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M. K. Gandhi

“Pocket Gandhi Series” No. 1

GOD IS TRUTH

BY

M. K. GANDHI

EDITED & PUBLISHED

BY

ANAND T. HINGORANI



1962

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

BOMBAY-7

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FOR ANAND T. HINGORANI, ALLAHABAD.

PREFACE

DO you believe in God? If so, this book will greatly strengthen your belief and help to carry you further forward on your way to God-Realization. It will also inspire and elevate your soul and give to your life a new content, a new joy, and a new hope.

Are you an atheist? Even if you are one, you will undoubtedly profit by a perusal of this book. It will enable you to understand the limitations of reason, by which generally so much store is set by rationalists like you, and unfold to you the beauty and virtue of faith which is, however, not to be “undiscriminating or blind”, if it is to serve its purpose. And it will also tell you why Gandhiji equates Truth with God and *vice versa*.

Do you feel puzzled and perplexed by the mystery of this universe, and the inscrutable ways of the Providence? Do you feel sometimes that God, who permits all sorts of evils, injustices, tyrannies, etc., to happen, cannot be a just or a benevolent God? Here is, then, the book for you which will help solve your doubts and dilemmas by revealing to you the true nature of God and the working of His Law. God is not a revengeful or heartless deity, as is supposed by some. “Only His ways”, says Gandhiji, “are not our ways. When we know that God Himself is the mystery of mysteries, why should anything that He does perplex us?” And he further adds: “If He acted as we would have Him do, we would not be His creatures and He our Creator.”

In short, this is a book for everyone—whether a believer in God, or a scoffer or an atheist. A dip into its pages will always prove spiritually invigorating and uplifting.

ANAND T. HINGORANI

7, Edmonstone Road
Allahabad (INDIA)

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1. THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

EVER since its commencement, the world, the wise and the foolish included, has proceeded upon the assumption that if we are, God is; and that, if God is not, we are not. And since belief in God is co-existent with the humankind, existence of God is treated as a fact more definite than the fact that the Sun is. This living faith has solved the largest number of puzzles of life. It has alleviated our misery. It sustains us in life, it is our one solace in death. The very search for Truth becomes interesting, worthwhile because of this belief.

Search For Truth Is Search For God

But search for Truth is search for God. Truth is God. God is, because Truth is. We embark upon the search, because we believe that there is Truth and that It can be found by diligent search and meticulous observance of the well-known and well-tried rules of the search. There is no record in history of the failure of such search. Even the atheists, who have pretended to disbelieve in God, have believed in Truth. The trick they have performed is that of giving God another, not a new, name. His names are legion. Truth is the crown of them all.¹

—*Harijan*: Sept. 21, 1934.

1. "Innumerable are the names of God, but if a choice were to be made of one, it would be *Sat* or *Satya* i.e. Truth. Hence, Truth alone is God."

—*Bapu-Ke-Ashirvad*.

2. THE SOVEREIGN PRINCIPLE

FOR me Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This Truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also; and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and, for a moment, stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice demanded be my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.

He Alone is Real

Though this path is straight and narrow and sharp as the razor's edge, for me it has been the quickest and easiest.¹ Even my Himalayan blunders have seemed

1. "I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of the sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: 'He who strives never perishes'. I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I will not lose faith but hope that I shall see the Light when the flesh has been brought under perfect subjection, as some day it must."

—*Young India*: June 17, 1926.

ONE SUPREME BEING

trifling to me because I have kept strictly to this path. For, the path has saved me from coming to grief, and I have gone forward according to my light. Often, in my progress, I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal.

Means for The Quest of Truth

The further conviction has been growing upon me that whatever is possible for me is possible even for a child, and I have found sound reasons for saying so. The instruments for the quest of Truth are as simple as they are difficult. They may appear quite impossible to an arrogant person, and quite possible to an innocent child. The seeker after Truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after Truth should so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of Truth.

—*My Experiments With Truth* (1945): P. 4.

3. ONE SUPREME BEING

I THINK it is wrong to expect certainties in this world where all else but God, that is Truth, is an uncertainty. All that appears and happens about and around us is uncertain, transient. Only there is one Supreme Being hidden therein as a Certainty, and one would be blessed if one could catch a glimpse of that Certainty and hitch one's wagon on it. The quest for that Truth is the *summum bonum* of life.

—*Young India*: May 12, 1927.

GOD IS TRUTH

4. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

MY uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth.... The little fleeting glimpses that I have been able to have of Truth can hardly convey an idea of the indescribable lustre of Truth, a million times more intense than that of the Sun we daily see with our eyes. In fact, what I have caught is only the faintest glimmer of that Mighty Effulgence. But this much I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of *Ahimsa*.

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself.¹ And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

—*My Experiments With Truth* (1945): P. 404.

5. IN SEARCH FOR TRUTH

AS I proceed in my search for Truth, it grows upon me that Truth comprehends everything. It is not in *Ahimsa*, but *Ahimsa* is in it. What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling

1. "I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone".

—*Young India*: Aug. 4, 1927.

IN SEARCH FOR TRUTH

to it, and it enables one to reach pure Truth. There is no question there of a divided duty. But often enough it is difficult to decide what is *Ahimsa*. For instance, the use of disinfectants is *himsa*, and yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of *Ahimsa* in the midst of a world of *himsa*, and that is possible only if we cling to Truth. That is how I deduce *Ahimsa* from Truth.¹

Brahma is Real, All Else Unreal

Out of Truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of Truth has to be humble as the dust.² His humility increases with his observance of Truth. I see this every moment of my life. I have a much vividder sense of Truth and of my own littleness than I had a year ago. The wonderful implication of the great truth '*Brahma satyam jaganmithya*' (Brahma is real, all else unreal) grows on me from day to day. It teaches us patience. This will purge us of harshness and add to our tolerance. It will make us magnify the mole-hills of our errors into mountains, and minimize the mountains of others' errors into mole-hills. The body persists because of egoism. The utter extinction of the body, of egoism, is *Moksha*. He who has achieved this

1. "*Ahimsa* is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for *Ahimsa*, Truth says: 'Find it through me.' When I look for Truth, *Ahimsa* says: 'Find it out through me'."

—*Young India*: June 4, 1925.

2. "No one can see God face to face who has aught of the 'I' in him. He must become a cipher if he would see God. Who shall dare say in this storm-tossed universe: 'I have won'? God triumphs in us, never we."

—*Young India*: June 25, 1925.

GOD IS TRUTH

will be the very image of Truth, or one may call it *Brahman*.

Therefore, the loving name of God is *Dasanudas* (Servant of servants). Wife, children, friends, possessions—all should be held subservient to Truth. Each one of these should be sacrificed in the search for Truth.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 22, 1942.

6. GOD IS TRUTH AND LOVE

WE may all have different definitions for 'God'. If we could all give our own definitions of God, there would be as many definitions as there are men and women. But behind all that variety of definitions, there would be also a certain sameness which would be unmistakable. For, the root is one. God is that indefinable something which we all feel, but which we do not know.

Source of Light and Life

To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For, in His boundless love, God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word, for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly.

The Purest Essence

He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need

GOD IS TRUTH AND LOVE

His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *Is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. One may banish the word 'God', but one has no power to banish the Thing Itself. What is solemn affirmation if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And, surely, conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God.

He is Long-Suffering

He cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long-suffering. He is patient, but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to our neighbours—men and brutes. With Him, ignorance is no excuse. And withal, He is ever forgiving, for He always gives us the chance to repent.

The Greatest Democrat

He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and, under cover of free will, leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport—*Lila* or calls it all an illusion—*Maya*. We are *not*, He alone *Is*. And if we will be, we must eter-

GOD IS TRUTH

nally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His *bansi*—lute, and all would be well.

—*Young India*: March 5, 1925.

7. GOD IS ONE

*“Who can name Him, and knowing what he says,
Say: ‘I believe in Him’? And who can feel,
And, with self-violence, to conscious wrong
Hardening his heart, say: ‘I believe Him not’!
The All-Embracing, All-Sustaining One.
Say: does He not embrace, sustain, include
Thee-Me-Himself? Bends not the sky above?
And earth, on which we are, is it not firm?
And over us, with constant kindly smile,
The sleepless stars keep everlasting watch!
Am I not here gazing into thine eyes?*

*And does not All, that is,
—Seen and unseen—mysterious All—
Around thee, and within,
Untiring agency,
Press on thy heart and mind?*

*—Fill thy whole heart with it—and, when thou art
Lost in the consciousness of happiness,*

*Then call it what thou wilt
Happiness!—Heart!—Love!—God!
I have no name for it!
Feeling is all in all!
Name is but sound and reek,
A mist around the glow of Heaven.”*

—Goethe's *Faust*

ADVAITISM AND GOD

GOD is certainly One. He has no second. He is unfathomable, unknowable and unknown to the vast majority of mankind. He is everywhere. He sees without eyes, and hears without ears. He is formless and indivisible. He is uncreate, has no father, mother or child; and yet He allows Himself to be worshipped as father, mother, wife and child. He allows himself even to be worshipped as stock and stone, although He is none of these things. He is the most elusive. He is the nearest to us, if we would but know the fact. But He is farthest from us when we do not want to realize His omnipresence. There are many gods in the *Vedas*. Other scriptures call them angels. But the *Vedas* sing of only one God.

—*Young India*: Sept. 25, 1924.

8. ADVAITISM AND GOD

I AM an *Advaitist*¹ and yet I can support *Dvaitism* (dualism). The world is changing every moment and is, therefore, unreal; it has no permanent existence. But, though it is constantly changing, it has something about it which persists and it is, therefore, to that extent real. I have, therefore, no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *Ane-*

1. "I believe in *Advaita* (non-dualism). I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives.... When we descend to the empirical level, we descend to the world of duality. In God there is no duality. But as soon as we descend to the empirical level, we get two forces—God and Satan, as Christianity calls them. Other terms for the two are used in Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam."

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 37.

kantavadi or a *Syadvadi*. But my *Syadvad* is not the *Syadvad* of the learned; it is peculiarly my own. I cannot engage in a debate with them. It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men, who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant, were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant.

I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of Reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussalman from his standpoint, and a Christian from his. Formerly, I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. To-day, I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and *vice versa*. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My *Anekantavad* is the result of the twin doctrine of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*.

—*Young India*: Jan. 21, 1926.

9. HE IS ONE YET MANY

I BELIEVE God to be creative as well as non-creative. This, too, is the result of my acceptance of the doctrine of the manyness of Reality. From the platform of the Jains, I prove the non-creative aspect of God; and from that of Ramanuja, the creative as-

HE IS ONE YET MANY

pect. As a matter of fact, we are all thinking of the Unthinkable, describing the Indescribable, seeking to know the Unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate and even often contradictory. That is why the *Vedas* describe *Brahman* as 'Not this', 'Not this'. But if He or It is not this, He or It is. If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere.

