his own opinion about it. The instance of the Bhavishya Purana shows that Hindus had no scruples about borrowing from the Bible and in some Indian dialects the name Krishna appears as Krishto or Kushto. On the other hand, whatever borrowing there may have been is concerned exclusively with trivial details: the principal episodes of the Krishna legend were known before the Christian era.

This is perhaps the place to examine a curious episode of the Mahābhārata which narrates the visit of certain sages to

1 Pargiter, *Dynasties of the Kali age*, p. xviii.
2 Commentary on Pūṇini, 2. 3. 36, 3. 1. 36 and 3. 2. 111. It seems probable that Pātanjali knew the story of Krishna and Kamsa substantially as it is recounted in the Hari-vamsa.
a region called Śvetadvipa, the white island or continent, identified by some with Alexandria or a Christian settlement in central Asia. The episode occurs in the Śantiparvan of the Mahābhārata and is introduced by the story of a royal sacrifice, at which most of the gods appeared in visible shape but Hari (Vishnu or Krishna) took his offerings unseen. The king and his priests were angry, but three sages called Ekata, Dvīta and Trita, who are described as the miraculous offspring of Brahmā, interposed explaining that none of those present were worthy to see Hari. They related how they had once desired to behold him in his own form and after protracted austerities repaired under divine guidance to an island called Śvetadvipa on the northern shores of the Sea of Milk. It was inhabited by beings white and shining like the moon who followed the rules of the Pancarātra, took no food and were continually engaged in silent prayer. So great was the effulgence that at first the visitors were blinded. It was only after another century of penance that they began to have hopes of beholding the deity. Then there suddenly arose a great light. The inhabitants of the island ran towards it with joined hands and, as if they were making an offering, cried, "Victory to thee, O thou of the lotus eyes, reverence to thee, producer of all things: reverence to thee,

1 Section 337. A journey to Śvetadvipa is also related in the Kathāsarit sāgara, LIV.
2 The most accessible statement of the geographical fancies here referred to is in Vishnu Purāna, Book II, chap. IV. The Sea of Milk is the sixth of the seven concentric seas which surround Jambudvīpa and Mt Meru. It divides the sixth of the concentric continents or Śakadvipa from the seventh or Pushkara-dvīpa. The inhabitants of Śakadvipa worship Vishnu as the Sun and have this much reality that at any rate, according to the Vishnu and Bhavishya Purānas, they are clearly Iranian Sun-worshippers whose priests are called Magas or Mrigas. Pushkara-dvīpa is a terrestrial paradise: the inhabitants live a thousand years, are of the same nature as the gods and free from sorrow and sin. "The three Vedas, the Purānas, Ethics and Polity are unknown" among them and "there are no distinctions of caste or order: there are no fixed institutes." The turn of fancy which located this non-Brahmanic Utopia in the north seems akin to that which led the Greeks to talk of Hyperboreans. Fairly early in the history of India it must have been discovered that the western, southern, and eastern coasts were washed by the sea so that the earthly paradise was naturally placed in the north. Thus we hear of an abode of the blessed called the country of the holy Uttara Kurus or northern Kurus. Here nothing can be perceived with human senses (Mahābh. Sabbath, 1043), and it is mentioned in the same breath as Heaven and the city of Indra (ib. Anusāsa, 2841).

It is not quite clear (neither is it of much moment), whether the Mahābhārata intends by Śvetadvipa one of these concentric world divisions or a separate island. The Kūrma and Padma Purānas also mention it as the shining abode of Vishnu and his saintly servants.
Hrishikeśa, great Purusha, the first-born." The three sages saw nothing but were conscious that a wind laden with perfumes blew past them. They were convinced, however, that the deity had appeared to his worshippers. A voice from heaven told them that this was so and that no one without faith (abhakta) could see Nārāyaṇa.

A subsequent section of the same book tells us that Nārada visited Śvetadvipa and received from Nārāyaṇa the Pancarātra, which is thus definitely associated with the locality.

Some writers have seen in this legend a poetical account of contact with Christianity, but wrongly, as I think. We have here no mythicized version of a real journey but a voyage of the imagination. The sea of milk, the white land and its white shining inhabitants are an attempt to express the pure radiance proper to the courts of God, much as the Book of Revelation tells of a sea of glass, elders in white raiment and a deity whose head and hair were white like wool and snow. Nor need we suppose, as some have done, that the worship of the white sages is an attempt to describe the Mass. The story does not say that whenever the White Islanders held a religious service the deity appeared, but that on a particular occasion when the deity appeared they ran to meet him and saluted him with a hymn. The idea that prayer and meditation are the sacrifice to be offered by perfected saints is thoroughly Indian and ancient. The account testifies to the non-Brahmanic character of this worship of Vishnu, which was patronized by the Brahmans though not originated by them, but there is nothing exotic in the hymn to Nārāyaṇa and the epithet first-born (pūrvavaja), in which some have detected a Christian flavour, is as old as the Rig Veda. The reason for laying the scene of the story in the north (if indeed the points of the compass have any place in this mythical geography) is no doubt the early connection of the Pancarātra with Kashmir and north-western India. The facts that some Puranas people the regions near Śveta-dvipa with Iranian sun-worshippers and that some details of the Pancarātra (though not the system as a whole) show a resemblance to Zoroastrianism suggest interesting hypotheses as to origin of this form of Vishnuism, but more facts are needed to confirm them. Chronology gives us little help, for though the

1 Garbe thinks that the Sea of Milk is Lake Balkash. For the Pancarātra see book vi. iii. 3.

2 See note 2 on last page.
Mahābhārata was substantially complete in the fourth century, it cannot be denied that additions may have been made to it later and that the story of Śvetadvipa may be one of them. There were Nestorian Bishops at Merv and Herat in the fifth century, but there appears to be no evidence that Christianity reached Transoxiana before the fall of the Sassanids in the first half of the seventh century.

Thus there is little reason to regard Christianity as an important factor in the evolution of Hinduism, because (a) there is no evidence that it appeared in an influential form before the sixteenth century and (b) there is strong evidence that most of the doctrines and practices resembling Christianity have an Indian origin. On the other hand abundant instances show that the Hindus had no objection to borrowing from a foreign religion anything great or small which took their fancy. But the interesting point is that the principal Christian doctrines were either indigenous in India—such as bhakti and avatāras—or repugnant to the vast majority of Hindus, such as the crucifixion and atonement. I do not think that Nestorianism had any appreciable effect on the history of religious thought in southern India. Hellenic and Zoroastrian ideas undoubtedly entered north-western India, but, though Christian ideas may have come with them, few of the instances cited seem even probable except some details in the life of Krishna which affect neither the legend as a whole nor the doctrines associated with it. Some later sects, such as the Kabirpanthis, show remarkable resemblances to Christianity, but then the teaching of Kabir was admittedly a blend of Hinduism and Islam, and since Islam accepted many Christian doctrines, it remains to be proved that any further explanation is needed. Barth observed that criticism is generally on the look out for the least trace of Christian influence on Hinduism but does not pay sufficient attention to the extent of Muslim influence. Every student of Indian religion should bear in mind this dictum of the great French savant. After the sixteenth century there is no difficulty in supposing direct contact with Roman Catholicism. Tukaram, the Maratha poet who lived comparatively near to Goa, may have imitated the diction of the Gospels.

Some authors\(^1\) are disposed to see Christian influence in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, particularly in the Amidist

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\(^1\) E.g. several works of Lloyd and Sacki, *The Nestorian Monument in China*. 

\(\text{B. III.}\)
sects. I have touched on this subject in several places but it may be well to summarize my conclusions here.

The chief Amidist doctrines are clearly defined in the Sukhāvatī-vyūha which was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in the latter half of the second century A.D. It must therefore have existed in Sanskrit at least in the first century of our era, at which period dogmatic Christianity could hardly have penetrated to India or any part of Central Asia where a Sanskrit treatise was likely to be written. Its doctrines must therefore be independent of Christianity and indeed their resemblance to Christianity is often exaggerated, for though salvation by faith in Amida is remarkably like justification by faith, yet Amida is not a Saviour who died for the world and faith in him is coupled with the use of certain invocations. The whole theory has close parallels in Zoroastrianism and is also a natural development of ideas already existing in India.

Nor can I think that the common use of rites on behalf of the dead in Buddhist China is traceable to Christianity. In this case too the parallel is superficial, for the rites are in most cases not prayers for the dead: the officiants recite formulae by which they acquire merit and they then formally transfer this merit to the dead. Seeing how great was the importance assigned to the cult of the dead in China, it is not necessary to seek for explanations why a religion trying to win its way in those countries invented ceremonies to satisfy the popular craving, and Buddhism had no need to imitate Christianity, for from an early period it had countenanced offerings intended to comfort and help the departed.

