

AVATARS

Avatars are unlike anything generally known in Western civilization. The experience of an Avatar has been granted to a few individuals in the West, but neither the experience nor, especially, the concept of an Avatar is familiar to Western peoples in general. It is generally assumed that we can know God as come in human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, but it is the point of this little essay that that assumption, while true, is not the whole truth. It is true that we can experience God in Christ Jesus and experience Him unto salvation. But it is also true that in an Avatar we have a fundamentally different and fuller manifestation of Godhead than we have in Jesus. In a word, we have the Father, not the Son, embodied in human form as the Avatar. Our purpose is to show that these statements are true and that the Creedal statements regarding the Nature of Jesus are also true. In doing this we will untie the knot represented by Islamic and Christian statements regarding the Nature of Jesus, and we will lay the strands of the knot out in full, straight lines for all to see and ponder.

We will be dealing with concepts and experiences which are unfamiliar to the Western Intellect, so, I have to ask the reader to bear with me patiently and try to understand as best one may while I unravel these matters. My ultimate aim is to untie the knot aforementioned, and it is now necessary that I expose the means for doing this, or, as I said, the leverage needed for untying the knot. Please be patient and I will be as careful and comprehensive as I can be in clarifying matters.

We have to deal with this fact of Avatars. There is no way around it. We might as well approach the subject of Avatars boldly and head-on. It will become evident to anyone who inquires deeply that the Avatars are ultimately incomprehensible. They cannot be understood, even by the greatest scholar, the finest intellect, even with some billions of years for making the effort. However, prior to this ultimate disposition, several key observations may be made regarding the behavior of the Avatars and the experience one has of them.

First, the Avatars of the Lord ("Avatar" means "He Who comes down or descends") appear only in India. Apparently, this is by design: India is the spiritual heart of the planet, so, the Lord takes that as His Seat. Again, the Avatar always comes in the Kshatriya caste, the caste of rulers and soldiers. By this is indicated that He is always holding the right of command and of punishment. The other three castes -- Brahmin (priest, teacher, doctor), Vaisya (businessman, farmer), Sudra (laborer) -- do not have the political or the penal authority by right. And, they never will. The Avatar does have these rights because He always takes Birth as a Kshatriya, a warrior, the members of which caste can command and punish.

Again, the Avatar is always in the male physical form. Often, but not always, He has the Consort, the female physical form, embodied as human also. Sometimes the Avatar will be accompanied by one or even more Avatars who will play subordinate Roles, supporting the main Avatar. Sometimes the Avatar comes in a series of Bodies, the Birth of one Body following closely on the Death of the former.

The Form, the Role, the Name, the Pose, the Tone are suited to the time, the place and the circumstance. Rama and Krishna are both Avatars of the Vishnu aspect of Godhead (i.e., the aspect of fostering, preservation), but the Dress, the Role, the Tone differ according to the context and its requirements. Only God knows what Role has to be played, and, as the Avatar, He Plays It with unparalleled skill. Each Role is indescribably sweet, incomparably attractive, absolutely unpredictable. God is the Master Actor.

Usually the Avatar is known to only a few people. The masses learn of His earthly Form only after He has departed It. This is not always the case, but is usually so. Most Avatars do not go among the masses.

The Avatar lives out His earthly Existence in response to the prayers of saints and sages for succor and guidance. In fact, He is merely the concretization of those prayers. His purpose in the human form may be described as: (1) reestablishment of the Vedas, that is, of the foundations of Life: Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love; (2) fostering of devotees; and (3) punishment of the wicked.

There is an undercurrent of total renunciation about the Avatar's Life. Detachment, complete and absolute, characterizes everything He does. He acts as though the whole world depends on Him alone and that He has nothing to do with the world in any way, shape or form. The conventions of society do not bind Him in the least. The expectations of men, the petty little rules and prejudices into which men invest themselves for gaining respectability, the Avatar treats with breezy indifference. He has equal regard for all. Distinctions of caste, wealth, station, sex, race, creed,

education, etc. mean nothing to Him. Rocks, plants and animals receive from Him the same attention lavished on humans. He has no favorites. He is Insouciance Incarnate.

On the other hand, He behaves as the absolute bond-slave of those who love Him with a pure heart. Nothing in this or any other world can restrict or contain Him in the least, but the love of His devotees binds Him to them with bonds which even He, the Lord of All, is powerless to undo or throw off. The Avatar strides through life as the supreme monarch of men and of nature and as their supreme servant. He does exactly as He Wills to do, He says whatever He Wills to say, He goes wherever He Wills to go -- and He is the life-prisoner of those who love Him with intense, unsullied ardor.