Smaller Than Atom, Bigger Than Himalayas

And that is why all of us with one voice call one God differently as *Paramatma*, *Ishwara*, *Shiva*, *Vishnu*, *Rama*, *Allah*, *Khuda*, *Dada Hormuzda*, *Jehovah*, *God*, and an infinite variety of names. He is one and yet many. He is smaller than an atom, and bigger than the Himalayas. He is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass Him. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. But I need not labour the point. Faith is essential in this matter. My logic can make and unmake innumerable hypothesis. An atheist might floor me in a debate. But my faith runs so very much faster than my reason that I can challenge the whole world and say: 'God is, was and ever shall be.'

The Merciful and Compassionate

But those who want to deny His existence are at liberty to do so. He is merciful and compassionate. He is not an earthly king needing an army to make us accept His sway. He allows us freedom, and yet His

GOD IS TRUTH

compassion commands obedience to His will. But if any one of us disdains to bow to His will, He says: 'So be it. My sun will shine no less for thee, my clouds will rain no less for thee. I need not force thee to accept my sway.' Of such a God, let the ignorant dispute the existence. I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him and am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His glory.

—*Young India*: Jan. 21, 1926.

10. GOD'S EXISTENCE CANNOT BE PROVED

IT is easy enough to say: "I do not believe in God."

For, God permits all things to be said of Him with impunity. He looks at our acts. And any breach of His Law carries with it, not its vindictive, but its purifying, compelling punishment. God's existence cannot be, does not need to be, proved. God Is. If He is not felt, so much the worse for us. The absence of feeling is a disease which we shall some day throw off *nolens volens*.

—*Young India*: Sept. 23, 1926.

God Defies Reason

Seeing God face to face is to feel that He is enthroned in our hearts, even as a child feels a mother's affection without needing any demonstration. Does a child reason out the existence of a mother's love? Can he prove to others? He triumphantly declares: 'It is'. So must it be with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced. Let us not reject the experience of Tulsidas, Chaitanya, Ramdas and a host

FAITH vs. REASON

of other spiritual teachers, even as we do not reject that of mundane teachers.

—*Young India*: July 9, 1925.

‘Yet There is God’

I believe in faith, in things where reason has no place, *e.g.*, the existence of God. No argument can move me from that faith; and like that little girl, who repeated against all reason: ‘Yet we are seven’, I would like to repeat, on being baffled in argument by a very superior intellect, ‘Yet there is God.’

—*Harijan*: Dec. 5, 1936.

11. FAITH vs. REASON

Q. You once expressed your opinion....that faith begins where reason ends.¹ Then, I expect you will call it faith if a person believes in a thing for which he can give no reasons. Is it not, then, clear that faith is believing unreasonably? Do you think it truth or justice if anybody believed in anything unreasonable? I think it is folly to believe in that way.... If you think like me, I hope, you will call faith as nothing but folly.

A. There is in this question a clear failure to understand my meaning. That which is beyond reason is surely not unreasonable. Unreasonable belief is blind

1. “Faith only begins where reason stops. But there are very few actions in the world for which reasonable justification cannot be found.”

—*Young India*: June 24, 1926.

faith and is often superstition. To ask anybody to believe without proof what is capable of proof would be unreasonable, as, for instance, asking an intelligent person to believe without the proof that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. But, for an experienced person to ask another to believe without being able to prove that there is God, is humbly to confess his limitations and to ask another to accept in faith the statement of his experience. It is merely a question of that person's credulity. In ordinary matters of life, we accept in faith the word of persons on whom we choose to rely although we are often cheated. Why may we not, then, in matters of life and death, accept the testimony of sages all the world over that there is God, and that He is to be seen by following Truth and Innocence (Non-violence)? It is at least as reasonable for me to ask my correspondent to have that faith in this universal testimony, as it would be for him to ask me to take his medicine in faith even though many a medicine-man might have failed me.

What is True Faith ?

I make bold to say that without faith this world would come to naught in a moment. True faith is appropriation of the reasoned experience of people whom we believe to have lived a life purified by prayer and penance. Belief, therefore, in prophets or incarnations, who have lived in remote ages, is not an idle superstition but a satisfaction of an inmost spiritual want. The formula, therefore, I have humbly suggested for guid-

FAITH TRANSCENDS REASON

ance is rejection of every demand for faith where a matter is capable of present proof, and unquestioned acceptance on faith of that which is itself incapable of proof except through personal experience.

—*Young India*: April 14, 1927.

12. FAITH TRANSCENDS REASON

REASON is a poor thing in the midst of temptations.

Faith alone can save us. Reason *appears* to be on the side of those who indulge in drink and free love. The fact is that reason is blurred on such occasions. It follows the instinct. Do not lawyers ranged on opposite sides make reason appear to be on their side? And yet one of them must be wrong, or it may be that both are. Hence faith in the rightness of one's moral position is the only bulwark against the attack of reason.

Counter-arguments have always been advanced. They have been advanced against the very existence of God—the sum of all that Is. Faith that transcends reason is our only Rock of Ages. . . . My faith has saved me and is still saving me from pitfalls. It has never been known to betray anyone.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 23, 1939.

Reason Cannot Take Us Far

There are subjects where reason cannot take us far, and we have to accept things on faith. Faith, then, does not contradict reason, but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason.

—*Harijan*: March 6, 1937.

GOD IS TRUTH

Faith is Consciousness of God Within

It is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains and faith that jumps across the ocean. That faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing. Bodily diseased, he is spiritually healthy; physically poor, he rolls in spiritual riches.

—*Young India*: Sept. 24, 1925.

13. GOD IS GREAT

I CLAIM to be a man of faith and prayer, and even if I were to be cut to pieces, I trust God would give me the strength not to deny Him, but to assert that He is.

The Mussalman says: "He is, and there is no one else."

The Christian says the same thing, and so does the Hindu.

If I may venture to say so, the Buddhist also says the same thing, only in different words.

It is true that we may each of us be putting our own interpretation on the word 'God'. We must of necessity do so; for God embraces, not only this tiny globe of ours, but millions and billions of such globes and worlds beyond worlds.

How can we, little crawling creatures, possibly measure His greatness, His boundless love, His infinite compassion?

GOD IS

So great is His infinite love and pity that He allows a man insolently to deny Him, to wrangle about Him, and even to cut the throat of his fellow-man !

—*With Gandhiji in Ceylon: P. 61.*

14. GOD IS

THERE is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this Unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs, we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet, they know that there is a Power that certainly rules. In my tour in Mysore, I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler, I, who am infinitely lesser than God than they than their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of kings.

Law and The Law-Giver are One

Nevertheless, I do feel, as the poor villagers felt about Mysore, that there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living be-

GOD IS TRUTH

ings; and, thanks to the marvellous researches of Sri J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law, then, which governs all life, is God. Law and the Law-giver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Law-giver, because I know so little about it or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of Divine Authority makes life's journey easier, even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

Changeless Living Power

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a Living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing Power or Spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this Power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For, I can see that in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, Truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good.

God Must Rule The Heart

But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule

GOD MUST RULE THE HEART

the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every the smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever perceive. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses, it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence, but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experience of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

Faith Transcends Reason

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and, therefore, in the supremacy of the Moral Law—the Law of Truth and Love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love. I confess I have no argument to convince through reason. Faith transcends reason. All I can advise is not to attempt the impossible.

Existence of Evil

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal

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with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

Lead Kindly Light

I know, too, that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology, as it is to-day, but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile, I invite the correspondent to pray with Newman who sang from experience:

*“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.”*

—*Young India*: Oct. 11, 1928.

15. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

‘**W**HY is there evil in the world?’ is a difficult question to answer. I can only give what I may call a villager’s answer. If there is good, there must also be evil, just as where there is light there is also dark-

ness. But it is true only so far as we human mortals are concerned. Before God there is nothing good, nothing evil. We may talk of His dispensation in human terms, but our language is not God's.

The *Vedanta* says the world is *Maya*. Even that explanation is a babbling of imperfect humanity. I, therefore, say that I am not going to bother my head about it. Even if I was allowed to peep into the innermost recess of God's chamber, I should not care to do it. For, I should not know what to do there. It is enough for our spiritual growth to know that God is always with the doer of good.

'But He is All-mighty, as unquestionably He is, why does He not free us from evil?'

I would rule out this question, too. God and we are not equals. Equals may put such questions to one another, but not unequals. Villagers do not ask why town-dwellers do things which, if they did, would mean certain destruction.

'I quite see what you mean. It is a strong point you have made. But who made God?'

If He is All-powerful, He must have made Himself.

'Do you think He is an autocrat or a democrat?'

I do not think these things at all. I do not want to divide the power with Him, and hence I am absolved from having to consider these questions. I am content with doing the task in front of me. I do not worry about the why and wherefore of things.

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‘But has He not given us reason?’

Indeed, He has. But that reason helps us to see that we should not dabble in things we cannot fathom.

‘Do you believe it is easier to be evil than good, that a descent is easier than an ascent?’

Apparently, it is so. But really it is easier to be good than to be evil. Of course, poets have said that descent to hell is easy, but I do not think so. Nor do I think there are more bad people in the world than good. In that case, God Himself would be evil and not an embodiment of *Ahimsa* or Love which He is.

‘May I know your definition of *Ahimsa*?’

Ahimsa means avoiding injury to anything on earth, in thought, word and deed.

—*Harijan*: Sept. 7, 1935.

16. GOOD AND EVIL

IN a strictly scientific sense, God is at the bottom of both good and evil. He directs the assassin's dagger no less than the surgeon's knife. But for all that, good and evil are, for human purposes, from each other distinct and incompatible, being symbolical of Light and Darkness, God and Satan. Ahriman and Ormuzd respectively.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 20, 1937.

Is Evil Also Made By God ?

God's hand is behind good, but in God's hand it is not mere good. His hand is behind evil also, but

DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

there it is no longer evil. 'Good' and 'evil' is our own imperfect language. God is above both good and evil.¹

Q. Is evil also made by God?

A. Nothing can possibly exist without His allowing it. He makes many things inverted which must be put right. We must invert the process. God has given us conscience. He has given us the power to do right. If I take your thing with your permission, it is right. If I take it without your permission, it is stealing and I must put it back in its own place.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 27.

17. DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

Q. The distinction between good and evil thoughts is of our creation. Why should their coming and going make us uneasy?

A. The distinction is not unimportant. Nor do these thoughts come haphazard. They follow some law, which the scriptures have tried to enunciate. There are certain problems in mathematics, for the solution of which some workable assumptions have to be made. They help in the solution of the problem. But they are purely imaginary, and have no other practical use. Similarly, psychologists have proceeded upon the assumption that a pair of opposite forces is warring against each other in the universe, of which one is divine and other devilish.... The distinction is made by all the

1. "Evil is good or truth misplaced. It has no separate existence at all, but it is only truth or good misplaced."