Under the T'ang dynasty Manichæism, Nestorianism and new streams of Buddhism all entered China. These religions had some similarity to one another, their clergy may have co-operated and Manichæism certainly adopted Buddhist ideas. There is no reason why Buddhism should not have adopted Nestorian ideas and, in so far as the Nestorians familiarized China with the idea of salvation by faith in a divine personage, they may have helped the spread of Amidism. But the evidence that we possess seems to show not that the Nestorians introduced the story of Christ's life and sacrifice into Buddhism but that they suppressed the idea of atonement by his death, possibly under Buddhist influence.
CHAPTER LVI

INDIAN INFLUENCE IN THE WESTERN WORLD

The influence of Indian religion on Christianity is part of the wider question of its influence on the west generally. It is clear that from 200 B.C. until 300 A.D. oriental religion played a considerable part in the countries round the Mediterranean. The worship of the Magna Mater was known in Rome by 200 B.C. and that of Isis and Serapis in the time of Sulla. In the early centuries of the Christian era the cultus of Mithra prevailed not only in Rome but in most parts of Europe where there were Roman legions, even in Britain. These religions may be appropriately labelled with the vague word oriental, for they are not so much the special creeds of Egypt and Persia transplanted into Roman soil as fragments, combinations and adaptations of the most various eastern beliefs. They differed from the forms of worship indigenous to Greece and Italy in being personal, not national: they were often emotional and professed to reveal the nature and destinies of the soul. If we ask whether there are any definitely Indian elements in all this orientalism, the answer must be that there is no clear case of direct borrowing, nothing Indian analogous to the migrations of Isis and Mithra. If Indian thought had any influence on the Mediterranean it was not immediate, but through Persia, Babylonia and Egypt. But it is possible that the doctrine of metempsychosis and the ideal of the ascetic life are echoes of India. Though the former is found in an incomplete shape among savages in many parts of the world, there is no indication that it was indigenous in Egypt, Syria, Babylonia, Asia Minor, Greece or Italy. It crops up now and again as a tenet held by philosophers or communities of cosmopolitan tastes such as the Orphic Societies, but usually in circumstances which suggest a foreign origin. It is said, however, to have formed part of the doctrines taught by the Druids in Gaul. Similarly though occasional fasts and other mortifications may have been usual in the worship of various deities and though the rigorous Spartan discipline was a sort of military asceticism, still the idea that the religious life
consists in suppressing the passions, which plays such a large part in Christian monasticism, can be traced not to any Jewish or European institution but to Egypt. Although monasticism spread quickly thence to Syria, it is admitted that the first Christian hermits and monasteries were Egyptian and there is some evidence for the existence there of pagan hermits. Egypt was a most religious country, but it does not appear that asceticism, celibacy or meditation formed part of its older religious life, and their appearance in Hellenistic times may be due to a wave of Asiatic influence starting originally from India.

Looking westwards from India and considering what were the circumstances favouring the diffusion of Indian ideas, we must note first that Hindus have not only been in all ages pre-occupied by religious questions but have also had a larger portion of the missionary spirit than is generally supposed. It is true that in wide tracts and long periods this spirit has been suppressed by Brahmanic exclusiveness, but phenomena like the spread of Buddhism and the establishment of Hinduism in Indo-China and Java speak for themselves. The spiritual tide flowed eastwards rather than westwards; still it is probable that its movement was felt, though on a smaller scale, in the accessible parts of the west. By land, our record tells us mainly of what came into India from Persia and Bactria, but something must have gone out. By water we know that at least after about 700 B.C. there was communication with the Persian Gulf, Arabia and probably the Red Sea. Semitic alphabets were borrowed: in the Jātakas we hear of merchants going to Baeveru or Babylon: Solomon’s commercial ventures brought him Indian products. But the strongest testimony to the dissemination of religious ideas is found in Asoka’s celebrated edict (probably 256 B.C.) in which he claims to have spread the Dhamma as far as the dominions of Antiochus “and beyond that Antiochus to where dwell the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander.” The kings mentioned are identified as the rulers of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene and Epirus. Asoka compares his missionary triumphs to the military conquests of other monarchs. It may be that the comparison is only too just

and that like them he claimed to have extended his law to regions where his name was unknown. No record of the arrival of Buddhist missions in any Hellenistic kingdom has reached us and the language of the edict, if examined critically, is not precise. On the other hand, however vague it may be, it testifies to two things. Firstly, Egypt, Syria and the other Hellenistic states were realities to the Indians of this period, distant but not fabulous regions. Secondly, the king desired to spread the knowledge of the law in these countries and this desire was shared, or inspired, by the monks whom he patronized. It is therefore probable that, though the difficulties of travelling were great and the linguistic difficulties of preaching an Indian religion even greater, missionaries set out for the west and reached if not Macedonia and Epirus, at least Babylon and Alexandria. We may imagine that they would frequent the temples and the company of the priests and not show much talent for public preaching. If no record of them remains, it is not more wonderful than the corresponding silence in the east about Greek visitors to India.

It is only after the Christian era that we find Apollonius and Plotinus looking towards India as the home of wisdom. In earlier periods the definite instances of connection with India are few. Indian figures found at Memphis perhaps indicate the existence there of an Indian colony\textsuperscript{1}, and a Ptolemaic gravestone has been discovered bearing the signs of the wheel and trident\textsuperscript{2}. The infant deity Horus is represented in Indian attitudes and as sitting on a lotus. Some fragments of the Kanarese language have been found on a papyrus, but it appears not to be earlier than the second century A.D.\textsuperscript{3} In 21 A.D. Augustus while at Athens received an embassy from India which came \textit{vid} Antioch.

It was accompanied by a person described as Zarmanochegas, an Indian from Bargosa who astonished the Athenians by publicly burning himself alive\textsuperscript{4}. We also hear of the movement of an Indian tribe from the Panjab to Parthia and thence to

\textsuperscript{1} Flinders Petrie, \textit{Man}, 1908, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{J.R.A.S.} 1898, p. 875.
\textsuperscript{4} Nicolaus Damascenus, quoted by Strabo, xv. 73. See also Dion Cassius, ix. 58, who calls the Indian Zarmaros. Zarmanochegas perhaps contains the two words Śramana and Ācārya.
Armenia (149–127 B.C.)\(^1\), and of an Indian colony at Alexandria in the time of Trajan. Doubtless there were other tribal movements and other mercantile colonies which have left no record, but they were all on a small scale and there was no general outpouring of India westwards.

The early relations of India were with Babylon rather than with Egypt, but if Indian ideas reached Babylon they may easily have spread further. Communication between Egypt and Babylon existed from an early period and the tablets of Tel-el-Amarna testify to the antiquity and intimacy of this intercourse. At a later date Necho invaded Babylonia but was repulsed. The Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity (538 B.C.) with their religious horizon enlarged and modified. They were chiefly affected by Zoroastrian ideas but they may have become acquainted with any views and practices then known in Babylon, and not necessarily with those identified with the state worship, for the exiles may have been led to associate with other strangers. After about 535 B.C. the Persian empire extended from the valley of the Indus to the valley of the Nile and from Macedonia to Babylon. We hear that in the army which Xerxes led against Greece there were Indian soldiers, which is interesting as showing how the Persians transported subject races from one end of their empire to the other. After the career of Alexander, Hellenistic kingdoms took the place of this empire and, apart from inroads on the north-west frontier of India, maintained friendly relations with her. Seleucus Nicator sent Megasthenes as envoy about 300 B.C. and Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B.C.) a representative named Dionysius. Bindusâra, the father of Asoka, exchanged missions with Antiochus, and, according to a well-known anecdote\(^2\), expressed a wish to buy a professor (σοφιστήν). But Antiochus replied that Greek professors were not for sale.

Egyptologists consider that metempsychosis is not part of the earlier strata of Egyptian religion but appears first about 500 B.C., and Flinders Petrie refers to this period the originals of the earliest Hermetic literature. But other authorities regard these works as being both in substance and language consider-

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\(^1\) See *J.R.A.S.* 1907, p. 968.

ably posterior to the Christian era and as presenting a jumble of Christianity, Neoplatonism and Egyptian ideas.

I have neither space nor competence to discuss the date of the Hermetic writings, but it is of importance for the question which we are considering. They contain addresses to the deity like I am Thou and Thou art I (ἐγώ εἰμι σὺ καὶ σὺ ἐγώ). If such words could be used in Egypt several centuries before Christ, the probability of Indian influence seems to me strong, for they would not grow naturally out of Egyptian or Hellenistic religion. Five hundred years later they would be less remarkable. Whatever may be the date of the Hermetic literature, it is certain that the Book of Wisdom and the writings of Philo are pre-Christian and show a mixture of ideas drawn from many sources, Jewish, Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean. If these hospitable systems made the acquaintance of Indian philosophy, we may be sure that they gave it an unprejudiced and even friendly hearing. In the centuries just before the Christian era Egypt was a centre of growth for personal and private religious ideas¹, hardly possessing sufficient organization to form what we call a religion, yet still, inasmuch as they aspired to teach individual souls right conduct as well as true knowledge, implicitly containing the same scheme of teaching as the Buddhist and Christian Churches. But it is characteristic of all this movement that it never attempted to form a national or universal religion and remained in all its manifestations individual and personal, connected neither with the secular government nor with any national cultus. Among these religious ideas were monotheism mingled with pantheism to the extent of saying that God is all and all is one: the idea of the Logos or Divine Wisdom, which ultimately assumes the form that the Word is an emanation or Son of God; asceticism, or at least the desire to free the soul from the bondage of the senses; metempsychosis and the doctrine of conversion or the new birth of the soul, which fits in well with metempsychosis, though it frequently exists apart from it. I doubt if there is sufficient reason for attributing the doctrine of the Logos² to India, but it is possible that asceticism and the belief in metempsychosis received their first impulse thence.