What the Avatar Wills others are powerless to impede or restrain. What He Wills must happen. There is no one and no thing which can stand in His way. There is no question that the Avatar is the Embodiment of Supreme Power and Authority. Those who would oppose Him He removes from the scene like straws in the wind. He will march into the palace of a wicked ruler, stride past the guards, grab the ruler by his hair, pull ^{him} off his throne, drag him into the street, swing him up by his legs and smash his head to pieces on the pavement in view of the wondering populace, all the while smiling cheerfully, as if on a bucolic picnic. All the principalities and powers in all the worlds could not hope to make Him falter or hesitate. He is all dash, vigor and confidence. He is Supreme Power, Itself.

The Heart of the Avatar is as soft as melted butter. In fact, there is

nothing softer. The cries of the lonely, the ill-treated, the traduced, the poor and the helpless He cannot bear hearing. He rushes instantly to remedy their distress. Sincere pleading He cannot resist. Rank wickedness He will punish with instant, decisive severity. But, for the heart which is saturated in humility and love, He is pure flowing oil, liquid essence of Life and Love. No words can describe His tenderness. No emotion can gauge the depths of His soft Nature. He is all limpness and agility. He is everything we mean by Love and Peace.

Physically, the Avatar is the paradigm of exquisite charm. His Body contains all the elements we associate with male splendor and, equally, all the qualities of feminine beauty. He combines them both in His Body and the effect on the beholder is transfixing, enchanting. One can stand rooted to the spot, not wanting even to blink, while drinking in the charm and grace of His Physical Frame. Never have eyes seen such sublime, majestic loveliness as the actual Physical Frame of the Avatar. No beauty or grandeur of Nature can compare with the splendorous might and majesty of His Body. It is beyond the ability of words to describe. However, wicked persons do not see His loveliness at all. Instead, they see either ugliness or a vision of Primal Terror. Black hearts cannot bear to gaze on Him. The vision of His Form enrages them or, for many, drives them insane. This is a remarkable phenomenon that I have observed with my own eyes.

The Avatar can be observed to be always aware of everything. He needs no schooling. He has no teacher. Yet, He can be observed to be seeing all and knowing all -- and enjoying all -- all the time, without intermission. Very few people can observe this quality in the Avatar. But, it is there,

as surely as the sun is in the sky. He knows you before you open your mouth. He answers you before you ask. He volunteers to tell you your in-most thoughts and perplexities and emotions. He tells you what you have done, what you are doing and what you will be doing. And He does this without hesitation, without anymore fanfare than any normal, quiet conversation between old and chummy friends. He treats you as one He has known since before you remember yourself. He treats you as one He will know after you forget yourself. He lets you feel that He has been knowing you personally, intimately, totally, as the Ancient of Age knows His Own Handiwork (-- even, Himself.) And He treats everyone in exactly this same manner. The omniscience of the Avatar is a mansion of such ineffable glory and such awesome, overwhelming vastness that he who would claim to measure its extent must be declared a fool.

The Avatar is Love Incarnate. Love is His distinguishing sign. All other attributes of His Nature are of secondary, or less, importance to this one: Love. If anyone is likely to scoff at the old saying, "Love makes the world go 'round," then they have but to experience the Avatar to get convinced of the truth of it. Does He produce miracles? They are rubbish, tinsel and trash. Does He alleviate suffering? This is nice but not essential. Does He exhibit supreme courage, does He draw to Himself flocks of people, does He teach this and that remedy for spiritual ills, does He have dominion over men and nature, does He present Himself as being in all places all the time? Yes, He does. Each of these attributes or activities is pleasant, charming or wonderful to behold. But, each is peripheral, delusive. The essential quality of the Avatar is Love. Love -- expansive, expensive, extravagant, unquenchable, unyielding, unfathomable, unsullied --

this is His central and essential Nature. This is what matters. This is important. This alone: Love.

All the other attributes of the Avatar can be done without. In fact, they are mere toys and baubles, distractions. They are convincing chiefly for the convinced. They entertain the faithful and they enrage the vicious or they bore the stupid. They inspire wonder and give joy and happiness to believers and they incite hatred and malice in the crooked or they confuse the contumacious. But, they do not melt a stony heart. They do not bind up a broken spirit. They do not wipe a grieving tear. They do not puncture a vicious pride. They do not ignite the thirst for God. Only love can do these things. In a word, only Love is Powerful unto Salvation.