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 37.

scriptures of the world. I say this distinction is imaginary. God is one, without a second. He alone is. He is indefinable. In reality, there is no God who is at war with Satan; but we have imagined that there is a war going on between God and Satan. The author of the *Mahabharata* has described the war between the opposing forces of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and has advised men to non-co-operate with the latter.

It is we who entertain thoughts, and again it is we ourselves who repulse them. We have thus to strive against ourselves. The scriptures have, therefore, said that there is a duel in the world. This duel is imaginary, not real. We can, however, sustain ourselves in the world only by assuming the existence of the imaginary duel to be real.

—*Gandhiji's View of Life*: P. 57.

18. ROOT CAUSE OF PERPLEXITY

TO say that God permits evil in this world may not be pleasing to the ear. But if He is held responsible for the good, it follows that He has to be responsible for the evil, too. Did not God permit Ravana to exhibit unparalleled strength? Perhaps, the root cause of the perplexity arises from a lack of the real understanding of what God is. God is not a person. He transcends description. He is the Law-maker, the Law and the Executor. No human being can well arrogate these powers to himself. If he did, he would be looked upon as an unadulterated dictator. They become only Him whom we worship as God. This is the reality.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 24, 1946.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

19. WHAT IS TRUTH ?

TRUTH is God—nothing else, nothing less. The nearest word answering to Truth in Sanskrit is *Sat*. *Sat* means 'being'. God alone is *Sat*. He alone is, nothing and no one else is. Everything else is illusion. *Satya* means *Sat*. Truth alone is in the world, nothing else is. This is easy enough to understand. Then, what is Truth? For us, it is a relative term. Absolute Truth is God. Whatever we understand by God is implied in Truth. It alone really sustains us. For a time, many other things may sustain us; but this alone sustains us for all time.

Truth gives perennial joy. In Sanskrit, we have the word *Sat-Chit-Anand*. It is a fine combination. The three together make one word. Truth is Knowledge also. It is Life. You feel vitality in you when you have got Truth in you. Again, it gives Bliss. It is a permanent thing of which you cannot be robbed. You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have Truth in you, you will experience an inner joy.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 35.

20. GOD AS TRUTH

NOTHING is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *Sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say that 'Truth is God' than to say that 'God is Truth'. But as we cannot do without a ruler or general, such names of God as 'King of kings' or the 'Almighty' are,

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and will remain, generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized that *Sat* or *Satya* is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

‘Sat-Chit-Anand’

And where there is Truth, there also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word *Chit* or knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss (*Anand*). There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence, we know God as *Sat-Chit-Anand*, One who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.

Breath of Our Life

Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But, without Truth, it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.

Law of Truth

Generally speaking, observation of the Law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we should understand the word '*Satya*' or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. To

GOD AS TRUTH

the man who has realized this Truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this never-failing test of Truth, we will at once be able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth reading.

How To Realize Truth

But how is one to realize this Truth, which may be likened to the philosopher's stone or the Cow of Plenty? By single-minded devotion (*abhayasa*) and indifference to all other interests in life (*vairagya*)—replies the *Bhagavad Gita*. In spite, however, of such devotion, what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Yet we know that He is one. But Truth is the right designation of God.

Quest of Truth

Hence, there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed, it is his duty to do so. Then, if there is a mistake on the part of anyone so following Truth, it will be automatically set right. For, the quest of Truth involves *tapas*—self-

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suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth, nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path. Therefore, the pursuit of Truth is true *Bhakti* (devotion). It is the path that leads to God. There is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to Life Eternal.

A Treasure Beyond Price

In this connection, it would be well to ponder over the lives and examples of Harishchandra, Prahalad, Ramchandra, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, the Christian saints, etc. How beautiful it would be, if all of us, young and old, men and women, devoted ourselves wholly to Truth in all that we might do in our waking hours, whether working, eating, drinking or playing, till dissolution of the body makes us one with Truth? God as Truth has been for me a treasure beyond price; may He be so to every one of us!

—*From Yeravda Mandir: Chap. I*

21. GOD IS TRUTH : TRUTH IS GOD

God is Truth

IN my early youth, I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe—and I think it

is the truth—that God has as many names as there are creatures and, therefore, we also say that God is nameless; and since God has many forms, we also consider Him formless; and since He speaks to us through many tongues, we consider Him to be speechless; and so on. And so when I came to study Islam, I found that Islam, too, had many names for God. I would say with those who say ‘God is Love’, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that, for myself, God is Truth.

Truth is God

But two years ago, I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz., that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth, which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least, and that human love, in the sense of passion, could become a degrading thing also. I found, too, that love, in the sense of *Ahimsa*, had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with Truth, and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of Truth. But, in their passion for discovering

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Truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly.¹ And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that ‘God is Truth’, I should say that ‘Truth is God.’

I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh who delighted to call himself an atheist; but knowing as I do something of him, I would never regard him as an atheist. I would call him a God-fearing man, though I know that he would reject the claim. His face would redden if I would say: “Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a Truth-fearing man, and so a God-fearing man.” I would automatically disarm his criticism by saying that Truth is God, as I have disarmed criticisms of many a young-man. Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and in His name committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit cruelties in the name of Truth. I know how, in the name of Truth and Science, inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. There are thus a number of difficulties in the way, no matter how you describe God. But the human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or an entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp.

1. “Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of Truth. The sum total of those sparks is indescribable, as-yet-Unknown Truth, which is God.”

—Gandhiji's *Article in Contemporary Indian Philosophy*: P. 21.

God Alone Is

And, then, we have another thing in Hindu philosophy, *viz.*, God alone is and nothing else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the *Kalma* of Islam. There you find it clearly stated that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact, the Sanskrit word for Truth is a word which literally means that which exists—*Sat*. For these and several other reasons that I can give you, I have come to the conclusion that the definition 'Truth is God' gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God, the only inevitable means is Love, *i.e.*, Non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately the means and end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

What is Truth ?

"What, then, is Truth?"

A difficult question; but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How, then, you ask, different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media, and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another, and hence those who have made these experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments.

Discipline for Realizing Truth

Just as for conducting scientific experiments, there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Everyone should, therefore, realize his limitations before he speaks of his Inner Voice. Therefore, we have the belief, based upon experience, that those who would make individual search after Truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance, the vow of Truth, the vow of *Brahmacharya* (purity)—for, you cannot possibly divide your love for Truth and God with anything else—the vow of Non-violence, of Poverty and Non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows, you may not embark on the experiment at all. There are several other conditions prescribed, but I must not take you through all of them.

Reduce Yourself to Zero

Suffice it to say that those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the Voice of Conscience, and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience, without going through any discipline whatsoever, that there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world. All that I can, in true humility, present to you is that Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the Ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a

zero.¹ Further than this, I cannot go along this fascinating path.

—*Young India*: Dec. 31, 1931.

22. A DISCIPLINED CONSCIENCE

A DISCIPLINED conscience is one to obey. It is the Voice of God. An undisciplined conscience leads to perdition, for the devil speaks through it. . . . "Not everyone that sayeth unto me 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven shall enter that Kingdom."

* * *

As we go forward in our journey of life, we have always problems coming up for decision, and they are the hardest when the voice of Satan nearly approaches the Voice of God. Only fullest trust (in God) and perfect purity and extreme humility can lead us to the right choice.

—*My Dear Child*: pp. 56, 59.

23. THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

THERE are times when you have to obey a call which is the highest of all, *i.e.*, the Voice of Conscience, even though such obedience may cost many a bitter tear, nay even more, separation from friends,

1. "Q. What is the meaning of reducing ourselves to zero?

A. It means to be the last in receiving good things, to serve everyone, not to expect gratitude, and to be the first in suffering. One who thus reduces himself to zero will always be absorbed in his work."

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 211, July 3, 1932.

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from family, from the State to which you may belong, from all that you have held as dear as life itself. For, this obedience is the Law of our Being.

—*Speeches & Writings of M. Gandhi*: P. 458.

‘A Little Voice Within’

There come to us moments in life when about some things we need no proof from without. A Little Voice within us tells us: ‘You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way.’

—*The Leader*: Dec. 25, 1916.

‘Still Small Voice’

There are moments in your life when you must act, even though you cannot carry your best friends with you. The ‘Still Small Voice’ within you must always be the final arbiter when there is a conflict of duty.

—*Young India*: Aug. 4, 1920.

The Pillar of Fire

I pray like every good Hindu. I believe that we can all become messengers of God, if we cease to fear man and seek only God’s Truth. I do believe I am seeking only God’s Truth and have lost all fear of man. I have no special revelation of God’s will. My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being, but we shut our ears to the ‘Still Small Voice.’ We shut our eyes to the Pillar of Fire in front of us. I *realize* His omnipresence.

—*Young India*: May 25, 1921.

THE VOICE OF GOD

The Inner Voice

The Inner Voice defies description. But sometimes we do feel that we receive an inspiration from within.¹ The time when I learnt to recognize it may be called my prayer time, say about 1906. I recollect it and tell you as you ask me. For the rest, never did I feel at any time in my life that I had some new experience. My spiritual growth has been unnoticed like the growth of hair on our heads.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 275, Aug. 7, 1932.

24. THE VOICE OF GOD

MY claim to hear the Voice of God is no new claim.

Unfortunately, there is no way that I know of proving the claim except through results. God will not be God if He allowed Himself to be an object of proof by His creatures. But He does give His willing slave the power to pass through the fieriest of ordeals. I have been a willing slave to this most exacting Master for more than half a century. His Voice has been increasingly audible, as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour. He has saved me often against myself and left me not a vestige of independence. The greater the surrender to Him, the greater has been my joy.

—*Harijan*: May 6, 1933.

1. Q. Does the Inner Voice mean the message of God?

A. The Inner Voice may mean a message from God or from the Devil, for both are wrestling in the human breast. Acts determine the nature of the Voice.

—*Young India*: Feb. 13, 1930.

25. WHEN THE INNER VOICE SPEAKS

NOBODY has, to my knowledge, questioned the possibility of the Inner Voice speaking to some, and it is a gain to the world even if one person's claim to speak under the authority of the Inner Voice can be really sustained. Many may make the claim, but not all will be able to substantiate it. But it cannot and ought not to be suppressed for the sake of preventing false claimants. There is no danger whatsoever if many people could truthfully represent the Inner Voice. But, unfortunately, there is no remedy against hypocrisy. Virtue must not be suppressed because many will feign it. Men have always been found throughout the world claiming to speak for the Inner Voice. But no harm has yet overtaken the world through their short-lived activities. Before one is able to listen to that Voice, one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, and when it is the Inner Voice that speaks, it is unmistakable. The world cannot be successfully fooled for all time. There is, therefore, no danger of anarchy setting in, because a humble man like me will not be suppressed and will dare to claim the authority of the Inner Voice, when he believes that he has heard it.

—*Harijan*: March 18, 1933.