¹ See Flinders Petrie, Personal Religion in Egypt before Christianity, 1909.
² As I have pointed out elsewhere there is little real analogy between the ideas of Logos and Śabda.
They appear late and, like the phraseology of the Hermetic books, they do not grow naturally out of antecedent ideas and practices in Egypt and Palestine. The life followed by such communities as the Therapeutæ and Essenes is just such as might have been evolved by seekers after truth who were trying to put into practice in another country the religious ideals of India. There are differences: for instance these communities laboured with their hands and observed the seventh day, but their main ideas, retirement from the world and suppression of the passions, are those of Indian monks and foreign to Egyptian and Jewish thought.

The character of Pythagoras's teaching and its relation to Egypt have been much discussed and the name of the master was clearly extended by later (and perhaps also by early) disciples to doctrines which he never held. But it seems indisputable that there were widely spread both in Greece and Italy societies called Pythagorean or Orphic which inculcated a common rule of life and believed in metempsychosis. The rule of life did not as a rule amount to asceticism in the Indian sense, which was most uncongenial to Hellenic ideas, but it comprised great self-restraint. The belief in metempsychosis finds remarkably clear expression: we hear in the Orphic fragments of the circle of birth and of escape from it, language strikingly parallel to many Indian utterances and strikingly unlike the usual turns of Greek speech and thought. Thus the soul is addressed as "Hail thou who hast suffered the suffering" and is made to declare "I have flown out of the sorrowful weary wheel." I see no reason for discrediting the story that Pythagoras visited Egypt. He is said to have been a Samian and during his life (c. 500 b.c.) Samos had a special connection with Egypt, for Polycrates was the ally of Amasis and assisted him with troops. The date, if somewhat early, is not far removed from the time when metempsychosis became part of Egyptian religion. The general opinion of antiquity connected the Orphic

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1 Kύκλου ὁ Ἐφέσιος μακαναίοις ἀργαλείᾳ. From the tablet found at Compagno. Cf. Proclus in Plat. Tim. v. 330, ἢ καὶ οἶκον Ἄρρητος ὅρμων καὶ τῇ κάρῃ τελεόμενοι πυχεῖν ἐνδεχόμενον Κύκλου Ῥαμανάς καὶ ἀναβιώσαι κακότητα. See J. E. Harrison, Proleg. to the study of Greek Religion, 1908, cap. xi. and appendix.

2 Burnet, Early Greek Philosophy, p. 94, says that it first occurs in the Busiris of Isocrates and does not believe that the account in Herodotus implies that Pythagoras visited Egypt.
doctrines with Thrace but so little is known of the Thracians and their origin that this connection does not carry us much further. They appear, however, to have had relations with Asia Minor and that region must have been in touch with India. But Orphism was also connected with Crete, and Cretan civilization had oriental affinities.

The point of greatest interest naturally is to determine what were the religious influences among which Christ grew up. Whatever they may have been, his originality is not called in question. Mohammed was an enquirer: in estimating his work we have often to ask what he had heard about Christianity and Judaism and how far he had understood it correctly. But neither the Buddha nor Christ were enquirers in this sense: they accepted the best thought of their time and country: with a genius which transcends comparison and eludes definition they gave it an expression which has become immortal. Neither the substance nor the form of their teaching can reasonably be regarded as identical, for the Buddha did not treat of God or the divine government of the world, whereas Christ’s chief thesis is that God loves the world and that therefore man should love God and his fellow men. But though their basic principles differ, the two doctrines agree in maintaining that happiness is obtainable not by pleasure or success or philosophy or rites but by an unselfish life, culminating in the state called Nirvana or the kingdom of heaven. “The kingdom of heaven is within you.”

In the Gospels Christ teaches neither asceticism nor metempsychosis. The absence of the former is remarkable: he eats flesh and allows himself to be anointed: he drinks wine, prescribes its use in religion and is credited with producing it miraculously when human cellars run short. But he praises poverty and the poor: the Sermon on the Mount and the instructions to the Seventy can be put in practice only by those who, like the members of a religious community, have severed all worldly ties and though the extirpation of desire is not in

1 Whatever may have been the true character and history of the enigmatic people of Mitanni it appears certain that they adored deities with Indian names about 1400 b.c. But they may have been Iranians, and it may be doubted if the Aryan Indians of this date believed in metempsychosis.

2 J. E. Harrison, l.c. pp. 459 and 684, seems to think that Orphism migrated from Crete to Thrace.
the Gospels held up as an end, the detachment, the freedom from care, lust and enmity prescribed by the law of the Buddha find their nearest counterpart in the lives of the Essenes and Therapeuta. Though we have no record of Christ being brought into contact with these communities (for John the Baptist appears to have been a solitary and erratic preacher) it is probable that their ideals were known to him and influenced his own. Their rule of life may have been a faint reflex of Indian monasticism. But the debt to India must not be exaggerated: much of the oriental element in the Essenes, such as their frequent purifications and their prayers uttered towards the sun, may be due to Persian influence. They seem to have believed in the pre-existence of the soul and to have held that it was imprisoned in the body, but this hardly amounts to metempsychosis, and metempsychosis cannot be found in the New Testament. The old Jewish outlook, preserved by the Sadducees, appears not to have included a belief in any life after death, and the supplements to this materialistic view admitted by the Pharisees hardly amounted to the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul but rather to a belief that the just would somehow acquire new bodies and live again. Thus people were ready to accept John the Baptist as being Elias in a new form. Perhaps these rather fragmentary ideas of the Jews are traceable to Egyptian and ultimately to Indian teaching about transmigration. That belief is said to crop up occasionally in rabbinical writings but was given no place in orthodox Christianity.

With regard to the teaching of Christ then, the conclusion must be that it owes no direct debt to Indian, Egyptian, Persian or other oriental sources. But inasmuch as he was in sympathy with the more spiritual elements of Judaism, largely borrowed during the Babylonian captivity, and with the unworlidy and self-denying lives of the Essenes, the tone of his teaching is

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1 The question of the Disciples in John ix. 2. Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? must if taken strictly imply some form of pre-existence. But it is a popular question, not a theological statement, and I doubt if severely logical deductions from it are warranted.

2 The pre-existence of the soul seems to be implied in the Book of Wisdom viii. 20. The remarkable expression in the Epistle of James iii. 6 τρόχος τῆς γεννήσεως suggests a comparison with the Orphic expressions quoted above and Samsâra, but it is difficult to believe it can mean more than "the course of nature."
nearer to these newer and imported doctrines than to the old law of Israel.\footnote{As in their legends, so in their doctrines, the uncanonical writings are more oriental than the canonical and contain more pantheistic and ascetic sayings. \textit{E.g.} "Where there is one alone, I am with him. Raise the stone and thou shalt find me: cleave the wood and I am there" (\textit{Ozyrhynchus Logia}). "I am thou and thou art I and wheresoever thou art I am also: and in all things I am distributed and wheresoever thou wilt thou gatherest me and in gathering me thou gatherest thyself" (Gospel of Eve in Epiph. \textit{Haer.} xxvi. 3). "When the Lord was asked, when should his kingdom come, he said: When two shall be one and the without as the within and the male with the female, neither male nor female" (\textit{Logia}).}

Some striking parallels have been pointed out between the Gospels and Indian texts of such undoubted antiquity that if imitation is admitted, the Evangelists must have been the imitators. Before considering these instances I invite the reader's attention to two parallel passages from Shakespeare and the Indian poet Bhartrihari. The latter is thus translated by Monier Williams:\footnote{\textit{Hinduism}, p. 549. The original is to be found in Bhartrihari's \textit{Vairogya\-\textit{takam}}, 112.}

\begin{quote}
Now for a little while a child, and now
An amorous youth; then for a season turned
Into the wealthy householder: then stripped
Of all his riches, with decrepit limbs
And wrinkled frame man creeps towards the end
Of life's erratic course and like an actor
Passes behind Death's curtain out of view.
\end{quote}

The resemblance of this to the well-known lines in \textit{As You Like It}, "All the world's a stage," etc., is obvious, and it is a real resemblance, although the point emphasized by Bhartrihari is that man leaves the world like an actor who at the end of the piece slips behind the curtain, which formed the background of an Indian stage. But, great as is the resemblance, I imagine that no one would maintain that it has any other origin than that a fairly obvious thought occurred to two writers in different times and countries and suggested similar expressions.

Now many parallels between the Buddhist and Christian scriptures—the majority as it seems to me of those collected by Edmunds and Anesaki—belong to this class.\footnote{\textit{The Buddhist and Christian Gospels}, 4th ed. 1909.} One of the most striking is the passage in the Vinaya relating how the
Buddha himself cared for a sick monk who was neglected by his colleagues and said to those latter, "Whosoever would wait upon me let him wait on the sick." Here the resemblance to Matthew xxv. 40 and 45 is remarkable, but I do not imagine that the writer of the Gospel had ever heard or read of the Buddha’s words. The sentiment which prompted them, if none too common, is at least widespread and is the same that made Confucius show respect and courtesy to the blind. The setting of the saying in the Vinaya and in the Gospel is quite different: the common point is that one whom all are anxious to honour sees that those around him show no consideration to the sick and unhappy and reproves them in the words of the text, words which admit of many interpretations, the simplest perhaps being "I bid you care for the sick: you neglect me if you neglect those whom I bid you to cherish."