Love is the essential sign of the Avatar. He is Premaswarupa -- the very Embodiment of Love. Love -- and Love alone -- is convincing. Love leaves no slightest shred of doubt. Love is the only means available for binding up a broken world. Love -- and Love alone -- is the only means of even approaching the Avatar. A heart devoid of love will find the Avatar's Presence intolerable. Scholarship, instrumentation, disputation, witty repartee -- none of these resources of knowledge can give one even the faintest glimpse or experience of the Avatar's Reality. But, Love will show one in a trice. The Avatar can be known, His Reality plumbed, by Love alone. He is Love and nothing else.

The Avatar is always fostering the various modes of right conduct. These modes of conduct vary according to the stage of worldly life and the stage of spiritual life one is engaged in. A child must conform to certain rules

of conduct, a student to another group of rules, a householder to another and so on. A beginning aspirant conforms to certain rules of conduct, a monk to still others and a mendicant to still others. The Avatar is constantly fostering by precept and example each of these modes of conduct so that society may be regulated and at peace. For, when the proper modes of conduct are observed by everyone according to their duties and stage of life, mankind will have peace, prosperity and happiness. The Avatar is very closely caring to ensure that society advances and prospers by demarcating the ancient, immutable courses of morality and right conduct.

But, He does so without quick fixes. Doling money, materializing vast harvests, building huge housing projects are not on His Agenda. He is watering the roots of prosperity, not the leaves, for the roots only can absorb the nutrient. And the roots of prosperity are, very simply, morality, the modes and manners of living which are prescribed for the various occupations and stages of life that men undergo. Morality, not money, is the basis of prosperity, and its substance also. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows. Getting people to understand and to practice right conduct or morality is the Avatar's task. When the Lord Wills to reestablish society on its genuine foundation -- Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love -- His Will must succeed in being carried out. About this there can be no doubt, no "choosing." The ancient ways will be conformed to without the least pinch of compromise or deviation.

Finally, the Avatar is all Bliss. This is a phenomenon -- say, the Truth -- that Westerners do not usually associate with God. We do not usually think of God's Nature as being Bliss, Itself. Perhaps this is the reality

behind Mencken's quip that Puritanism is the ghastly suspicion that someone, somewhere might be happy. But, God is Bliss. We have conceived of God as just, merciful, loving, even wrathful. But, we have not thought of Him as Happiness Itself. Mystics have known God as Bliss, but not scholars or theologians. The reason for this is simple enough: we conceive of God, that is, we treat Him as distant. We are lacking in direct experience of Him. This is especially true of the educated classes, who revel in atheism, even as clergymen and "theologians." God for us is remote, a concept, a logician's cipher. We think of Him as loving but, in fact, He is Love. We think of Him as just but, in fact, He is Justice. We think of Him as merciful but, in fact, He is Mercy. We think a lot about God and have no experience of Him. We are dry wells, all sound and volume, no water and refreshment. We may get a truer feeling by conceiving of Him in roles we play ourselves, such as Father. But as long as we keep conceiving of Him and disdain experiencing Him immediately, directly -- quite beyond books and bricks and rules and roles and altar clothes -- the Knowledge of God will not be ours with any deep and systematic regularity.

It should be! Oh, what we miss! Oh, what we do not even dare to hope! Oh, with what paltry and feeble feelings do we allow ourselves to rest content as religious people! Oh, how close He really is! We are like pre-schoolers who have inertly accepted to remain in that grade without making the effort needed to attain the First Form, much less the Final Forum. If God is far and remote for us, who is to blame? Certainly not God. It is our own innate laziness, our own sick pride, our own fatuous fear of setting out on high adventure. These, our own faults, convince us that He is distant from us. Oh, what feeble faith we settle for!

Well, the lives of saints and sages are not admixed with these diseases, or, they show the means for getting rid of them. It is often wondered why these great ones enter so avidly upon a course of life common men find debasing, or immoral, or hard, or extravagant, or simplistic, or fool-hardy. Chesterton deals most feelingly with this matter in his biography of St. Francis. His answer to the scorn of the common man for the often ribald austerity of the saint is that the saint is in love with God and, like any lover, will do anything to please his Loved One. That has to be the answer, full and complete. But, under it we can remark a very simple fact: which is that the saint is very happy doing his unusual life. He is not differently motivated than any other man: he wants to be happy. What is different about him is what makes him happy. Common men suppose that all manner of things -- fame, fortune, family, friends -- will make them happy. They do not stop to consider that even the least fulfillment of these wants incites 10 more to take their place, that seeking happiness in the world is an endless treadmill, a forlorn hope, the pursuit of a mirage.