26. HOW I HEARD THE VOICE

FOR me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or the 'Still Small Voice' means one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never

HOW I HEARD THE VOICE

tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly, the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. I felt refreshed and began to write the note about it which the reader must have seen.¹

Not An Echo of Heated Imagination

Could I give any further evidence that it was truly the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say that it was all self-delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this—that not the unanimous verdict of the whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God.

1. "A tempest has been raging within me for some days. I have been struggling against it. On the eve of the 'Harijan Day', the Voice became insistent, and said: 'Why don't you do it? I resisted it. But the resistance was vain. And the resolution was made to go on an unconditional and irrevocable fast for twenty-one days, commencing from Monday noon the 8th May and ending on Monday noon the 29th May.'"

—*Harijan*: May 6, 1933.

GOD IS TRUTH

More Real Than My Own Existence

But some think that God Himself is a creation of our own imagination. If that view holds good, then nothing is real, everything is of our own imagination. Even so, whilst my imagination dominates me, I can only act under its spell. Realest things are only relatively so. For me, the Voice was more real than my own existence. It has never failed me, and for that matter, anyone else.

And everyone who wills can hear the Voice. It is within everyone. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation.¹

—*Harijan*: July 8, 1933.

27. NO HALLUCINATION

THERE is no question of hallucination. I have stated a simple scientific truth, thus to be tested by all who have the will and the patience to acquire the necessary qualifications, which are again incredibly simple to understand and easy enough to acquire where there is determination. I can only say: "You have to believe no one but yourselves. You must try to listen to the Inner Voice, but if you won't have the expression 'Inner Voice', you may use the expression 'Dictates of Reason', which you should obey; and if you will not parade God, I have no doubt you will parade

1. "Having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the 'Still Small Voice' within."

—*The Epic Fast*: P. 34.

something else which in the end will prove to be God, for, fortunately, there is no one and nothing else but God in this Universe.

Training Necessary For Listening

I would also submit that it is not everyone claiming to act on the urge of the Inner Voice (who) has that urge. After all, like every other faculty, this faculty for listening to the 'Still Small Voice' within requires previous effort and training, perhaps much greater than what is required for the acquisition of any other faculty; and even if, out of thousands of claimants, only a few succeed in establishing their claim, it is well worth running the risk of having and tolerating doubtful claimants. A person falsely claiming to act under Divine inspiration or the promptings of the Inner Voice, without having any such, will fare worse than the one falsely claiming to act under the authority of an earthly sovereign. Whereas the latter on being exposed will escape with injury to his body, the former may perish body and soul together. Charitable critics impute no fraud to me, but suggest that I am highly likely to be acting under some hallucination. The result for me, even then, will not be far different from what it would be if I was laying a false claim. A humble seeker that I claim to be has need to be most cautious and, to preserve the balance of mind, he has to reduce himself to zero before God will guide him. Let me not labour this point.

—*The Bombay Chronicle*: Nov. 18, 1933.

28. INNER VOICE OR AUTO-SUGGESTION

WHEN a man speaks of the 'Inner Voice', the scientist says it is auto-suggestion. It is auto-suggestion indeed, because God is within. When he says it is auto-suggestion, to him it appears a thing to be despised and suppressed. I, however, use the word 'auto-suggestion' in my own sense.... When the scientist speaks of the Inner Voice being auto-suggestion, he means to say it is the devil's voice. Maybe it is. There are occasions when the devil's voice speaks as God's Voice. God's Voice is not heard in the heart of every person. It is no matter of inherent right. You must undergo a course of training, if you want to hear the Voice of God. There are some rules laid down for it. If you followed them, the result would be infallible.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 37.

29. PROPHETIC VISION

Q. May I ask if you had anything like a prophetic vision?

A. I do not know what you call a vision and what you will call prophetic. But let me give you an experience in my life. When I announced my fast of 21 days in jail, I had not reasoned about it. On retiring to bed the previous night, I had no notion that I was going to announce the next morning a fast of 21 days. But, in the middle of the night, a Voice woke me up and said: "Go through a fast." "How many days?" I asked. "21 days", was the answer. Now let me tell you that my mind was unprepared for it, disinclined

LISTENING TO GOD

for it. But the thing came to me as clearly as anything could be.

Let me tell you one thing more and I have done. Whatever striking things I have done in life I have not done prompted by reason, but prompted by instinct—I would say God. Take the Dandi Salt March of 1930. I had not the ghost of a suspicion how the breach of the Salt Law would work itself out. Pandit Motilalji and other friends were fretting and did not know what I would do; and I could tell them nothing, as I myself knew nothing about it. But like a flash it came, and, as you know, it was enough to shake the country from one end to the other.

One last thing. Until the last day, I knew nothing about announcing the 6th of April 1919 as a day of fasting and prayer. But I dreamt about it—there was no Voice or Vision as in 1930—and I felt it was just the thing to do. In the morning, I shared it with C.R.¹ and announced it to the country, you know with what a wonderfully spontaneous response.

—*Harijan*: May 14, 1938.

30. LISTENING TO GOD

Members of the Oxford Group : You have always been listening to God. We feel that the solution of those problems which you have worked would be reached if all the millions of India would start listening to God. We feel we have a place in this plan and have, therefore, come to you in joy.

1. Chakravarty Rajagopalachari.

GOD IS TRUTH

Gandhiji : How I wish I had the same enthusiasm that fires you. Of course, I have the experience in listening, not merely of trying to listen. The more I listen, the more I discover that I am still far away from God. While I can lay down rules, the observance of which is essential for proper listening, the Reality still escapes me. When we say we are listening to God and getting answers, though we say it truthfully, there is every possibility there of self-deception. I do not know that I am myself altogether free from self-deception. People sometimes ask me if I may not be mistaken, and I say to them: "Yes, very likely, what I say may be just a picture of my elongated self before you."

All That Glitters is Not Gold

This I know that all that glitters is not gold, and also that if a man has really heard the Voice of God, there is no sliding back, just as there is no forgetting it by one who has learnt to swim. The listening in must make people's lives daily richer and richer.

Waiting on God

This listening in presupposes the fitness to listen, and the fitness is acquired after constant and patient striving and waiting on God. Shankaracharya has likened the process to the attempt to empty the sea by means of a drainer, small as the point of a blade of grass. This process thus necessarily is endless, being carried through birth after birth. And yet the effort

TRUTH HAS NO FORM

has to be natural as breathing or the winking of the eyes, which processes happen without our knowing them. The effort coincides with the process of living. I commend to you this process of eternal striving which alone can take us face to face with God.

—*Harijan*: Oct. 7, 1939.

31. TRUTH HAS NO FORM

TRUTH has no form. Therefore, everyone will form such an idea or image of Truth as appeals to him, and there will be as many images of Truth as there are men. These will all be true as long as they last. For, they enable a man to obtain everything he wants. As a matter of fact, names such as *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Ishwara*, *Bhagavan*, are either meaningless or at least not significant enough, whereas *Satya* (Truth) is the perfect name for God. If someone says he will die for God's sake, he cannot make plain to others what he means, and people who hear him say so will hardly understand it. On the other hand, one who says he will die for Truth knows what he means, and his words will be generally understood by those who hear him.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 120, May 20, 1932.

32. TRUTH RESIDES IN HUMAN HEART

I NEED not say anything more about Truth. As regards God, it is difficult to define Him; but the definition of Truth is deposited in every human heart. Truth is that which you believe to be true at this moment, and that is your God. If a man worships this

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relative truth, he is sure to attain the Absolute Truth, *i.e.*, God, in course of time. The same doctrine is taught in the *Vedas*.

All reading is fruitless so long as we have not learnt to live a truthful life. A lover of Truth will not try to appear different from what he is. His thoughts, words and actions will be harmonious. This condition is easy to attain for those who recognize Truth as God. Bulky tomes do not need to be consulted in order to live truthfully.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 249, July 24, 1932.

Man Cannot Know The Whole Truth

It is not given to man to know the whole Truth. His duty lies in living up to the Truth as he sees it, and, in doing so, to resort to the purest means, *i.e.*, to non-violence. But Truth is not to be found in books. Truth resides in every human heart and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by Truth as one sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of Truth.

—*Harijan*: Nov. 24, 1933.

33. GOD AND HIS LAW

FOR the last few years, I have been saying that 'Truth is God' instead of 'God is Truth'.¹ The former statement is more consonant with facts, for in

1. To a question if 'God is Truth' and 'God is Love' meant anything more than that 'God is truthful' and 'God is loving', Gandhiji replied:

"In 'God is Truth', *is* certainly does not mean *is equal* to, nor does the proposition merely mean 'God is truthful'. Truth is not

GOD AND HIS LAW ARE ONE

this world there is nothing besides Truth. Truth here should be understood in a wide sense. It is full of intelligence. God as Truth and His Law are not different but one and the same; therefore, it also is full of intelligence. Indeed, it is all the same whether we say that the universe is a function of Truth, or that it is a function of Law. This Truth is charged with infinite power. In the language of the *Gita*, Chapter 10, the universe is sustained by a fraction of it. Therefore, if you replace the word 'God' by the word 'Truth', wherever it occurs, you will have some idea of what I mean.

If God is, it is our duty to worship Him even if we recognize Him as Truth. We tend to become what we worship. That is the whole and comprehensive meaning of prayer. Truth abides in the human heart. But we realize it indifferently or not at all. Sincere prayer is the key to such realization.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 160, June 13, 1932.

34. GOD AND HIS LAW ARE ONE

WE do not know all the laws of God, nor their working. Knowledge of the tallest scientist or the greatest spiritualist is like a particle of dust. If God is not a personal being for me like my earthly father,

a mere attribute of God, but He is That. He is nothing if He is not That. Truth, in Sanskrit, means *Sat*, *Sat* means Is. Therefore, the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. We are only to the extent that we are truthful."

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 218, July 9, 1932.

GOD IS TRUTH

He is infinitely more. He rules me in the tiniest detail of my life. I believe literally that not a leaf moves but by His will. Every breath I take depends upon His sufferance.

He and His Law are one. The Law is God. Anything attributed to Him is not a mere attribute. He is the Attribute. He is Truth, Love, Law, and a million things that human ingenuity can name. I do believe with Gurudev¹ "in the inexorableness of the Universal Law in the working of which God Himself never interferes".² For, God is the Law. But I submit that we do not know the Law or the laws fully, and what appear to us as catastrophes are so only because we do not know the universal laws sufficiently.

—*Harian*: Feb. 16, 1934.

35. PERSONAL GOD

Q. Do you believe in a personal God?

A. I don't. I don't believe God to be a personal being in the sense that we are personal beings. I understand God to be Universal Law. God, however, cannot be described in His fullness. We human beings describe Him in our own vocabulary. God is

1. Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore.

2. "God Himself has reserved no right of revision of His own laws, nor is there any need for Him for any such revision. He is All-powerful, All-knowing. He knows at the same time and without any effort the past, the present and the future. He has, therefore, nothing to reconsider, nothing to revise, nothing to alter, and nothing to amend."