But many passages in Buddhist and Christian writings have been compared where there is no real parallel but only some word or detail which catches the attention and receives an importance which it does not possess. An instance of this is the so-called parable of the prodigal son in the Lotus Sūtra, Chapter iv, which has often been compared with Luke xv. 11 ff. But neither in moral nor in plot are the two parables really similar. The Lotus maintains that there are many varieties of doctrine of which the less profound are not necessarily wrong, and it attempts to illustrate this by not very convincing stories of how a father may withhold the whole truth from his children for their good. In one story a father and son are separated for fifty years and both move about: the father becomes very rich, the son poor. The son in his wanderings comes upon his father’s palace and recognizes no one. The father, now a very old man, knows his son, but instead of welcoming him at once as his heir puts him through a gradual discipline and explains the real position only on his deathbed. These incidents have nothing in common with the parable related in the Gospel except that a son is lost and found, an event which occurs in a hundred oriental tales. What is much more remarkable, though hardly a case of borrowing, is that in both versions the chief personage, that is Buddha or God, is likened to a father as he also is in the parable of the carriages.

1 Mahāvagga, viii. 26.  
2 Lotus, chap. v.
One of the Jain scriptures called Uttarādyayana\(^1\) contains the following remarkable passage. "Three merchants set out on their travels each with his capital; one of them gained much, the second returned with his capital and the third merchant came home after having lost his capital. The parable is taken from common life; learn to apply it to the Law. The capital is human life, the gain is heaven," etc. It is impossible to fix the date of this passage: the Jain Canon in which it occurs was edited in 454 A.D. but the component parts of it are much older. It clearly gives a rough sketch of the idea which is elaborated in the parable of the talents. Need we suppose that there has been borrowing on either side? Only in a very restricted sense, I think, if at all. The parable is taken from common life, as the Indian text truly says. It occurred to some teacher, perhaps to many teachers independently, that the spiritual life may be represented as a matter of profit and loss and illustrated by the conduct of those who employ their money profitably or not. The idea is natural and probably far older than the Gospels, but the parable of the talents is an original and detailed treatment of a metaphor which may have been known to the theological schools of both India and Palestine. The parable of the sower bears the same relation to the much older Buddhist comparison of instruction to agriculture\(^2\) in which different classes of hearers correspond to different classes of fields.

I feel considerable hesitation about two other parallels. What relation does the story of the girl who gives two copper coins to the Sangha bear to the parable of the widow's mite? It occurs in Aśvaghosa's Sūtrālankāra, but though he was a learned poet, it is very unlikely that he had seen the Gospels. Although his poem ends like a fairy tale, for the poor girl marries the king's son as the reward of her piety, yet there is an extraordinary resemblance in the moral and the detail of the two mites. Can the origin be some proverb which was current in many countries and worked up differently?

The other parallel is between Christ's meeting with the woman of Samaria and a story in the Divyāvadāna\(^3\) telling how Ānanda asked an outcast maiden for water. Here the Indian work, which is probably not earlier than the third century A.D.,

\(^{1}\) vii. 15-21 in *S.B.E. xliv.* p. 29.
\(^{2}\) *Sam. Nik.* xliv. vii.
\(^{3}\) Ed. Cowell, p. 611.
might well be the borrower. Yet the incident is thoroughly Indian. The resemblance is not in the conversation but in the fact that both in India and Palestine water given by the impure is held to defile and that in both countries spiritual teachers rise above such rules. Perhaps Europeans, to whom such notions of defilement are unknown, exaggerate the similarity of the narratives, because the similarity of customs on which it depends seems remarkable.

There are, however, some incidents in the Gospels which bear so great a likeness to earlier stories found in the Pitakas that the two narratives can hardly be wholly independent. These are (a) the testimony of Asita and Simeon to the future careers of the infant Buddha and Christ: (b) the temptation of Buddha and Christ: (c) their transfiguration: (d) the miracle of walking on the water and its dependence on faith: (e) the miracle of feeding a multitude with a little bread. The first three parallels relate to events directly concerning the life of a superhuman teacher, Buddha or Christ. In saying that the two narratives can hardly be independent, I do not mean that one is necessarily unhistorical or that the writers of the Gospels had read the Pitakas. That a great man should have a mental crisis in his early life and feel that the powers of evil are trying to divert him from his high destiny is eminently likely. But in the East superhuman teachers were many and there grew up a tradition, fluctuating indeed but still not entirely without consistency, as to what they may be expected to do. Angelic voices at their birth and earthquakes at their death are coincidences in embellishment on which no stress can be laid, but when we find that Zoroaster, the Buddha and Christ were all tempted by the Evil One and all at the same period of their careers, it is impossible to avoid the suspicion that some of their biographers were influenced by the idea that such an incident was to be expected at that point, unless indeed we regard these so-called temptations as mental crises natural in the development of a religious genius. Similarly it is most remarkable that all accounts of the transfiguration of the Buddha and of Christ agree not only in describing the shining body but in adding a reference to impending death. The resemblance between the stories of Asita and Simeon seems to me less striking but I think that they owe their place in both biographies to the tradition that the
superman is recognized and saluted by an aged Saint soon after birth.

The two stories about miracles are of less importance in substance but the curious coincidences in detail suggest that they are pieces of folklore which circulated in Asia and Eastern Europe. The Buddhist versions occur in the introductions to Jātakas 190 and 78, which are of uncertain date, though they may be very ancient\(^1\). The idea that saints can walk on the water is found in the Majjhima-nikāya\(^2\), but the Jātaka adds the following particulars. A disciple desirous of seeing the Buddha begins to walk across a river in an ecstasy of faith. In the middle, his ecstasy fails and he feels himself sinking but by an effort of will he regains his former confidence and meets the Buddha safely on the further bank. In Jātaka 90 the Buddha miraculously feeds 500 disciples with a single cake and it is expressly mentioned that, after all had been satisfied, the remnants were so numerous that they had to be collected and disposed of.

Still all the parallels cited amount to little more than this, that there was a vague and fluid tradition about the superman's life of which fragments have received a consecration in literature. The Canonical Gospels show great caution in drawing on this fund of tradition, but a number of Buddhist legends make their appearance in the Apocryphal Gospels and are so obviously Indian in character that it can hardly be maintained that they were invented in Palestine or Egypt and spread thence eastwards. Trees bend down before the young Christ and dragons (nāgas) adore him: when he goes to school to learn the alphabet he convicts his teacher of ignorance and the good man faints\(^3\). When he enters a temple in Egypt the images prostrate themselves before him just as they do before the young Gotama in the temple of Kapilavastu\(^4\). Mary is luminous before the birth of Christ which takes place without pain or impurity\(^5\). But the parallel which is most curious, because the incident related is unusual in both Indian and European literature, is

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\(^2\) Maj. Nik. vi.

\(^3\) Gospel of Thomas: longer version, chaps. vi. xiv. See also the Arabic and Syriac Gospels of the Infancy, cf. Lalita-vistara, chap. x.


the detailed narrative in the Gospel of James, and also in the Lalita-vistara relating how all activity of mankind and nature was suddenly interrupted at the moment of the nativity\(^1\). Winds, stars and rivers stayed their motion and labourers stood still in the attitude in which each was surprised. The same Gospel of James also relates that Mary when six months old took seven steps, which must surely be an echo of the legend which attributes the same feat to the infant Buddha.

Several learned authors have discussed the debt of medieval Christian legend to India. The most remarkable instance of this is the canonization by both the Eastern and the Western Church of St Joasaph or Josaphat. It seems to be established that this name is merely a corruption of Bodhisat and that the story in its Christian form goes back to the religious romance called Barlaam and Josaph which appears to date from the seventh century\(^2\). It contains the history of an Indian prince who was converted by the preaching of Barlaam and became a hermit, and it introduces some of the well-known stories of Gotama’s early life, such as the attempt to hide from him the existence of sickness and old age, and his meetings with a cripple and an old man. The legends of St Placidus (or Hubert) and St Christopher have also been identified with the Nigrodha and Sutasoma Jātakas\(^3\). The identification is not to my mind conclusive nor, if it is admitted, of much importance. For who doubts that Indian fables reappear in Aesop or Kalilah and Dimnah? Little is added to this fact if they also appear in legends which may have some connection with the Church but which most Christians feel no obligation to believe.

But the occurrence of Indian legends in the Apocryphal Gospels is more important for it shows that, though in the early centuries of Christianity the Church was shy of this oriental exuberance, yet the materials were at hand for those who chose to use them. Many wonders attending the superman’s birth were deliberately rejected but some were accepted and oriental practices, such as asceticism, appear with a suddenness that makes the suspicion of foreign influence legitimate.