The saint also is after happiness, just as the common man is -- as every man is. But, he has found the way to actually have it, and the way consists, very plainly, in renouncing the body and its cravings, being detached from the mind and its whimsy. The secret of happiness is this: attachment brings grief, detachment brings joy. There is no other way of gaining uninterrupted happiness -- or, what is called Bliss -- than becoming saturated in renunciation, cultivating detachment, deep, powerful, uninterrupted. And that is all the saint is doing. He is cultivating detachment. In that activity does the "unusualness" of his life consist.

The common man is cultivating attachment, for, he believes that to be the way to happiness. So he does the things that he calculates will bring him happiness: buys a Mercedes, goes to Med School, weds a rich girl, boats on weekends, works overtime at the office, borrows to buy a house and a ski cabin. The saint, on the other hand, is likewise wanting to be happy, but he has seen the futility of worldly attachments for gaining his goal and feels that the opposite course will suffice him quite nicely. So, he sets out. And the very first step tells him something important: happiness, real happiness, happiness that is deep and sweet and savory -- what is usually called Bliss -- this happiness, or Bliss, wells up from within him. It does not come from the external world but from the internal one. It does not depend on something or someone else. It is its own cause and origin and one carries it all the time, buried within. In fact, one is it, as is everyone else the same, but that truth is not found out right away.

What makes the saint's behavior peculiar is that it is being evaluated by the common man, whose whole effort and urge is in the other direction. The saint's life is "unusual" or "abnormal" as viewed by the common man's standard of usual and normal. Actually, and from God's point of view, it is the other way around. The saint's life is normative for mankind as a whole while the common man's life is merely berzerk. From the saint's perspective, the behavior of the common man is peculiar in the extreme, not to mention pitifully ignorant. For, while the common man insists loud and tough that he is on the road to success and happiness, the saint can see very clearly that he is already steeped in every opposite of happiness -- fear, greed, anxiety, pride, hatred, lust -- and, unless he

turn around, must end in ruin.

The so-called antics of the saint are nothing more than his own best, even if fumbling, efforts to rid himself of every insane tendency upon which the common man plants his claim to normalcy. And, in the long view of history, that is, of the experience of mankind in the trips and traps of this old world, one has to say that a saint's method of gaining happiness is cold-sober sane while the common man's method of gaining happiness is a colossal futility, not to mention imbecility. Or, the "insanity" of the saint is man's least harmful infirmity. The saint may need to do some peculiar things to rid himself of erroneous -- insane -- tendencies. However, the peculiarity of his doings is a function of their being measured by the inverted values of the common man. Against a correct standard of values they will, most likely, be quite normal, even normative. Furthermore, that the saint is ridding himself of undesirable traits is sanity itself, regardless of the sometimes gorgeous calisthenics he engages in for doing it. Whereas, the common man is embracing certain ruin as if it were heaven and insulting the saints withal.

The internal course, not the external accidents, of the saint's life must be observed for the meaning and significance of it to be understood. His goal is to be happy, and it is probable that he will achieve that goal, whereas, it is certain that the common man will not achieve his goal, however loudly he may boast and blast.

It is important and necessary to distinguish between happiness and Bliss. By happiness we mean a feeling of exhilaration, even joy or exuberance.

This is a common enough experience, but it is always just passing through, a temporary phase. Happiness, by its very nature, comes and goes. Really speaking, happiness is a mountain between two valleys of grief. Grief, also, is a valley between two mountains of happiness. Grief and happiness are the lot of every one of us. There is no one who can escape them. They come and go in equal measure and last just until the next arrival of their opposite, like alternating current. Both happiness and grief are transitory. You cannot have one without the other. You cannot hold on to one indefinitely. Each must be replaced, for a brief span of time, by the other, alternating indefinitely. They are like a cat chasing its own tail: they never catch up to link up with each other. Life is a ceaseless round of happiness and grief, pleasure and pain, good times and bad. There is no exit from this eternal cycle. No one has any choice about it. Grief is a prelude to joy, happiness an overture to grief. And so it goes, round and round forever.

Anybody who desires this happiness, the transitory joys of everyday life, is a colossal fool. Reveling in happiness only burns up merit.