—*Young India*: Nov. 25, 1926.

THEISM—AN ACT OF FAITH

the Law as well as the Law-giver. The two are one.¹ In Buddhism, God is described as the Law. Many people say that Buddhism is atheistic. I have never thought so.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 36.

36. THEISM—AN ACT OF FAITH

TOLSTOY writes:

“I speak of a personal God, whom I do not acknowledge for the sake of convenience of expression. There are two Gods. There is the God people generally believe in, a God who has to serve them sometimes in a very refined way; perhaps, merely by giving them peace of mind. This God does not exist. But the God whom we all have to serve does exist and is the prime cause of our existence and of all we perceive.”

Asked which of these two Gods he believed in, for if a man believed in the second God, prayer had no meaning for him, Gandhiji replied:

I believe in both the Gods, the one who serves us as well the other whom we serve. It is impossible that we should render service and not receive some return for it. But, in fact, both these Gods are imaginary. God, who really is beyond the reach of human imagination, He does not serve nor is He served. No

1. “God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life—in other words, the Law and the Law-giver rolled into one.”

—*Harijan*: April 14, 1946.

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epithet applies to Him for God is not an external entity but abides in the human heart. And as we do not know how God works, we should remember Him whom our mind cannot reach. The moment we thus remember Him, our own imagination bodies Him forth. In fact, theism is not a product of the human intellect but an act of faith. Intellect here is of little use. And directly we believe in God, no further speculation is necessary as regards the ways of the world, for, as we believe in God, we likewise believe that no part of His creation is without a purpose.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 288, Aug. 15, 1932.

37. AN UNSEEN POWER

GOD is not a Power residing in the clouds. God is an Unseen Power residing within us and nearer to us than finger-nails to the flesh.¹ There are many powers lying hidden within us and we discover them by constant struggle. Even so may we find this Supreme Power, if we make diligent search with the fixed determination to find Him. One such way is the way of *Ahimsa*.² It is so very necessary because God is in every one of us and, therefore, we have to identify

1. "My God does not reside up above. He has to be realized on earth. He is here, within you, within me. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. You need not think of the world beyond. If we can do our duty here, the beyond will take care of itself."

—*Press Report*: Jan. 4, 1946.

2. "Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realizing Him."

—*Young India*: Jan. 8, 1925.

GOD IS LOVE

ourselves with every human being without exception. This is called cohesion or attraction in scientific language. In the popular language, it is called Love. It binds us to one another and to God. *Ahimsa* and Love are one and same thing.

—*Harijan*: March 28, 1953.

38. GOD IS LOVE

SCIENTISTS tell us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms that comprise this globe of ours, it would crumble to pieces and we cease to exist; and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, so must there be in all things animate; and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love. We notice it between father and son, between brother and sister, friend and friend. But we have to learn to use that force among all that lives, and in the use of it consists our knowledge of God. Where there is Love, there is Life; hatred leads to destruction.

—*Young India*: May 5, 1920.

39. VISION OF GOD OR TRUTH

WHAT is the vision of the Truth or God? It does not mean seeing something with the physical eye or witnessing a miracle. Seeing God means realization of the fact that God abides in one's heart. The yearning must persist until one has attained this realization, and will vanish upon realization. Realization is the

GOD IS TRUTH

final fruit of constant effort. The human lover sacrifices his all for his beloved, but his sacrifice is fruitless inasmuch as it is offered for the sake of momentary pleasure. But the quest of Truth calls for even greater concentration than that of the human beloved. There is joy ineffable in store for the aspirant at the end of the quest. Still, very few of us are as earnest as even the human lover. Such being the facts of the case, what is the use of complaining that the quest of Truth is an uphill task? The human beloved may be at a distance of several thousand miles; God is there in the tabernacle of the human heart, nearer to us than the finger-nails are to the fingers. But what is to be done with a man who wanders all over the wide world in search of treasure which, as a matter of fact, is buried under his very feet?

—*Ashram Observances in Action*: P. 54.

40. HOW WE MAY SEE GOD

WE cannot see God with these eyes. God is spirit without body and is, therefore, visible only to the eye of faith. If there are no evil thoughts troubling our mind and no fears but constant cheerfulness in our heart, that is an indication of God's presence in ourselves. Indeed, He is there at all times, but we fail to notice His presence as we have no faith, and thus undergo much suffering. When once we have cultivated real faith, calamities cease to upset us.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 114, May 17, 1932.

41. THE BEATIFIC VISION

ONE who looks upon the Universe as various facets of God, will certainly have the beatific vision. But what he sees will be a creation of his own imagination. A Christian, who looks upon the Universe as God, will see a Christ-like image. A man sees God as he worships Him. A Hindu will always draw fresh inspiration from the Eleventh Chapter (of the *Gita*); and if he is a devotee (*bhakta*), he will see God as He has been there described. But what he sees will have no existence except in his own imagination. God is without form, but He assumes form for His devotee. That is His *Maya*, or poetry. The whole thing boils down to this: We have to see God even in the thief and the robber. If we can thus see God in him, he will give up his thievish propensities. All our knowledge and spiritual exercises are fruitless, so long as we have not had this vision.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 244, July 19, 1932.

42. HOW TO ATTAIN GOD REALIZATION

Q. Can a man who resorts to untruth for worldly purposes see God? Or, is the beatific vision possible for one who gives up all activities in order to be able to observe the Law of Truth?

A. One who resorts to untruth, with any end in view whatsoever and is full of likes and dislikes, can never attain the Supreme. Your second question deals with an impossibility. To tread the path of Truth and

to eschew all activity—this is a contradiction in terms. If a man is not active, how can we say anything about the path he has taken? To tread the path of Truth implies an active life in the world of men. In the absence of such activity, there is no occasion for either pursuing or swerving from Truth. The *Gita* has made it clear that a man cannot remain inactive even for a single moment. The difference between one who is a devotee of God and another who is not, is that the former is active in the service of others, never gives up Truth in the midst of activity and gradually overcomes his likes and dislikes; while the other is active for selfish reasons, and has no scruples whatever as regards the means he employs in order to achieve his selfish ends. This world is not something evil in itself, for only an active life in the world can help us to attain the goal of God-realization. This activity must be directed to the good of others. Selfish activity is fit only to be condemned and should be given up.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 250, July 24, 1932.

43. THE LIVING EMBODIMENT OF GOD

Q. Can there be any service without religion?

A. Why, service which has not the slightest touch of self in it, is itself the highest religion.

Q. But one must be devoted to someone?

A. Yes, to Truth. I am devoted to none but Truth, and I owe no discipline to anybody but Truth.

Q. But how is one to get inspiration from this general idea?

SERVICE OF GOD

A. That means to say that you want a God who has form, Truth is too impersonal for you? Well, idolatry is embedded in human nature. But you may, if you like, worship God as Truth, if not Truth as God. God is Truth, but God is many other things also. That is why I prefer to say Truth is God. But you need not go into what may sound like mystic lore; you may simply worship what you find to be the Truth, for Truth is known relatively. Only, remember, that Truth is not one of the many qualities that we name. It is the living embodiment of God, it is the only Life, and I identify Truth with fullest life, and that is how it becomes a concrete thing, for God is His whole Creation, the whole Existence, and service of all that exists—Truth—is service of God.

—*Harijan*: May 25, 1935.

44. SERVICE OF GOD

Q. How can we serve God when we do not know God?

A. We may not know God, but we know His creation. Service of His creation is the service of God.¹

Q. But how can we serve the whole of God's creation?

A. We can but serve that part of God's creation which is nearest and best known to us. We can start with our next-door neighbour. We should not

1. "The only way to be nigh unto God is to serve His creation. There can be no other meaning of God."

—*From a Letter to Vidya Hingorani*: Nov. 23, 1930.

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be content with keeping our courtyard clean; we should see that our neighbour's courtyard is also clean. We may serve our family, but may not sacrifice the village for the sake of the family. Our own honour lies in the preservation of that of our own village. But we must each of us understand our own limitations. Our capacity for service is automatically limited by our knowledge of the world in which we live. But let me put it in the simplest possible language. Let us think less of ourselves than our next-door neighbour. Dumping the refuse of our courtyard into that of our neighbour is no service of humanity, but disservice. Let us start with the service of our neighbours.

—*Harijan*: Aug. 22, 1936.

45. MAN'S ULTIMATE AIM

MAN'S ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities—social, political, religious—have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done through one's country. I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert, that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave,

FREE WILL

I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.

—*Harijan*: Aug. 29, 1936.

46. FREE WILL

Q. You are living a guided life. Could you kindly tell me your experience of guidance?

A. I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God, and God's Law and God are not different things or facts, in the sense that an earthly king and his law are different. Because God is an Idea, Law Himself, therefore, it is impossible to conceive God as breaking the Law. He, therefore, does not rule our actions and withdraw Himself. When we say He rules our actions, we are simply using human language and we try to limit Him. Otherwise, He and His Law abide everywhere and govern everything. Therefore, I do not think that He answers in every detail every request of ours; but there is no doubt that He rules our action, and I literally believe that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will. The free will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck.¹

Communion with God

Q. Do you feel a sense of freedom in your communion with God?

1. **Q.** Has the soul 'free will' or 'choice' and, if so, how much?

A. Man has got a choice, but as much of it as a passenger on board a ship has. It is just enough for him. If we don't use it, then we are practically dead.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 28.

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A. I do. I do not feel cramped as I would on a boat full of passengers. Although I know that my freedom is less than that of a passenger, I appreciate that freedom as I have imbibed through and through the central teaching of the *Gita* that man is the maker of his own destiny, in the sense that he has freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses that freedom. But he is no controller of results. The moment he thinks he is, he comes to grief.

—*Harijan*: March 23, 1940.

47. TO AN ATHEIST

A HUMANITARIAN outlook is a necessity, but it can never be a substitute for God. God is there, but our conception of God is limited by our mental horizon and by our physical environment. For instance, when you read the *Bible*, you find that the God of the Hebrews was quite different from the God of Jesus Christ. You are dissatisfied with the prevalent idea about God, for the simple reason that those who profess belief in God do not present a living God in their own lives.... Unless you have a living faith in God to sustain you, when failure stares you in the face, there is disappointment in store for you.

The seers have described God as 'नेति', 'नेति' ('Not this', 'Not this'). Truth will elude you. The sum-total of all that is true is Truth. But you can't sum up all that is true. Like most of those who have had Western education, you have got an analytical

A TALK WITH AN ATHEIST

mind. But there are things that can't be analyzed. A God who can be analyzed by my poor intellect won't satisfy me. Therefore, I do not try to analyze Him. I go behind the relative to the Absolute and get my peace of mind.

—*An Atheist with Gandhiji*: P. 28.

48. A TALK WITH AN THEIST

ATHEIST: Your way of life appeals to me very much. It offers scope for the exercise of individual will. The idea of God introduces a determinism and that limits man. It interferes with his free will.