Not only was monasticism adopted by Christianity but

\(^1\) See Gospel of James, xviii. and Lal. Vist. vii. \textit{ad init.}


\(^3\) Nos. 12 and 537.
many practices common to Indian and to Christian worship obtained the approval of the Church at about the same time. Some of these, such as incense and the tonsure, may have been legacies from the Jewish and Egyptian priesthoods. Many coincidences also are due to the fact that both Buddhism and Christianity, while abolishing animal sacrifices, were ready to sanction old religious customs: both countenanced the performance before an image or altar of a ritual including incense, flowers, lights and singing. This recognition of old and widespread rites goes far to explain the extraordinary similarity of Buddhist services in Tibet and Japan (both of which derived their ritual ultimately from India) to Roman Catholic ceremonial. Yet when all allowance is made for similar causes and coincidences, it is hard to believe that a collection of such practices as clerical celibacy, confession, the veneration of relics, the use of the rosary and bells can have originated independently in both religions. The difficulty no doubt is to point out any occasion in the third and fourth centuries A.D. when oriental Christians other than casual travellers had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with Buddhist institutions. But the number of resemblances remains remarkable and some of them—such as clerical celibacy, relics, and confession—are old institutions in Buddhism but appear to have no parallels in Jewish, Syrian, or Egyptian antiquity. Up to a certain point, it is a sound principle not to admit that resemblances prove borrowing, unless it can be shown that there was contact between two nations, but it is also certain that all record of such contact may disappear. For instance, it is indisputable that Hindu civilization was introduced into Camboja, but there is hardly any evidence as to how or when Hindu colonists arrived there, and none whatever as to how or when they left India.

It is in Christian or quasi-Christian heresies—that is, the sects which were rejected by the majority—that Indian influence is plainest. This is natural, for if there is one thing obvious in the history of religion it is that Indian speculation and the Indian view of life were not congenial to the people of Europe and western Asia. But some spirits, from the time of Pythagoras onwards, had a greater affinity for oriental ways of thinking, and such sympathy was specially common among the Gnostics. Gnosticism consisted in the combination of Chris-
tianity with the already mixed religion which prevailed in Alexandria, Antioch and other centres, and which was an uncertain and varying compound of Judaism, Hellenistic thought and the ideas of oriental countries such as Egypt, Persia and Babylonia. Its fundamental idea, the knowledge of God or Gnosis, is clearly similar to the Jñânakânda of the Hindus¹, but the emphasis laid on dualism and redemption is not Indian and the resemblances suggest little more than that hints may have been taken and worked up independently. Thus the idea of the Demiurgus is related to the idea of Íśvara in so far as both imply a distinction not generally recognized in Europe between the creator of the world and the Highest Deity, but the Gnostic developments of the Demiurgus idea are independent. Similarly though the Æons or emanations of the Gnostics have to some extent a parallel in the beings produced by Brahmâ, Prajâpati or Vâsudeva, yet these latter are not characteristic of Hinduism and still less of Buddhism, for the celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Mahâyâna are justly suspected of being additions due to Persian influence.

Bardanes, one of the latest Gnostic teachers (155–233), wrote a book on Indian religion, quoted by Porphyry. This is important for it shows that he turned towards India for truth, but though his teaching included the pre-existence of the soul and some doctrine of Karma, it was not specially impregnated with Indian ideas. This, however, may be said without exaggeration of Carpocrates and Basilides who both taught at Alexandria about 120–130 A.D. Unfortunately we know the views of these interesting men only from the accounts of their opponents. Carpocrates² is said to have claimed the power of coercing by magic the spirits who rule the world and to have taught metempsychosis in the form that the soul is imprisoned in the body again and again until it has performed all possible actions, good and evil. Therefore the only way to escape reincarnation (which is the object of religion) and to rise to a superior sphere of peace is to perform as much action as possible, good and evil, for the distinction between the two depends on intention, not on the nature of deeds. It is only through faith and love that a man

¹ As is also the idea that γνώσις implies a special ascetic mode of life, the ἔλεος γνωστικής.

² Irenæus, i. xxv.
can obtain blessedness. Much of the above sounds like a caricature, but it may be a misrepresentation of something analogous to the Indian doctrine that the acts of a Yogi are neither black nor white and that a Yogi in order to get rid of his Karma creates and animates many bodies to work it off for him.

In Basilides we find the doctrines not only of reincarnation, which seems to have been common in Gnostic schools\(^1\), but of Karma, of the suffering inherent in existence and perhaps the composite nature of the soul. He is said to have taught that the martyrs suffered for their sins, that is to say that souls came into the world tainted with the guilt of evil deeds done in another existence. This guilt must be expiated by commonplace misfortune or, for the nobler sort, by martyrdom. He considered the world process to consist in sorting out confused things and the gradual establishment of order. This is to some extent true of the soul as well: it is not an entity but a compound (compare the Buddhist doctrine of the Skandhas) and the passions are appendages. He called God \(\omega \kappa \omega \nu \varepsilon \delta \sigma\) which seems an attempt to express the same idea as Brahman devoid of all qualities and attributes (nirguna). It is significant that the system of Basilides died out\(^2\).

A more important sect of decidedly oriental affinities was Manichaeanism, or rather it was a truly oriental religion which succeeded in penetrating to Europe and there took on considerably more Christianity than it had possessed in its original form. Mani himself (215–276) is said to have been a native of Ecbatana but visited Afghanistan, Bactria and India, and his followers carried his faith across Asia to China, while in the west it was the parent inspiration of the Bogomils and Albigenese. The nature and sources of his creed have been the subject of considerable discussion but new light is now pouring in from the Manichaean manuscripts discovered in Central Asia, some of which have already been published. These show that about the seventh century and probably considerably earlier the Manichaeanism

\(^1\) It appears in the Pistis Sophia which perhaps represents the school of Valentinus. Basilides taught that "unto the third and fourth generation" refers to transmigration (see Clem. Al. fragm. sect. 28 Op., ed. Klotz, iv. 14), and Paul's saying "I was alive without the law once" (Rom. vii. 9), to former life as an animal (Orig. in Ep. ad Rom. v. Op. iv. 549).

\(^2\) For Gnosticism, see Buddhist Gnosticism, J. Kennedy in J.R.A.S. 1902, and Mead, Fragments of a Faith Forgotten.
of those regions had much in common with Buddhism. A Manichaean treatise discovered at Tun-huang\(^1\) has the form of a Buddhist Sūtra: it speaks of Mani as the Tathāgata, it mentions Buddhas of Transformation (Hua-fo) and the Bodhisattva Ti-tsang. Even more important is the confessional formula called Khuanstuanift\(^2\) found in the same locality. It is clearly similar to the Pāṭimokkha and besides using much Buddhist terminology it reckons killing or injuring animals as a serious sin. It is true that many of these resemblances may be due to association with Buddhism and not to the original teaching of Mani, which was strongly dualistic and contained many Zoroastrian and Babylonian ideas. But it was eclectic and held up an ascetic ideal of celibacy, poverty and fasting unknown to Persia and Babylon. To take life was counted a sin and the adepts formed an order apart who lived on the food given to them by the laity. The more western accounts of the Manichæans testify to these features as strongly as do the records from Central Asia and China. Cyril of Jerusalem in his polemic against them\(^3\) charges them with believing in retributive metempsychosis, he who kills an animal being changed into that animal after death. The Persian king Hormizd is said to have accused Mani of bidding people destroy the world, that is, to retire from social life and not have children. Alberuni\(^4\) states definitely that Mani wrote a book called Shābūrkhān in which he said that God sent different messengers to mankind in different ages, Buddha to India, Zarādusht to Persia and Jesus to the west. According to Cyril the Manichæan scriptures were written by one Scythianus and revised by his disciple Terebinthus who changed his name to Boddas. This may be a jumble, but it is hard to stifle the suspicion that it contains some allusion to the Buddha, Śākyamuni and the Bo tree.

I think therefore that primitive Manichæism, though it contained less Buddhism than did its later and eastern forms, still owed to India its asceticism, its order of celibate adepts and its regard for animal life. When it spread to Africa and

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\(^1\) Chavannes et Pelliot, "Un traité Manichæen retrouvé en Chine," J.A. 1911, i, and 1913, ii.


\(^3\) Catechetical Lectures, vi. 20 ff. The whole polemic is curious and worth reading.

\(^4\) Alberuni, Chronology of ancient nations, trans. Sachau, p. 190.
India it became more Christian, just as it became more Buddhist in China, but it is exceedingly curious to see how this Asiatic religion, like the widely different religion of Mohammed, was even in its latest phrases the subject of bitter hatred and persistent misrepresentation.

Finally, do the Neoplatonists, Neopythagoreans and other pagan philosophers of the early centuries after Christ owe any debt to India? Many of them were consciously endeavouring to arrest the progress of Christianity by transforming philosophy into a non-Christian religion. They gladly welcomed every proof that the higher life was not to be found exclusively or most perfectly in Christianity. Hence bias, if not accurate knowledge, led them to respect all forms of eastern mysticism. Apollonius is said to have travelled in India¹: in the hope of so doing Plotinus accompanied the unfortunate expedition of Gordian but turned back when it failed. We may surmise that for Plotinus the Indian origin of an idea would have been a point in its favour, although his writings show no special hostility to Christianity². So far as I can judge, his system presents those features which might be expected to come from sympathy with the Indian temperament, aided perhaps not by reading but by conversation with thoughtful orientals at Alexandria and elsewhere. The direct parallels are not striking. Plato himself had entertained the idea of metempsychosis and much that seems oriental in Plotinus may be not a new importation but the elaboration of Plato's views in a form congenial to the age³. Affirmations that God is τὸ δύναμις and τὸ ἐν ὑμῖν are not so much borrowings from the Vedânta philosophy as a re-statement of Hellenic ideas in a mystic and quietist spirit, which may owe something to India. But Plotinus seems to me nearer to India than were the Gnostics and Manichæans, because his teaching is not dualistic to the same extent. He finds the world unsatisfying not because it is the creation of the Evil One, but because it is transitory, imperfect and unreal.