However, Bliss is something else. Bliss is uninterrupted, unsullied happiness. It is calm, unruffled contentment. It is what the Quoran means by Tranquillity, the Talmud by Shekinah and Reinhold Niebuhr by Serenity. It may be described as equanimity, being unaffected by either joy or grief. It is Unconcern, Indifference toward the warblings of the world. Bliss begins with an attitude of resignation to the inescapable twin poles of grief and joy. It is beyond all dualism, all oscillation, all pulsation. Bliss is the core of Life, its true ontos or being. It is what Paul Tillich

indicates with the words, Ground of Being: Bliss.

But it is more than this, also. Bliss is an experience of such delectable delectation that no language known to man -- save perhaps profuse tears -- is able to describe it. For an incomparable literary effort in describing the experience of Bliss one may read St. Teresa of Avila's account of her ecstasy with the Angel and the Arrow. Bernini has rendered the scene in marble. The point is that this delectation in its most intense being (Parousia) is the very Self of every man, bug, beast and mountain. Also, It is pure God. "Sometimes, while in ecstasy, I feel that His Majesty and I are the same," says Teresa. "I and my Father are One," says Jesus of Nazareth.

Bliss comes from inside, not from outside. It is always and intensely present (Parousia) as one's inmost Nature and real Self. Bliss has to be delved into, inside. The experience of Bliss is worth seeking and having. It is ours by right because Bliss is us, we are Bliss, incarnate. It is not something we have to get or acquire. It is what we are, all the time, regardless of whether we feel sad or happy. Bliss is our very Nature. To experience Bliss, we have but to remove the veils of attachment to the body and its cravings, that is, ego.

Identification with the body is the cause of both joy and grief. When that identification is cut clean across, when the ego is crucified on the cross of compassion, when detachment from the senses is strong and reliable, Bliss wells up from within. When renunciation is complete, the true Self radiates in the personality as the effulgence of pure Light.

In other days, men used to speak of Heaven as characterized by untrammelled happiness. Well, they were right to speak so. However, we can sharpen this insight by declaring that both heaven and hell are right here on earth, subsisting in the Eternal Time. Bliss is experienced when one has successfully discriminated between the exigency and the Eternal, between what is passing and what is real -- and has cognized the real. That experience, the posture of unruffled calm, contentment amidst all the ups and downs of life, is Heaven. The absence of that experience, sledding up and down the petty, paltry pains and pleasures of life, is Hell. The Kingdom of Heaven is in the midst of you -- and so is the Mouth of Hell. But the Kingdom of Heaven is your real nature while the Mouth of Hell is an accretion, a veil of thick darkness drawn across the Kingdom of Heaven, the Sanctum Sanctorum, the Qodesh ha-Qodashim, the Basilea tu Theos, the Holy of Holies, the Temple of God, the heart of man.

To seek pleasure or happiness is a foolish venture because every ounce of pleasure must be followed by an equal dose of pain -- and rather sooner than later. It is the part of wisdom to forego entirely the pursuit of happiness, even though it is -- temporarily -- well within one's reach, and to concentrate, instead, on tasting the Bliss within, that is, on cognizing and experiencing one's own real nature, which one is all the time, regardless of exigencies. This Bliss, this equanimity, this unruffled calm, is pure God. Once a person has tasted Bliss, happiness will appear to him or her as raw sewage, as in fact it is, and they will keep away from it accordingly.

The common man wants happiness. The saint will not settle for less than

uninterrupted Bliss. Each one gets what he wants. But the common man also gets grief, and on this account does he rail against God and His saints. He feels cheated, but he got what he wanted. He just did not anticipate what else is involved, namely, equal measures of grief. He is a Midas. So, he feels his life is ruined by unseen, perverse forces. Really, the fault is in himself, in what he asked for. He is a fool, He looked outside when he should have looked inside. He wanted things when he should have wanted God. He wanted the gifts instead of the Giver. He failed utterly to discriminate between the real and the unreal. So, he is a fool.