Gandhiji: Is there such a thing as free will? What is it? We are all mere playthings in the hands of Providence.

Atheist: What is the relationship between God and man, between Truth and God?

Gandhiji: I used to say 'God is Truth'. That did not completely satisfy me. So I said 'Truth is God'. He and His Law are not different. God's Law is God Himself. To interpret it, man has to resort to intense prayer and merge himself in God. Each one will interpret it in his or her own way. As for the relationship between man and God, man does not become man by virtue of having two feet and two hands. He becomes man by becoming the tabernacle of God.

Atheist: When my idea of God itself is not clear, your talk of man becoming the tabernacle of God makes things still more confusing.

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Gandhiji: Yet it is the true conception. Unless we have the realization that the body is the house of God, we are less than men. And, where is the difficulty or confusion in conceiving Truth as God? You will concede that we are not tabernacles of Untruth: we are of Truth. Everyone who wants to live a true life has to face difficulties in life, some of which appear insurmountable. At that time, prayer and faith in God, that is Truth, alone will sustain you. The fellow-feeling which makes you feel miserable because of your brother's misery is godliness. You may call yourself an atheist, but so long as you feel akin with mankind, you accept God in practice. I remember clergymen who came to the funeral of the great atheist Bradlaugh. They said they had come to pay their homage because he was a godly man.¹

1. "It was about this time that Bradlaugh died. He was buried in the Woking Cemetery. I attended the funeral, as I believe every Indian residing in London did. A few clergymen also were present to do him the last honours. On our way back from the funeral, we had to wait at the station for our train. A champion atheist from the crowd heckled one of these clergymen: "Well, Sir, you believe in the existence of God?"

"I do," said the good man in a low tone.

"You also agree that the circumference of the Earth is 28,000 miles, don't you?" said the atheist, with a smile of self-assurance.

"Indeed."

"Pray, tell me, then, the size of your God and where He may be."

"Well, if we but knew, He resides in the hearts of us both."

"Now, now, don't take me to be a child," said the champion with a triumphant look at us.

The clergyman assumed a humble silence.

This talk still further increased my prejudice against atheism."

—*My Experiments with Truth* (1945): P. 61.

HOW TO CONVERT ATHEISTS

If you go back with a living faith in God, in Truth, I have no doubt that your work will flourish. You should feel dissatisfied with everything till you have found Him and you will find Him.

—*An Athiest with Gandhiji*: P. 28.

49. HOW TO CONVERT ATHEISTS

Q. How can one convert atheists to belief in God and religion?

A. There is only one way. The true servant of God can convert the atheist by means of his own purity and good conduct. It can never be done by argument. Innumerable books have been written to prove the existence of God, and if argument could have prevailed, there would not be a single atheist in the world to-day. But the opposite is the case. In spite of all the literature on the subject, atheism is on the increase. Often, however, the man who calls himself an atheist is not one in reality; and the converse also is equally true. Atheists sometimes say: "If you are believers, then we are unbelievers." And they have a right to say so, for self-styled believers are often not so in reality. Many worship God because it is the fashion to do so, or in order to deceive the world. How can such persons have any influence on atheists? Therefore, let the believer realize and have the faith that, if he is true to God, his neighbours will instinctively not be atheists. Do not let him be troubled about the whole world. Let us remember that atheists exist by the sufferance of God. How truly has it been said that

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those who worship God in name only are not believers, but those who do His will.¹

—*Harijan*: Sept. 1, 1940.

50. TO WHOM SHALL WE PRAY ?

A FRIEND: Do you know the God to whom you pray?

Gandhiji: No, I don't.

A Friend: To whom shall we pray, then?

Gandhiji: To the God whom we do not know—we do not always know the person to whom we pray.

A Friend: May be, but the person to whom we pray is knowable.

Gandhiji: So is God; and since He is knowable, we search. It may take a billion years before we find Him. What does it matter? So, I say, even if you do not believe, you must continue to pray, *i.e.* search. "Help thou my unbelief" is a verse from the *Bible* to be remembered. But it is not right to ask such questions. You must have infinite patience and inward longing. Inward longing obviates all such questions. "Have faith and you will be whole" is another tip from the *Bible*.

1. *Q.* How can an ordinary man distinguish between God's will and his own will?

A. By not regarding anything as God's will, unless he has positive proof to the contrary. Not every person can know God's will. Proper training is necessary to attain the power to know God's will.

—*Harijan*: April 27, 1940.

GOD—A GREAT DEMOCRAT

A Friend: When I look around me, I say to myself: There must be one Creator, one God, and to Him I should pray.

Gandhiji: That again is reasoning. God is beyond reason. But I have nothing to say if your reason is enough to sustain you.

—*M. Gandhi—The Last Phase: P. 61.*

51. GOD—A GREAT DEMOCRAT

PERFECTION is the attribute of the Almighty, and yet what a great democrat He is! What an amount of wrong and humbug He suffers on our part! He ever suffers us, insignificant creatures of His, to question His very existence, though He is in every atom about us, around us and within us. But He has reserved to Himself the right of becoming manifest to whomsoever He chooses. He is a Being without hands and feet and other organs, yet he can see Him to whom He chooses to reveal Himself.

—*Harijan: Nov. 14, 1936.*

52. GOD ALONE IS OMNISCIENT

GOD alone is omniscient. Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect. He may be described as being made in the image of God, but he is far from being God. God is invisible, beyond the reach of the human eye. All that we can do, therefore, is to try to understand the words and actions of those whom we regard as men of God. Let them soak into our being and let

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us endeavour to translate them into action, but only so far as they appeal to the heart.

—*Harijan*: March 3, 1946.

53. HAS MAN CREATED GOD ?

Q. God is a creation of man's imagination. It is not God who has created man, but man who has created God. Is this not true?

A. I have taken this from a correspondent's letter. There is a semblance of truth in what he says. The writer has, however, unwittingly created the illusion by a play upon the two words "creation" and "God".

God Himself is both the Law and the Law-giver. The question of anyone creating Him, therefore, does not arise, least of all by an insignificant creature such as man. Man can build a dam, but he cannot create a river. He can manufacture a chair, but it is beyond him to make the wood. He can, however, picture God in his mind in many ways. But how can man, who is unable to create even a river or wood, create God? That God has created man is, therefore, the pure truth. The contrary is an illusion. However, anyone may, if he likes, say that God is neither the doer nor the cause. Either is predicable of Him.

—*Harijan*: April 14, 1946.

54. THE LAW OF GOD

Q. You have said: 'God is the Law and the Law-giver'. I do not understand it. Laws are made by

THE LAW OF GOD

man and they keep on changing with time. For instance, Draupadi had five husbands and yet she was considered a *Sati*. A woman who does that to-day will be considered immoral.

A. Law here means the Law of God. Man interprets that Law according to his understanding. For instance, the rotation of the earth is a law of Nature. We are convinced of its correctness to-day. Yet, before Galileo, astronomers believed differently. As for Draupadi, the *Mahabharata*, in my opinion, is an allegory and not history. Draupadi means the soul wedded to the five senses.

Theory of Re-birth

Q. God cannot be realized through reason. He has to be understood through faith. Do you believe in re-birth, or is it that Hindu seers propounded it in order to enable people to appreciate the significance of good and evil deeds, and derive some satisfaction from the belief?

A. God cannot be realized through intellect. Intellect can lead one to a certain extent and no further. It is a matter of faith and experience derived from that faith. One might rely on the experience of one's betters, or else be satisfied with nothing less than personal experience. Full faith does not feel the want of experience. The distinction between good and evil is not meant to act as a consolation. Nor is faith in God meant for that purpose. The seers have held that there is good and evil and there is re-birth. I think this theory

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of reincarnation is capable of being understood by the intellect.

—*Harijan*: Aug. 4, 1946.

55. WHAT OR WHO IS GOD ?

GOD is not a person. To affirm that He descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth, which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as God is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of Him. But this leads us nowhere. *Rama*, *Krishna*, etc. are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth, they are creations of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not, does not affect the picture of them in men's mind. The *Rama* and *Krishna* of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

He is The Essence of Life

The truth is that God is the Force.¹ He is the Essence of Life. He is pure and undefiled Consciousness. He is eternal. And yet, strangely enough, all are not able to derive either benefit from, or shelter in, the all-pervading Living Presence.

1. "God is not a person. He is the all-pervading, all-powerful Spirit. Anyone who bears Him in his heart has accession of a marvellous force or energy, comparable in its results to physical forces like steam or electricity, but much more subtle."

—*Harijan*: July 14, 1946.

GOD IS GOOD

Electricity is a powerful force. Not all can benefit from it. It can only be produced by following certain laws. It is a lifeless force. Man can utilize it, if he labours hard enough to acquire the knowledge of its laws.

The Living Force

The Living Force, which we call God, can similarly be found if we know and follow His Law leading to the discovery of Him in us. But it is self-evident that to find out God's Law requires far harder labour. The Law may, in one word, be termed *Brahmacharya*. The straight way to cultivate *Brahmacharya* is *Ramanama*. I can say this from experience. Devotees and sages like Tulsidas have shown us this royal path.

—*Harijan*: June 22, 1947.

56. GOD IS GOOD

NOT in the same sense as X is good. X is comparatively good. He is more good than evil, but God is wholly good. There is no evil in Him. God made man in His own image. Unfortunately for us, man has fashioned Him in his own. This arrogation has landed mankind in a sea of troubles. God is the Supreme Alchemist. In His Presence, all iron and dross turn into pure gold. Similarly does all evil turn into good.

Again, God lives but not as we. His creatures live but to die. But God is life. Therefore, goodness and all it connotes is not an attribute. Goodness is God.

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Goodness, conceived as apart from Him, is a lifeless thing and exists only whilst it is a paying policy. So are all morals. If they are to live in us, they must be considered and cultivated in their relation to God. We try to become good, because we want to reach and realize God. All the dry ethics of the world turn to dust, because apart from God they are lifeless. Coming from God, they come with life in them. They become part of us and ennoble us.

Conversely, God conceived without Goodness is without life. We give Him life in our vain imaginings.

—*Harijan*: Aug. 24, 1947.

57. IS GOD A REVENGEFUL DEITY ?

Q. Is the God who sent the earthquake a heartless and revengeful deity?

A. No, He is neither. Only His ways are not our ways. When we know that God Himself is the mystery of mysteries, why should anything that He does perplex us? If He acted as we would have Him do, we would not be His creatures and He our Creator. The impenetrable darkness that surrounds us is not a curse, but a blessing. He has given us power to see only the step in front of us, and it should be enough if Heavenly Light reveals that step to us. We can then sing with Newman: *'One step enough for me.'* And we may be sure from our past experience that the next step will always be in view. In other words, the impenetrable darkness is nothing so impenetrable as we

‘COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS’

may imagine. But it seems impenetrable when, in our impatience, we want to look beyond that one step. And since God is Love, we can say definitely that even the physical catastrophes that He sends now and then must be a blessing in disguise. But they can be so only to those who regard them as a warning for introspection and self-purification.