¹ The account in Philostratus (books ii. and iii.) reads like a romance and hardly proves that Apollonius went to India, but still there is no reason why he should not have done so.

² He wrote, however, against certain Gnostics.

³ Similarly Sallustius (c. 360 A.D.), whose object was to revive Hellenism, includes metempsychosis in his creed and thinks it can be proved. See translation in Murray, Four Stages of Greek Religion, p. 213.
His system has been called dynamic pantheism and this description applies also to much Indian theology which regards God in himself as devoid of all qualities and yet the source of the forces which move the universe. He held that there are four stages of being: primordial being, the ideal world, the soul and phenomena. This, if not exactly parallel to anything in Indian philosophy, is similar in idea to the evolutionary theories of the Sâňkhya and the phases of conditioned spirit taught by many Vishnuite sects.

For Plotinus neither moral good nor evil is ultimate: the highest principle, like Brahman, transcends both and is beyond good (ιπεραρχα). The highest morality is a morality of inaction and detachment: fasting and abstinence from pleasure are good and so is meditation, but happiness comes in the form of ecstasy and union with God. In human life such union cannot be permanent, though while the ecstasy lasts it affords a resting place on the weary journey, but after death it can be permanent: the divine within us can then return to the universal divine. In these ideas there is the real spirit of India.
CHAPTER LVII

PERSIAN INFLUENCE IN INDIA

Our geographical and political phraseology about India and Persia obscures the fact that in many periods the frontier between the two countries was uncertain or not drawn as now. North-western India and eastern Persia must not be regarded as water-tight or even merely leaky compartments. Even now there are more Zoroastrians in India than in Persia and the Persian sect of Shiite Mohammedans is powerful and conspicuous there. In former times it is probable that there was often not more difference between Indian and Iranian religion than between different Indian sects.

Yet the religious temperaments of India and Iran are not the same. Zoroastrianism has little sympathy for pantheism or asceticism: it does not teach metempsychosis or the sinfulness of taking life. Images are not used in worship\(^1\), God and his angels being thought of as pure and shining spirits. The foundation of the system is an uncompromising dualism of good and evil, purity and impurity, light and darkness. Good and evil are different in origin and duality will be abolished only by the ultimate and complete victory of the good. In the next world the distinction between heaven and hell is equally sharp but hell is not eternal\(^2\).

The pantheon and even the ritual of the early Iranians resembled those of the Veda and we can only suppose that the two peoples once lived and worshipped together. Subsequently came the reform of Zoroaster which substituted theism and dualism for this nature worship. For about two centuries, from 530 B.C. onwards, Gandhara and other parts of north-western India were a Persian province. Between the time of Zoroaster (whatever that may be) and this period we cannot say what

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\(^1\) They are forbidden by strict theology, but in practice there are exceptions, for instance, the winged figure believed to represent Ahura Mazda, found on Achaemenian reliefs.

\(^2\) Though the principles of Zoroastrianism sound excellent to Europeans, I cannot discover that ancient Persia was socially or politically superior to India.
were the relations of Indian and Iranian religions, but after
the seventh century they must have flourished in the same region.
Aristobulus¹, speaking of Taxila in the time of Alexander the
Great, describes a marriage market and how the dead were
devoured by vultures. These are Babylonian and Persian
customs, and doubtless were accompanied by many others less
striking to a foreign tourist. Some hold that the Zoroastrian
scriptures allude to disputes with Buddhists².

Experts on the whole agree that the most ancient Indian
architecture which has been preserved—that of the Maurya
dynasty—has no known antecedents in India, but both in
structure (especially the pillars) and in decoration is reminiscent
of Persepolis, just as Asoka’s habit of lecturing his subjects in
stone sermons and the very turns of his phrases recall the
inscriptions of Darius³. And though the king’s creed is in some
respects—such as his tenderness for animal life—thoroughly
Indian, yet this cannot be said of his style and choice of themes
as a whole. His marked avoidance of theology and philosophy,
his insistence on ethical principles such as truth, and his frank
argument that men should do good in order that they may fare
happily in the next world, suggest that he may have become
familiar with the simple and practical Zoroastrian outlook⁴,
perhaps when he was viceroy of Taxila in his youth. But still
he shows no trace of theism or dualism: morality is his one
concern, but it means for him doing good rather than suppressing
evil.

¹ See Strabo, xv. 62. So, too, the Pitakas seem to regard cemeteries as places
where ordinary corpses are thrown away rather than buried or burnt. In Dig. Nik.
III. the Buddha says that the ancient Sakya married their sisters. Such marriages
are said to have been permitted in Persia.

² "He who returns victorious from discussions with Gaotama the heretic," Farvadin
Yasht in S.B.E. xxxii. p. 184. The reference of this passage to Buddhism
has been much disputed and I am quite incompetent to express any opinion about
it. But who is Gaotama if not the Buddha? It is true that there were many other
Gautamas of moderate eminence in India, but would any of them have been known
in Persia?

³ The inscriptions near the tomb of Darius at Nakshi-Rustam appear to be
hortatory like those of Asoka. See Williams Jackson, Persia, p. 298 and references.
The use of the Kharoshthi script and of the word dipi has also been noted as in-
dicating connection with Persia.

⁴ Perhaps the marked absence of figures representing the Buddha in the oldest
Indian sculptures, which seems to imply that the holiest things must not be re-
presented, is due to Persian sentiment.
After the death of Asoka his Empire broke up and races who were Iranian in culture, if not always in blood, advanced at its expense. Dependencies of the Persian or Parthian empire extended into India or like the Satrapies of Mathurā and Saurāṣṭra lay wholly within it. The mixed civilization which the Kushans brought with them included Zoroastrianism, as is shown by the coins of Kanishka, and late Kushan coins indicate that Sassanian influence had become very strong in northern India when the dynasty collapsed in the third century A.D.

I see no reason to suppose that Gotama himself was influenced by Iranian thought. His fundamental ideas, his view of life and his scheme of salvation are truly Hindu and not Iranian. But if the childhood of Buddhism was Indian, it grew to adolescence in a motley bazaar where Persians and their ways were familiar. Though the Buddhism exported to Ceylon escaped this phase, not merely Mahayanism but schools like the Sarvāstivadins must have passed through it. The share of Zoroastrianism must not be exaggerated. The metaphysical and ritualistic tendencies of Indian Buddhism are purely Hindu, and if its free use of images was due to any foreign stimulus, that stimulus was perhaps Hellenistic. But the altruistic morality of Mahayanism, though not borrowed from Zoroastrianism, marks a change and this change may well have occurred among races accustomed to the preaching of active charity and dissatisfied with the ideals of self-training and lonely perfection. And Zoroastrian influence is I think indubitable in the figures of the great Bodhisattvas, even Maitreya, and above all in Amitābha and his paradise. These personalities have been adroitly fitted into Indian theology but they have no Indian lineage and, in spite of all explanations, Amitābha and the salvation which he offers remain in strange contradiction with the teaching of Gotama. I have shown elsewhere what close parallels may be found in the Avesta to these radiant and benevolent genii and to the heaven of boundless light which is entered by those who repeat the name of its master. Also there is good evidence to connect the early worship of Amitābha with

1 Strictly speaking there is nothing final about Maitreya who is merely the next in an infinite series of Buddhas, but practically his figure has many analogies to Sōshyō or Sa-chānt, the Parsi saviour and renovator of the world.

2 See chap. xlii. p. 220.
Central Asia. Later Iranian influence may have meant Mithraism and Manicheism as well as Zoroastrianism and the school of Asanga perhaps owes something to these systems. They may have brought with them fragments of Christianity or doctrines similar to Christianity but I think that all attempts to derive Amitabbhism teaching from Christianity are fanciful. The only point which the two have in common is salvation by faith, and that doctrine is certainly older than Christianity. Otherwise the efforts of Amitabha to save humanity have no resemblance to the Christian atonement. Nor do the relations between the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas recall the Trinity but rather the Persian Fravasheh.

Persian influences worked more strongly on Buddhism than on Hinduism, for Buddhism not only flourished in the frontier districts but penetrated into the Tarim basin and the region of the Oxus which lay outside the Indian and within the Iranian sphere. But they affected Hinduism also, especially in the matter of sun-worship. This of course is part of the oldest Vedic religion, but a special form of it, introduced about the beginning of our era, was a new importation and not a descendant of the ancient Indian cult.

The Brihatamsamhita says that the Magas, that is Magi, are the priests of the sun and the proper persons to superintend the consecration of temples and images dedicated to that deity, but the clearest statements about this foreign cult are to be found in the Bhavishya Purana which contains a legend as to its introduction obviously based upon history. Samba, the son of Krishna, desiring to be cured of leprosy from which he suffered owing to his father's curse, dedicated a temple to the sun on the river Candrabhaga, but could find no Brahmins willing to officiate in it. By the advice of Gaurumukha, priest of King Ugrasena, confirmed by the sun himself, he imported some Magas from Sakadvipa, whither he flew on the bird.