The Avatar is all Bliss. Pleasure and pain, happiness and grief, good and bad cannot affect Him in the least. He is all the while just Bliss Itself. Bliss is His Nature. He does not seek Bliss or yearn for Bliss like an aspirant. He is Anandaswarupa, the very Embodiment of Bliss. The opportunity to be near Him is an opportunity to experience Him as Bliss Incarnate and so gain a taste of one's own real Self. The Bliss one has in the Presence of the Avatar cannot be dilated upon with any precision. The experience is quite beyond the ability of words to express. Time halts. In fact, time disappears. One's entire attention is consumed in experiencing the sweet Glory He is. One does not think of the experience. One is simply experiencing Him resistlessly, as a bee drinking nectar. He is the sweetest, the most thrilling, the most charming, the least describable Person one can hope to meet and be with. Time ceases, the world drops away like a soiled garment and one is consumed in the sweet Bliss of His Presence and Being. He is less a Personality than a Principle, the Eternal Absolute as Truth-Consciousness-Bliss. He is all that is,

that was, that will be. He is all one sees. He is the dearest friend, the thickest comrade, the truest kith and kin. And, withal, He is so sweet that, at times, one feels a very sharp and deep urge to cast off everything and merge in that Stream of Sacred Sweetness, that Ocean of Bliss. He is the linchpin, the one Entity in this world which cannot be done without and so is worth holding onto. He, alone, has no one to call on. Without Him nothing else is or can be. Without Rama, there can be no panorama. He is the Supreme Sovereign Reality, concretized in human flesh for the delectation of His devotees, for the destruction of their traducers, and for the reestablishment of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. So He incarnates from age to age.

Very few people experience the Avatar in these terms. To many, He is a magician, a trickster, a phoney demagogue. For others, He is a high holy man, a saint of high accomplishment, an aspirant who has made it. Others take Him as a cookie-maker, a doler of enjoyable little treats and cures, promotions, beads and trinkets. Some see Him as a maleficent power pillaging the pockets of gullible humanity. Few, indeed, even among those who admire and are attracted to Him, grasp His essential Reality, that He is no aspirant at all, but rather, the Goal of every aspirant. Few, indeed, have the depth of insight to cognize the Might and Splendor of the Avatar.

But, He is unconcerned: "I do not need publicity." If ever anyone thought they have courage and confidence, then they need to witness the Avatar to get a true picture of these virtues. The Avatar is disinterestedness itself. He strides about as if nothing, anywhere, has the least affect on or holds the least interest for Him. He performs the task for which

He has come without any trace of bother or friction or anxiety or hesitation. He cannot be deflected from His Course. His attention cannot be drawn elsewhere than as He Wills to place it. In this He is the Model for every man: performance of duty without the least desire for having the fruits thereof, whether good or bad, even though one can claim those fruits by right. He does what He Wills to do and the effects fall as they may. He is not concerned with any consequences in the least. He is all attention to duty, for accomplishing the Mission for which He has come, which He has taken upon Himself. He is Unconcern Personified. He allows us, in this way, to glimpse the limitless expanse of Eternity, of Him.

These few words have been put down in an effort to describe the Avatar. Obviously, I am writing from first-hand experience. But I want to say that the Avatar is indescribable and incomprehensible. A few billion words would not begin to even hope to essay His Glory and Reality. He is too vast, too grand, too sweet, too powerful, too tender, too omniscient, too expansive, too embracing, too detached, too blissful for any words, however exalted, adequately to describe. All words about Him must remain in the category of poor lispings of the Sempiternal Truth He is.

I have not, therefore, tried to play the scholar and tell you in precise, "scientific" terms what He is. This cannot be done. The Avatar, who inspires every scholar, cannot be understood by anyone. He has to be experienced, beyond understanding, before understanding. "Credo ut intelligam," saith the Doctor. How true! How true! First faith, then experience to confirm and strengthen faith. I have tried to relate my experience and my observations as clearly and comprehensively as I can. I have

no intention of telling you the Name of the Avatar I am describing. Rama and Krishna I have mentioned. These are Avatars of the Vishnu aspect of Godhead, the aspect of fostering, preserving. The Shiva aspect of Godhead, the aspect of destruction and consummation, is right now incarnate in Human Flesh and carrying out the Mission on which He has come. You will have to find out His Name, for yourself.

The one clear fact is that Jesus of Nazareth is not an Avatar of the Lord. He does not behave as one. He does not identify Himself as one. He is not called one. He is not one. He is something else. But, What? Who? Are you ready?

MONASTICISM

Let us examine the parallel sources, beginning with the Prophets of Israel. In most cases, the accounts of the lives of these men and women is hardly more specific than the account of Jesus' life. In fact, with a few exceptions, such as Elijah, Elisha, Moses, Jeremiah, the record of their lives is about as terse as a classical Hebrew couplet, than which nothing is terser, save, perhaps, the Tetragrammaton. Even what is told of those about whose lives the text is a little more than reticent is so intensely paradigmatic, so little discursive, that a Lives of the Prophets must end up as, roughly, 10% evidence, 20% inference and 70% speculation. Which is to say, it is