—*Harijan*: April 20, 1934.

58. ‘COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS’

IF proofs were needed, God is proving for me His greatness and goodness every day. You remember the hymn: ‘Count your many blessings’. I think it is in Moody and Sankey’s Hymn Book. I can’t even count the blessings; they are so many. For, even the so-called sorrows and pains He sends descend like blessings. If we knew His love, we should know that He has nothing but blessings, and never curses, for His creation.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 106.

59. DOES GOD FEEL OUR SORROWS ?

Q. If God is the Father of this Universe, does He feel the sorrows of His children? If He feels so, then why did He work havoc and inflict so much misery on His children by the devastating quakes of Bihar and Quetta? Why did He humiliate an innocent nation—the Abyssinians? Are the Abyssinians not His sons? Is He not Almighty? Then, why could He not prevent these calamities?

A. The writer wants to know why, if God is a God of Mercy and Justice, He allows all the miseries and sorrows we see around us. I can give no satisfactory explanation.... Things are often not what they seem. It may be that what we mistake as sorrows, injustices and the like are not such in truth. If we could solve all the mysteries of the universe, we would be co-equals with God. Every drop of the ocean shares its glory, but is not the ocean. Realizing our littleness during this tiny span of life, we close every morning prayer with the recitation of a verse¹ which means:

"Misery so-called is no misery,

Nor riches so-called riches.

Forgetting (or denying) God is the true misery,

Remembering (or faith in) God is true riches."

—*Harijan*: June 13, 1936.

60. PLEA FOR FAITH IN GOD

IT is the fashion, now-a-days, to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the Law home to those who have no faith in, and no need for, a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law,

¹ "विपद्दो नैव विपदः संपदो नैव संपदः

विपद् विस्मरणं विष्णोः संपन्नारायण स्मृतिः"

PLEA FOR FAITH IN GOD

in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty, and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life.

—*Harijan*: April 25, 1936.

How To Cultivate Faith

The way to cultivate faith in God is to recognize our nothingness and thus be humble as the particle of dust.¹ You know the prayer to Mother Earth in our morning verses. The best of us at his very best is a tiny thing and utterly helpless. And yet, we are not so helpless the moment we know that we are sparks from the Divine which is in us. Faith does not come from reason. Faith is believing. Believe in God because those whose names we hold sacred have believed and testified.

—*From a Letter to Anand T. Hingorani*: Nov. 22, 1930.

How Can Faith Be Strengthened

I was at first lacking in faith, but I acquired it by contemplation and study of religions. It grows stronger from day to day, as I have an increasing realization of the fact that God abides with me in my heart. One man's experience in this line is of no use

1. "We are but specks, mere particles of dust. We are of the earth, earthy.... We are imperfect.... We should, therefore, be humble; we should reduce ourselves to dust; we should reduce ourselves to, and remain, ciphers."

—*Gandhi's View of Life*: P. 63.

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to another. Faith can be strengthened only by constant effort informed by faith.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 125, May 23, 1932.

Faith Should Not Be Blind

Faith should not be indiscriminating or blind. For instance, as regards some question, which can be solved by human intelligence, someone may say: "I do not care what the intellect has got to say in the matter; I will hold a particular belief from faith," his faith is not characterized by humility. It is for the human intellect to decide whether the earth is round or flat. Yet, if someone says he has full faith that it is flat, his faith is not coupled with humility.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 184, June 21, 1932.

My Belief in God

I have made the world's faith in God my own, and as my faith is ineffaceable, I regard that faith as amounting to experience. However, as it may be said that to describe faith as experience is to tamper with Truth, it may perhaps be more correct to say that I have no word for characterizing my belief in God.

—*My Experiments with Truth* (1945): P. 341.

Only in His Strength We are Strong

But far be it from me to suggest that you should believe in the God that I believe in. Maybe, your definition is different from mine, but your belief in that God must be your ultimate mainstay. It may be some Supreme Power or some Being, even indefinable, but

WHERE IS THE LIVING GOD ?

belief in it is indispensable. To bear all kinds of tortures, without a murmur or resentment, is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God. Only in His strength, we are strong. And only those, who can cast their cares and their fears on that Immeasurable Power, have faith in God.

—*Harijan*: June 3, 1939.

Faith in God

Everyone has faith in God, though everyone does not know it. For, everyone has faith in himself and that multiplied to *n*th degree is God. The sum-total of all that lives is God. We may not be God, but we are of God, even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. Imagine it torn away from the ocean and flung millions of miles away. It becomes helpless, torn from its surroundings, and cannot feel the might and majesty of the ocean. But if someone could point out to it that it is of the ocean, its faith would revive, it would dance with joy and the whole of the might and majesty of the ocean would be reflected in it.

—*Harijan*: June 3, 1939.

61. WHERE IS THE LIVING GOD ?

I DO have a living faith in a living God, even as I have a living faith in many things that scientists tell me. It may be retorted that what the scientists say can be verified if one followed the prescription given for realizing the facts which are taken for granted. Precisely in that manner speak the *Rishis* and the Pro-

phets. They say anybody following the path they have trodden can realize God. The fact is, we do not want to follow the path leading to realization, and we won't take the testimony of eye-witnesses about the one thing that really matters. Not all the achievements of physical sciences put together can compare with that which gives us a living faith in God. Those who do not want to believe in the existence of God, do not believe in the existence of anything apart from the body. Such a belief is held to be unnecessary for the progress of humanity. For such persons, the weightiest argument in proof of the existence of soul or God is of no avail. You cannot make a person, who has stuffed his ears, listen to, much less appreciate, the finest music. Even so can you not convince those about the existence of a living God, who do not want the conviction.

Living Faith in A Living God

Fortunately, the vast majority of people do have a living faith in a living God. They cannot, will not, argue about it. For them 'It is'. Are all the scriptures of the world old women's tales of superstition? Is the testimony of the *Rishis*, the Prophets, to be rejected? Is the testimony of Chaitanya, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Tukaram, Dhyandeva, Ramdas, Nanak, Kabir, Tulsidas of no value? What about Ramamohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Vivekananda, all modern men as well educated as the tallest among the living ones? I omit the living witnesses whose evidence would be considered unimpeachable. This belief in God has to

MY DARKEST HOUR

be based on faith which transcends reason. Indeed, even the so-called realization has at bottom an element of faith without which it cannot be sustained.

Incessant Divine Music

In the very nature of things, it must be so. Who can transgress the limitations of his being? I hold that complete realization is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living, immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings. God is not outside this earthly case of ours. Therefore, exterior proof is not of much avail, if any at all. We must ever fail to perceive Him through the senses, because He is beyond them. We can feel Him, if we will but withdraw ourselves from the senses. The Divine Music is incessantly going on within ourselves, but the loud senses drown the delicate music which is unlike, and infinitely superior to, anything we can perceive or hear with our senses.

—*Harijan*: June 13, 1936.

62. MY DARKEST HOUR

DR. MOTT: What affords you the greatest hope and satisfaction?

Gandhiji: Faith in myself born of faith in God.

Dr. Mott: In moments when your heart may sink within you, you hark back to this faith in God?

Gandhiji: Yes. That is why I have always described myself as an irrepressible optimist.

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Dr. Mott: So am I. Our difficulties are our salvation. They make us hark back to the living God.

Gandhiji: Yes. My difficulties have strengthened my faith which rises superior to every difficulty, and remains undimmed. My darkest hour was when I was in Bombay a few months ago. It was the hour of my temptation. Whilst I was asleep, I suddenly felt as though I wanted to see a woman. Well, a man, who had tried to rise superior to the sex instinct for nearly 40 years, was bound to be intensely pained when he had this frightful experience. I ultimately conquered the feeling, but I was face to face with the blackest moment of my life and, if I had succumbed to it, it would have meant my absolute undoing. I was stirred to the depths because strength and peace come from a life of continence. Many Christian friends are jealous of the peace I possess. It comes from God who has blessed me with the strength to battle against temptation.

Dr. Mott: I agree. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'

—*Harijan*: Dec. 26, 1936.

63. GOD APPEARS IN ACTION

DR. MOTT: What has brought deepest satisfaction to your soul in difficulties and doubts and questionings?

Gandhiji: Living faith in God.

Dr. Mott: When have you had indubitable manifestation of God in your life and experience?

Gandhiji: I have seen and believe that God never appears to you in person, but in action which can only account for your deliverance in your darkest hour.

Dr. Mott: You mean things take place that cannot possibly happen apart from God.

Gandhiji: Yes. They happen suddenly and unawares. One experience stands quite distinctly in my memory. It relates to my 21 days' fast for the removal of untouchability. I had gone to sleep the night before, without the slightest idea of having to declare a fast the next morning. At about 12 o'clock in the night, something wakes me suddenly, and some Voice—within or without, I cannot say—whispers: 'Thou must go on a fast'.

'How many days?' I ask.

The Voice again says: 'Twenty-one days'.

'When does it begin?' I ask.

It says: 'You begin tomorrow'.

I went quietly off to sleep after making the decision. I did not tell anything to my companions until after the morning prayer. I placed into their hands a slip of paper announcing my decision and asking them not to argue with me, as the decision was irrevocable. Well, the doctors thought I would not survive the fast. But something within me said that I would, and that

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I must go forward. That kind of experience has never in my life happened before or after that date.

Dr. Mott: Now, you surely can't trace such a thing to an evil source?

Gandhiji: Surely not. I never have thought it was an error. If ever there was in my life a spiritual fast, it was this. There is something in denying satisfaction of the flesh. It is not possible to see God face to face, unless you crucify the flesh. It is one thing to do what belongs to it as a temple of God, and it is another to deny it what belongs to it as to the body of flesh.

Dr. Mott: I am grateful to you for sharing this experience with me.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 10, 1938.

64. CREATIVE EXPERIENCES

DR. MOTT: What have been the most creative experiences in your life? As you look back on your past, what, do you think, led you to believe in God when everything seemed to point to the contrary, when life, so to say, sprang from the ground, although it all looked impossible?

Gandhiji: Such experiences are a multitude. But as you put the question to me, I recalled particularly one experience that changed the course of my life. That fell to my lot seven days after I had arrived in South Africa. I had gone there on a purely mundane and selfish mission. I was just a boy returned from England, wanting to make some money. Suddenly, the

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client who had taken me there asked me to go to Pretoria from Durban. It was not an easy journey. There was the railway journey as far as Charlestown, and the coach to Johannesburg. On the train I had a first class ticket, but not a bed ticket. At Maritzburg, where the beddings were issued, the guard came and turned me out and asked me to go to the van compartment. I would not go and the train steamed away, leaving me shivering in the cold. Now, the creative experience comes there. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting room. There was a White man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward with God as my Helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non-violence began from that date. And God put me through the test during that very journey. I was severely assaulted by the coachman for my moving from the seat he had given me.