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1 See chap. on Mahayana, vi.
2 A convenient statement of what is known about this cult will be found in Bhandarkar, Vaishnavism and Saivism, part II, chap. xvi.
3 Chap. 60. 19. The work probably dates from about 650 A.D.
5 For Sakadvipa see Vishnu, p. xiv. where it is said that Brahmins are called there Mīrga or Maga and Kshatriyas Magadha. The name clearly means the country of the Sakas who were regarded as Zoroastrians, whether they were Iranian by
Garuda. That this refers to the importation of Zoroastrian priests from the country of the Sākas (Persia or the Oxus regions) is made clear by the account of their customs—such as the wearing of a girdle called Avyāṅga—given by the Purana. It also says that they were descended from a child of the sun called Jaraśabda or Jaraśasta, which no doubt represents Zarathustra.

The river Candrabhāgā is the modern Chenab and the town founded by Samba is Mūlasthāna or Multan, called Mu-la-sam-pu-lu by the Chinese pilgrim Hsüian Chuang. The Bhavishya Purana calls the place Sambapuri and the Chinese name is an attempt to represent Mulasamba-puri. Hsüian Chuang speaks enthusiastically of the magnificent temple, which was also seen by Alberuni but was destroyed by Aurungzeb. Tāranātha relates how in earlier times a king called Śrī Harsha burnt alive near Multan 12,000 adherents of the Mleccha sect with their books and thereby greatly weakened the religion of Persians and Sakas for a century. This legend offers difficulties but it shows that Multan was regarded as a centre of Zoroastrianism.

Multan is in the extreme west of India, but sun temples are found in many other parts, such as Gujarat, Gwalior and the district of Gaya, where an inscription has been discovered at Govindapur referring to the legend of Samba. This same legend is also related in the Kapila Samhitā, a religious guide-book for Orissa, in connection with the great Sun temple of Konarak.

In these temples the sun was represented by images, Hindu convention thus getting the better of Zoroastrian prejudices, but the costume of the images shows their origin, for the Brihat-samhitā directs that Sūrya is to be represented in the dress of

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1 The Garuda may itself be of Persian provenance, for birds play a considerable part in Persian mythology.
2 The Aivyaonghen of the Avesta.
5 See Rājendralāla Mitra, Antiquities of Orissa, vol. ii. p. 145. He also quotes the Samba Purāṇa. The temple is said to have been built between 1240 and 1280 but the beauty of its architecture suggests an earlier date.
6 58. 47.
the northerners, covered from the feet upwards and wearing the girdle called avyaṅga or viyaṅga. In Rajputana I have seen several statues of him in high boots and they are probably to be found elsewhere.

Fortuitously or otherwise, the cult of the sun was often associated with Buddhism, as is indicated by these temples in Gaya and Orissa and by the fact that the Emperor Harsha styles his father, grandfather and great-grandfather paramāditya-bhakta, great devotees of the sun\(^1\). He himself, though a devout Buddhist, also showed honour to the image of Sūrya, as we hear from Hsüang Chuang.

\(^1\) See Epig. Ind. 72–73.
CHAPTER LVIII

MOHAMMEDANISM IN INDIA

Let us now turn to Mohammedanism. This is different from the cases which we have been considering and we need not trouble ourselves with any enquiry into opportunities and possibilities. The presence and strength of the Prophet's religion in India are patent facts and it is surprising that the result has not been greater.

The chief and most obvious method by which Islam influenced India was the series of invasions, culminating in the Mughal conquest, which poured through the mountain passes of the north-west frontier. But there was also long established communication and to some extent intermigration between the west coast and Mohammedan countries such as Arabia and Persia. Compared with the enormous political and social changes wrought by the land invasions, the results of this maritime intercourse may seem unworthy of mention. Yet for the interchange of ideas it was not without importance, the more so as it was unaccompanied by violence and hostility. Thus the Mappilas or Moplahs of Malabar appear to be the descendants of Arab immigrants who arrived by sea about 900 A.D., and the sects known as Khojas and Bohras owe their conversion to the zeal of Arab and Persian missionaries who preached in the eleventh century. Apart from Mohammedan conquests there must have been at this time in Gujarat, Bombay, and on the west coast generally some knowledge of the teaching of Islam.

In the annals of invasions and conquests several stages can be distinguished. First we have the Arab conquest of Sind in 712, which had little effect. In 1021 Mahmud of Ghazni annexed the Panjtab. He conducted three campaigns against other kingdoms of India but, though he sacked Muttra, Somnath and other religious centres, he did not attempt to conquer these regions, still less to convert them to Islam. The period of conquests as distinguished from raids did not begin until the end of the twelfth century when Muhammad Ghori began his
campaigns and succeeded in making himself master of northern India, which from 1193 to 1526 was ruled by Mohammedan dynasties, mostly of Afghan or Turki descent. In the south the frontiers of Vijayanagar marked the limits of Islam. To the north of them Rajputana and Orissa still remained Hindu states, but with these exceptions the Government was Mohammedan. In 1526 came the Mughal invasion, after which all northern India was united under one Mohammedan Emperor for about two centuries. Aurungzeb (1659–1707) was a fanatical Mohammedan: his intolerant reign marked the beginning of disintegration in the Empire and aroused the opposition of the Mahrattas and Sikhs. But until this period Mohammedan rule was not marked by special bigotry or by any persistent attempt to proselytize. A woeful chronicle of selected outrages can indeed be drawn up. In the great towns of the north hardly a temple remained unsacked and most were utterly destroyed. At different periods individuals, such as Sikander Lodi of Delhi and Jalaluddin (1414–1430) in Bengal, raged against Hinduism and made converts by force. But such acts are scattered over a long period and a great area; they are not characteristic of Islam in India. Neither the earlier Mughal Emperors nor the preceding Sultans were of irreproachable orthodoxy. Two of them at least, Ala-ud-Din and Akbar, contemplated founding new religions of their own. Many of them were connected with Hindu sovereigns by marriage or political alliances.

The works of Alberuni and Mohsin Fani show that educated Mohammedans felt an interest not only in Indian science but in Indian religion. In the Panjab and Hindustan Islam was strengthened by immigrations of Mohammedan tribes from the north-west extending over many centuries. Mohammedan sultans and governors held their court in the chief cities, which thus tended to become Mohammedan not only by natural attraction but because high caste Hindus preferred to live in the country and would not frequent the company of those whom they considered as outcasts. Still, Hindus were often employed as accountants and revenue officers. All non-Muslims had to pay the jizya or poll tax, and the remission of this impost accorded to converts was naturally a powerful incentive to change of faith. Yet Mohammedanism cannot record any wholesale triumph in India such as it has won in Persia, Egypt.
and Java. At the present day about one-fifth of the population are Moslim. The strength of Islam in the Panjab is due to immigration as well as conversion¹, but it was embraced by large numbers in Kashmir and made rapid progress in Oudh and Eastern Bengal. The number of Mohammedans in Bengal (twenty-five millions out of a total of sixty-two in all India) is striking, seeing that the province is out of touch with the chief Mohammedan centres, but is explicable by the fact that Islam had to deal here not with an educated and organized Hindu community but with imperfectly Hinduized aboriginal races, who welcomed a creed with no caste distinctions. Yet, apart from the districts named, which lie on the natural line of march from the Panjab down the Ganges to the sea, it made little progress. It has not even conquered the slopes of the Himalayas or the country south of the Jumna. If we deduct from the Mohammedan population the descendants of Mohammedan immigrants and of those who, like the inhabitants of Eastern Bengal, were not Hindus when they embraced the faith, the impression produced by Islam on the religious thought of India is not great, considering that for at least five centuries its temporal supremacy was hardly contested.

It is not until the time of Kabir that we meet with a sect in which Hindu and Mohammedan ideas are clearly blended, but it may be that the theology of Râmânuja and Madhva, of the Lingayats and Sivaite sects of the south, owes something to Islam. Its insistence on the unity and personality of God may have vivified similar ideas existing within Hinduism, but the expression which they found for themselves is not Moslim in tone, just as nowadays the Arya Samaj is not European in tone. Yet I think that the Arya Samaj would never have come into being had not Hindus become conscious of certain strong points in European religion. In the north it is natural that Moslim influence should not have made itself felt at once. Islam came first as an enemy and a raider and was no more sympathetic to the Brahmans than it was to the Greek Church in Europe. Though Indian theism may sometimes seem practically equivalent to Islam, yet it has a different and gentler tone, and it often rests on the idea that God, the soul and matter are all separate and eternal, an idea foreign to Mohammed’s doctrine of creation.

¹ But see on this point Census of India, 1911, vol. i. part i. p. 128.
But from the fifteenth century onwards we find a series of sects which are obviously compromises and blends. Advances are made from both sides. Thoughtful Mohammedans see the profundity of Hindu theology: liberal Hindus declare that no caste or condition, including birth in a Moslim family, disqualifies man for access to God.

The fusion of Islam with Hinduism exhibited in these sects has for its basis the unity and omnipresence of God in the light of which minor differences have no existence. But fusion also arises from an opposite tendency, namely the toleration by Indian Moslems of Hindu ideas and practices, especially respect for religious teachers and their deification after death. While known by some such title as saint, which does not shock unitarian susceptibility, they are in practice honoured as godlings. The bare simplicity of the Arabian faith has not proved satisfying to other nations, and Turks, Persians and Indians, even when professing orthodoxy, have allowed embellishments and accretions. Such supplementary beliefs thrive with special luxuriance in India, where a considerable portion of the Moslim population are descended from persons who accepted the new faith unwillingly or from interested motives. They brought with them a plentiful baggage of superstitions and did not attempt to sever the ties which bound them to their Hindu neighbours.

