

PREFACE

THE idea that a book needed to be written on the subject of Grace in Christianity and Hinduism was brought home to me by a statement made by Dr. Hendrik Kraemer in a discussion at the Tambaram Conference many years ago, to the effect that he intended to write such a book. The war, however, intervened; and the book never got under way. Since even after that period nothing seemed to be coming from him on the subject, and no one else was showing signs of undertaking the task, it struck me that, if it was to be done at all, I had better do it myself.

There may be many who think that there are a large number of subjects of greater immediate interest than that of Grace; and that it is on them that books should be written. But to say that a subject is of immediate interest is not to say that it is a subject of importance; almost anything can become a subject of immediate interest. It is better, therefore, to let important matters become matters of immediate interest than unimportant matters; that is, to let matters of ultimate interest become also matters of immediate interest. And one method perhaps of helping to bring this about is to write a book on a subject of ultimate interest.

The subject of Grace was the chief concern of St. Paul, as it later was of St. Augustine. It was the subject round which the battle raged at the time of the Reformation and produced the greatest split that has ever occurred in the Christian Church. Obviously, therefore, it is not a subject whose study we can afford to neglect; but it is one which for a long time has certainly suffered serious neglect, anyway in the English-speaking world. One illustration of this may be found in the fact that probably the only English translation of St. Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings ever made was made as late as the seventies of the last century; and that it has been reprinted only once, and that quite recently.

A proved method of studying a subject is by comparison and

contrast. But if such a method is to be adopted in this instance, it will not be enough to study the differences and agreements between Christian writers themselves. Christian writers write in the same atmosphere and context and go back to the same sources. It will be necessary to compare and contrast Christian teaching with the teaching on the subject in other great religions in the world.

The field of Comparative Religion used for long to hum with activity. During the greater part of this time other religions were compared with Christianity to their disadvantage; but during this century the trend changed materially. All this activity, however, came to a sudden stop when Hendrik Kraemer's book *The Christian Message in a non-Christian World* came almost crashing into the field twenty-five years ago. The impression spread that with his immense authority Kraemer had pronounced the whole project of comparison utterly senseless. Yet all that Kraemer wanted to do was to draw attention to what Schleiermacher had insisted on much earlier: that each religion was integrated round certain central doctrines and formed one essential whole; and that, therefore, ideas and doctrines should not be taken out of their context and compared to one another as independent entities, or be judged by neutral standards. The fact that Kraemer himself wanted to compare the teaching on Grace in Christianity with that in Hinduism, and the fact that he has actually done many elaborate comparisons on other subjects, prove that he by no means considered comparisons between the teachings of various religions as illegitimate *per se*.

If the subject of Grace is to be studied by comparing Christian teaching with that in any other religion, no field will be more profitable for it than that in reference to Hinduism. It is, therefore, a pity that even at the time when comparative investigations used to flourish not much systematic study was done in the matter. Whatever attempts were made were fragmentary and consisted of remarks made during a general survey of the two religions. The one writer who attempted anything systematic along this line was the great German scholar, Rudolf Otto; but his book, *India's Religion of Grace*, published in 1930 is extremely small for the purpose, deals chiefly with the school of Rāmānuja and gives no adequate background for the reader

PREFACE

to form his opinion. It may, therefore, be seen that this book has some justification.

Even though in comparing the teachings of religions there can be nothing like a neutral criterion, there has to be some criterion. I am writing this book as a Christian minister; and since it is my belief that the great watchwords of the Reformation, viz: *Sola gratia* and *Sola fide*, best represent the position of St. Paul, the chief writer on the subject in the New Testament, and therefore the true Christian position, I have adopted them as my criterion.

And since the Pauline standpoint is normative on the subject for the Christian Faith, I have thought it outside my scope to make a complete survey of all those who have taught on Grace on the Christian side; but I trust that what has been done is sufficiently representative. Therefore, while I have shown the difference between Augustine and Aquinas on the one hand and Luther on the other, I have thought it unnecessary to go further into the differences on the subject between Protestants and Roman Catholics. But Karl Barth and Fr. Hans Küng have recently agreed that if either represents his own side, the differences do not exist.

In regard to Hinduism, I have followed a different method. I have not merely tried to give the views of each school, but have also tried to set forth a historical picture of all Hinduism and put each school where it belongs in the picture. The reasons are as follows:

- (a) There are many schools in Hinduism; and what may be called the Hindu Canon—the *Upanishads*—allows of such diversity of interpretation as practically to rule out a generally accepted standard. Therefore, the view of each school is entitled to consideration; and it is necessary to know not merely what it says, but why it says it.
- (b) An English-speaking public may not know much of Hinduism; and, therefore, to treat of the doctrine apart from the history of the religion would have meant talking in the air.
- (c) A Christian writing on Hinduism is exposed to the charge of prejudice or arbitrariness in the choice of his material. Therefore, it is best to lay bare the whole

history of Hinduism and let the reader see the doctrine in its setting.