Dr. Mott: The miseries, the slaps after slaps you received burnt into your soul.

Gandhiji: Yes, that was one of the richest experience of my life.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 10, 1938.

65. BELIEF IN GOD

IT (belief in God) can never be a matter for argument. If you would have me convince others by argument, I am floored. But I can tell you this, that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you

and I are sitting in this room. Then, I can also testify that I may live without air and water, but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God, and I am dead. You may call this a superstition, but I confess it is a superstition that I hug, even as I used to hug the name of Rama in my childhood, when there was any cause of danger or alarm. That was what an old nurse had taught me.

“But you think that superstition was necessary for you?”

“Yes, necessary to sustain me.”

—*Harijan*: May 14, 1938.

66. FAITH IN THE LIVING GOD

Q. How can we bring man back to God, or the teaching of Jesus, or that of Mohammed?

A. I might give the answer that Jesus gave to one of his followers: “Do the will of my Father who is in Heaven, not merely say ‘Lord, Lord’.” That holds true of you, me and everybody. If we have faith in the living God, all will be well with us. I hope not to lose that faith even to my dying day. In spite of my numerous failings and shortcomings, of which I am but too well aware, my faith in God is burning brighter every day. If it did not, I would take the same prescription that I gave to women threatened with dishonour and with no prospect of help or escape *yīz.*, commit suicide.

—*Harijan*: Nov. 17, 1946.

67. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

WITH my hand on my breast, I can say that not a minute in my life am I forgetful of God. For over twenty years, I have been doing everything that I have done as in the presence of God. . . . As I am a believer in God, as I never for a moment lose faith in Him, as I content myself with the joy and sorrow that He wills for me, I may feel helpless, but I never lose hope.

—*Young India*: Jan. 27, 1927.

The Divine Presence

There is not a moment when I do not feel the presence of a Witness, whose eye misses nothing and with whom I strive to keep in tune.

I cannot recall a moment in my life when I had a sense of desertion by God.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 24, 1938.

Presence of God

If I did not feel the presence of God within me, I see so much of misery and disappointment every day that I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be the Hooghli.

—*Young India*: Aug. 6, 1925.

The Living Presence

As days pass, I feel this living Presence in every fibre of my veins. Without that feeling, I should be demented. There are so many things that are calculated

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to disturb my peace of mind. So many events happen that would, without the realization of that Presence, shake me to the very foundation. But they pass me by, leaving me practically untouched.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 268.

Never-Failing Presence

If you have a living faith in a living God, you would feel His never-failing Presence protecting you. Till that state is reached, even faith in an individual, clothed in flesh and bone, is not of any avail. It is relying on a broken reed.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 260.

68. THE INFALLIBLE CARETAKER

“**BE** careful for nothing” is one of the verses that have ever remained with me and taken possession of me. If God is, why need I care? He is the Infallible Caretaker. He is a foolish man who fusses, although he is well protected.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 149, June 4, 1932.

God Looks After Us

God is with us and looks after us as if He had no other care besides. How this happens, I do not know. That it does happen, I do know. Those who have faith have all their cares lifted from off their shoulders.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 267.

THE INFALLIBLE CARETAKER

'My Trust is in God'

My trust is in God. We can but work, and then be careful for nothing.

I know that if we trust in God when we are weakest, somehow He makes us strong.

* * *

I know it is stupid to be anxious. God is above us all to protect and guide His own.

*"Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
Let me hide in Thee."*

—*My Dear Child*: Pp. 6, 37, 55.

God—The Never-Failing

If we have trust in God, we should not worry, even as we would not when we have a trustworthy door-keeper or guard. And who can be a better door-keeper or guard than God—the never-failing? It is not enough that we sing about such things, or have a mere intellectual grasp. It is necessary to feel the thing within. . . . Feeling is exactly like feeling pain or pleasure. It admits of or needs no argument. Who can argue us out of our experience?

* * *

Feeling is of the heart. It may easily lead us astray, unless we would keep the heart pure. It is like keeping house and everything in it clean. The heart is the source from which knowledge of God springs. If the source is contaminated, every other remedy is

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useless. And if its purity is assured, nothing else is needed.

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God never comes to us except through the way of fire. There is a deep unconscious joy felt during such purifying agony.

—*My Dear Child*: Pp. 89, 91, 93.

His Way is Not Our Way

Remember that God takes the burden of all our cares on His broad shoulders, if we will but let Him. This is as true as it is true that I am writing to you. Only His way is not our way. His shoulders are not like ours. But there is all the beauty in doing His will.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 111.

Peace in The Midst of Strife

If we simply make ourselves instruments of His will, we should never have anxious moment. Yet, there is no calm without a storm, there is no peace without strife. Strife is inherent in peace. We should not know it without. Life is a perpetual struggle against strife, whether within or without. Hence, the necessity of realizing peace in the midst of strife.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 90.

69. SURRENDER TO GOD'S WILL

THE spirit of resignation is bad when the sorrows come out of our conscious errors; but when they come for reasons we do not know and cannot know,

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resignation is the proper thing. In other words, constant endeavour and surrender to the will of God have to go hand in hand.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 110.

God's Will Be Done

We are best tried when we are thwarted in what to us are holy purposes. God's ways are strange and inscrutable. Not our will but His must be our law.

* * *

There is no meaning in our wishes (however pure) not being fulfilled. Not our will, but His will be done.

—*My Dear Child*: Pp. 24, 25.

God's Hidden Ways

We do not know God's hidden ways. If we only submit to Him, He makes us do many things even unconsciously to ourselves. It will be such a joy to me if you never find yourself in the Valley of Despair, for, to be there, even for one moment, means lack of faith in a living God.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 90.

We Are All in God's Hands

We are all in God's hands. Not a blade moves but by His command. If we had all our own ways, the world will go to pieces. It is perhaps as well that our wishes are often frustrated. It is the test of our loyalty to God that we believe in Him even when He

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refuses to fulfil our wishes. I want you, therefore, to enjoy perfect peace, even while things seem to you to be all going wrong.

—*My Dear Child*: P. 102.

God's Guidance

Those who believe in God's guidance, just do the best they can and never worry. The sun has never been known to suffer from overstrain, and yet who slaves with such unexampled regularity as he! And, why should we think that the sun is inanimate? The difference between him and us may be that he has no choice, we have a margin, no matter how precarious it may be. But no more speculation of this sort. Suffice it for us that we have his brilliant example in the matter of tireless energy. If we completely surrender ourselves to His (God's) will, and really become *ciphers*, we, too, voluntarily give up the right of choice and then we need no wear and tear.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 171.

How to Know God's Will

How shall we know the will? By prayer, and right living. Indeed, prayer should mean right living. There is a *bhajan* we sing every day before the *Ramayana* commences whose refrain is: "Prayer has been never known to have failed anybody. Prayer means being one with God."

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 301.

NEVER IMAGINE THE WORST

What Full Surrender Means

Never imagine things good or bad until they stare you in the face. Full surrender means full freedom from all care. A child never has care for anything. It knows instinctively that it is being cared for by its parents. How much more true should it be with us grown up people? There you have the test of faith or detachment of the *Gita*, if you like.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 235.

Surrender in A Spirit of Self-Effacement

We must completely surrender ourselves to Him in a spirit of utter self-effacement. It is for God to take our broken barge across the stream, but it is for us to put in our best effort. It is for us to plug a hole in its bottom, or, if water gets into the boat, to throw it out. In that case, the barge will keep floating despite the hole. But it will float only when there is God's hand behind it. I would, therefore, say that man must make an endeavour, and for the result depend on God's grace.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 45.

70. NEVER IMAGINE THE WORST

IN ANY case, never imagine the worst. Since God is a God of Mercy, if we must imagine, it is best to imagine the best. Of course, a votary of the *Gita* never imagines anything. Good and bad are after all relative terms. He takes note of things as they happen and reacts naturally to them, fulfilling his part as if

propelled by the Great Mechanic, even as a piece of machine in good order responds automatically to the call of the mechanist. It is the most difficult thing for an intelligent being to be like a machine. And yet, if one is to become a zero, that is precisely what one desiring perfection has to become. The vital difference between the machine and the man is, that 'he machine is inert, the man is all life and consciously becomes like a machine in the hands of the Master Mechanic. Krishna says, in so many words, that God moves all beings as if they were parts of a machine.

—Bapu's *Letters to Mira*: 238.

71. 'BLESSED ARE THEY THAT EXPECT NOTHING'

BLESSED are they that expect nothing.

You say that your fears are not due to want of faith in God, but want of faith in self. But these are one and the same thing. Want of faith in self comes from want of faith in God. It betrays ignorance of what God is.

Then again, you say want of faith comes from our want of self-restraint. This is true, but it connotes the same thing. Read the Verse 59 of Chapter II, *Gita*. Objects of senses are eradicated only by seeing God face to face, in other words, by faith in God.

To have complete faith in God is to see Him. Nor is the matter any better by assuming the existence of the fourth dimension. It ultimately points to the same

WRONG TO REHEARSE A CALAMITY

thing. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all else will be added unto you." When we meet Him, we will dance in the joy of His Presence; and there will be neither fear of snakes, nor of the death of dear ones. For, there is no death and no snake-bite in His Presence.

The fact is that the most living faith, too, falls short of the perfect. Hence, there is no such thing as complete absence of fear for the embodied, *i.e.*, imprisoned soul. The possession of the body is a limitation. It is a wall of separation. We can, therefore, but try to shed our fear, *i.e.*, increase our faith.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 231.

72. WRONG TO REHEARSE A CALAMITY

[T is a wrong thing to rehearse a calamity (*i.e.*, an event believed by us to be a calamity, though, in fact, it may be a blessing) and to reproduce in advance the feelings one would have. It is enough that we hold ourselves prepared for the worst. This we do by an ever-increasing faith in God—the Good, the Just, the Compassionate, the Bountiful, the Giver of the daily bread, the Help of the helpless, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the Ever-Vigilant, the Whole Truth.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 233.

73. REJOICE IN SUFFERING

THERE is no such thing as a blow in reality. After having entrusted oneself to God, where is any room left for a blow? Therefore, rejoice in suffering.

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Nothing happens without Divine permission. A, how can we grieve over what He permits?

God is great and compassionate. He would not try His servants beyond endurance.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: Pp. 185, 193, 212.

We May Not Grumble

We may not grumble. It is all God's doing. Only we don't know Him. To grumble is also a विषय (object of sense). It won't abate till we know Him face to face.

—*Bapu's Letters to Mira*: P. 323.

74. HARDEST TASK-MASTER

GOD is the hardest task-master I have known on this earth, and He tries you through and through.¹ And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found. I cannot really recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me.

—*Speeches and Writings of M. Gandhi*: P. 1069.

1. "God tries His votaries through and through, but never beyond endurance. He gives them strength enough to go through the ordeal He prescribes for them."

—*Young India*: Feb. 19, 1925.