In the last century the efforts of the Wahabis and other reformers are said to have been partly successful in purifying Islam from Hindu observances, but even now the mixture is noticeable, especially in the lower classes. Brahmans are employed to cast horoscopes, Hindu ceremonies are observed in connection with marriages and funerals, and the idea of pollution by eating with unbelievers is derived from caste rules, for Mohammedans in other countries have no objection to eating with Christians. Numerous sacred sites, such as the shrine of Sheikh Chisti at Ajmere and of Bhairav Nath at Muttra, are frequented by both Moslems and Hindus, and it is an interesting parallel to find that the chief Moslim shrines of Turkestan are erected on spots which were once Buddhist sanctuaries. Sometimes the opposite happens: even Brahmans are known to adopt the observances.

1 Another instance is the shrine of Saiyad Salar Masud at Bahraich. He was a nephew of Mahmud of Ghazni and was slain by Hindus, but is now worshipped by them. See Grierson, J.R.A.S. 1911, p. 195.
of Shiahs. But on the whole it is chiefly the Mohammedans who borrow, not the main doctrines of Hinduism, but popular magic and demonology. Ignorant Mohammedans in Bengal worship Sitala, Kâli, Dharmarâj, Baidyanath and other Hindu deities and also respect certain mythical beings who seem to have a Muslin origin, but to have acquired strange characters in the course of time. Such are Khwaja Khizr who lives in rivers, Zindah Ghazi who rides on a tiger in the Sandarbans, and Sultan Shahid who is said to be the bodyguard and lover of Devi. But it is in the adoration of Pirs that this fusion of the two religions is most apparent. A Pir is the Muslin equivalent of a Guru and distinct from the Mullahs or official hierarchy. Just as Hindus receive initiation from their Guru so most Moslems, except the Wahabis and other purists, make a profession of faith before their Pir, accept his guidance and promise him obedience. When an eminent Pir dies his tomb becomes a place of prayer and pilgrimage. Even educated Mohammedans admit that Pirs can intercede with the Almighty and the uneducated offer to them not only direct supplications but even sacrifices. The Shrine of an important Pir, such as Hazrat Moin-ud-Din Chisti at Ajmere, is an edifice dedicated to a superhuman being as much as any Hindu temple.

This veneration of saints attains its strangest development in the sect of the Panchpiriias or worshippers of the five Pirs. They are treated by the last census of India as “Hindus whose religion has a strong Mohammedan flavour.” There is no agreement as to who the five saints or deities are, but though the names vary from place to place they usually comprise five of the best known semi-mythical Pirs. Whoever they may be, they are worshipped under the form of a small tomb with five domes or of a simple mound of clay set in the corner of a room. Every Wednesday the mound is washed and offerings of flowers and incense are made. A somewhat similar sect are the Mâlkânas of the Panjab. These appear to be Hindus formerly converted to Islam and now in process of reverting to Hinduism.

1 See for examples, Census of India, 1901, Panjab, p. 151, e.g. the Brahmans of a village near Rawal Pindi are said to be Murids of Abdul-Kadir-Jilani.
3 Such as Ghazi Miyan, Pir Badar, Zindha Ghazi, Sheikh Farid, Sheikh Sadu and Khwaja Khizr.
The influence of Hinduism on Indian Mohammedanism is thus obvious. It is responsible for the addition to the Prophet's creed of much superstition but also for rendering it less arid and more human. It is harder to say how far Moslem mysticism and Sufism are due to the same influence. History and geography raise no difficulties to such an origin. Arabia was in touch with the western coast of India for centuries before the time of Mohammed: the same is true of the Persian Gulf and Baghdad, and of Balkh and other districts near the frontiers of India. But recent writers on Sufism¹ have shown a disposition to seek its origin in Neoplatonism rather than in the east. This hypothesis, like the other, presents no geographical difficulties. Many Arab authors, such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) were influenced by Greek Philosophy: Neoplatonists are said to have taken refuge in Persia at the Court of Nushirwan (c. A.D. 532): the Fihrist (c. 988) mentions Porphyry and Plotinus. If, therefore, Sufiism, early or late, presents distinct resemblances to Neoplatonism, we need not hesitate to ascribe them to direct borrowing, remembering that Neoplatonism itself contains echoes of India. But, admitting that much in the doctrine of the Sufis can be found to the west as well as to the east of the countries where they flourished, can it be said that their general tone is Neoplatonic? Amongst their characteristics are pantheism; the institution of religious orders and monasteries; the conception of the religious life as a path or journey; a bold use of language in which metaphors drawn from love, wine and music are freely used in speaking of divine things and, although the doctrine of metempsychosis may be repudiated as too obviously repugnant to Islam, a tendency to believe in successive existences or states of the soul. Some of these features, such as the use of erotic language, may be paralleled in other ancient religions as well as Hinduism but the pantheism which, not content with speaking of the soul's union with God, boldly identifies the soul with the divinity and says I am God, does not seem traceable in Neoplatonism. And though a distinction may justly be drawn between early and later Sufism and Indian influence be admitted as stronger in the later developments, still an early Sufi, Al-Hallaj, was executed in 922 A.D. for saying

¹ E. G. Browne, Literary History of Persia; R. A. Nicholson, Selected Poems from the Divan of Shems-i-Tabriz.
Ana 'l-Haqq, I am the Truth or God, and we are expressly told that he visited India to study magic. Many important Sufis made the same journey or at least came within the geographical sphere of Indian influence. Faridu-'d-Din Attar travelled in India and Turkestan; Jalalu-'d-Din er-Rumi was born at Balkh, once a centre of Buddhism: Sa’di visited Balkh, Ghazna, the Panjab, and Gujarat, and investigated Hindu temples. Hafiz was invited to the Deccan by Sultan Muhammad Bahmani and, though shipwreck prevented the completion of the visit, he was probably in touch with Indian ideas. These journeys indicate that there was a prevalent notion that wisdom was to be found in India and those who could not go there must have had open ears for such Indian doctrines as might reach them by oral teaching or in books. After the establishment of the Caliphate at Bagdad in the eighth century translations of Indian authors became accessible. Arabic versions were made of many works on astronomy, mathematics and medicine and the example of Alberuni shows how easily such treatises might be flavoured with a relish of theology. His book and still more the Fihrist testify to the existence among Moslims, especially in Bagdad and Persia, of an interest in all forms of thought very different from the self-satisfied bigotry which too often characterizes them. The Caliph Ma’mun was so fond of religious speculation and discussion that he was suspected of being a Manichee and nicknamed Amiru-'l-Kafirin, Commander of the Unbelievers. Everything warrants the supposition that in the centuries preceding Mohammed, Indian ideas were widely disseminated in western Asia, partly as a direct overflow from India, for instance in Turkestan and Afghanistan, and partly as entering, together with much other matter, into the doctrines of Neoplatonists and Manicheans. Amid the intolerant victories of early Islam such ideas would naturally retreat, but they soon recovered and effected an entrance into the later phases of the faith and were strengthened by the visits of Sufi pilgrims to Turkestan and India.

The form of Jewish mysticism known as Kabbala, which in Indian terminology might be described as Jewish Tantrism, has a historical connection with Sufism and a real analogy to it.

1 He describes how he discovered the mechanism by which the priests made miraculous images move. See Browne, Lit. Hist. Persia, ii. 529.
for both arise from the desire to temper an austere and regal deism with concessions to the common human craving for the interesting and picturesque, such as mysticism and magic. If the accent of India can sometimes be heard in the poems of the Sufis we may also admit that the Kabbala is its last echo.

Experts do not assign any one region as the origin of the Kabbala but it grew on parallel lines in both Egypt and Babylonia, in both of which it was naturally in touch with the various oriental influences which we have been discussing. It is said to have been introduced to Europe about 900 A.D. but received important additions and modifications at the hands of Isaac Luria (1534–72) who lived in Palestine, although his disciples soon spread his doctrines among the European Jews.

Many features of the Kabbala, such as the marvellous powers assigned to letters, the use of charms and amulets, the emanations or phases of the deity and the theory of the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, are amazingly like Indian Tantrism but no doubt are more justly regarded as belonging to the religious ideas common to most of Asia. But in two points we seem able to discern definite Hindu influence. These are metempsychosis and pantheism, which we have so often found to have some connection with India when they exist in an extreme form. Their presence here is specially remarkable because they are alien to the spirit of orthodox Judaism. Yet the pre-existence and repeated embodiment of the soul is taught in the Zohar and even more systematically by Luria, in whose school were composed works called Gilgûlim, or lists of transmigrations. The ultimate Godhead is called En soph or the infinite and is declared to be unknowable, not to be described by positive epithets, and therefore in a sense non-existent, since nothing which is predicated of existing beings can be truly predicated of it. These are crumbs from the table of Plotinus and the Upanishads.

1 But there is something very Indian in the reluctance of the Kabbalists to accept creation ex nihilo and to explain it away by emanations, or by the doctrine of limitation, that is God's self-withdrawal in order that the world might be created, or even by the eternity of matter.