There is an opinion in certain influential quarters, strongly held and widely disseminated, that if you want to study religions you should go not to their classical sources but to the persons who profess those religions at the present time. Evidently such a school of thought has existed now for some time, since we find Max Müller late in the last century trying to meet their arguments. "Religion", he says, "becomes a 'mysterious thing', when it is sought for in the heart of each individual." No doubt each person in his heart modifies the religion he professes, according to his individual experience, education, training and disposition. That, however, does not mean that we cannot find out anything about his religious beliefs. It simply means that in this matter we begin at the wrong end if we start with the individual. A person's religious beliefs are seldom independent of the classical systems under whose influence he has lived, even when he has given up his faith in it. The basic ideas of the great systems seep down into the religious and intellectual heritage of communities. They have a habit of persistence and a gift of endurance. The great systems live on, not so much in the big books which are hardly read, as in the people who usually do not read them.

This book consists of exposition and comment. Therefore, a citation of authorities for and against has been a constant necessity. It had to be made clear that I was dealing with real opinions held by authoritative persons and not merely with my own opinions.

Work on a book always begins long before it comes to be written. When such work in this instance definitely began I cannot now say. I delivered some addresses to the clergy both in my diocese and in that of Tinnevely, South India, in the early fifties; but I cannot by any means say that they form the basis of this book. I did some serious reading on the subject when I was on a holiday in Bangalore in the latter part of 1953 and the early part of 1954.

This book took shape during the eight months I spent at the United Theological College, Bangalore, from May 1959 to January 1960. The first draft was almost finished when I left

PREFACE

Bangalore; but it was worked over a good deal in the light of subsequent reading, and a second draft completed and sent to various scholars in August 1960. The final draft was sent to London early in 1961.

An explanation may be necessary upon certain points in the book:

- (1) I have cut down on the use of diacritical marks, since most of them will convey no meaning to those who do not know the original pronunciation. Where alternative methods of transliteration are allowed they have been used. The only diacritical marks I have retained are those over long vowels.
- (2) For rendering the *Upanishads* into English I have drawn from various translations; for the *Bhagavad Gītā* I have mostly drawn from Mrs. Annie Besant's popular version.
- (3) The version of the English Bible generally used is the American Revised Standard; but I have occasionally fallen back upon the more familiar English Revised.

In a sense every undertaking is a joint undertaking, as without the help of quite a number of people, no one does anything. Fortunately in a book it is possible to acknowledge their part. The Executive Committee of my diocese kindly permitted me to be away from my station for many months on work not directly connected with the diocese. The Rev. K. S. Jayasingam functioned as my Commissary and did the work so well as to make it unnecessary for me to return home before my work was completed. The Principal of the United Theological College, Bangalore, permitted me to stay on the College premises for as long as eight months. He, Mrs. Chandran and various members of the U.T.C. Faculty showed me and my wife great hospitality. Miss A. Lindsay, the Librarian, provided me with a desk and permitted me to make whatever deprecations I pleased from the shelves, and whenever I pleased.

Dr. William Stewart of Serampore College went through the whole manuscript and made various helpful suggestions. Mr. M. D. Balasubramaniam, head of the Sanskrit department of Jaffna College, also went through my whole manuscript, to see whether I had taken any unwarranted liberty with the Sanskrit language. The late Kalai Pulavar K. Navaratnam of

Jaffna read through the chapters on Hinduism and on many occasions, when my manuscript was being finalized, supplied me with information on a variety of points. Professor Ramanujachari, formerly Professor of Philosophy and now head of the Faculty of Education of Annamalai University, went through chapters 6 and 7; and Dr. V. A. Devasenapathi of the Department of Philosophy in the University of Madras went through the chapter on Saivism. Their remarks were uniformly helpful and usually encouraging. Dr. Hendrik Kraemer kindly supplied the book with its Foreword and thus unwittingly conferred on it a distinction that comes to any work of this nature through any kind of association with him.

My wife put the manuscript through the typewriter, when it was in its most difficult stage, that is, taking shape as the first draft. Mr. Aseervatham, my secretary, was responsible for the comparatively lighter burden of getting the second draft through; and the Rev. N. W. G. Sugunarajah, for the (relatively) flawless version that is expected by the publishers.

To all these I beg to express my sincere gratitude.

I have made it clear from what standpoint this book has been written. Whether others agree with the views expressed or not, I can assure them that I have made every effort to be always fair and, as far as I could, to ensure strict accuracy at every point. If I have tripped anywhere, it certainly has not been willingly.

I thank God for the opportunity given me to write this; and trust He will make it useful.

SABAPATHY KULANDRAN

October 1963

Bishop