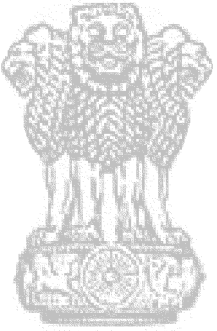


सत्यमेव जयते

AN INQUIRY INTO THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERN THEOSOPHY

WITH AN APPENDIX

Containing a paper on Pantheism
read at the
F.C. Institute on the 19th Dec.1903

By

PESTONJI ARDESHIR WADIA, M.A.

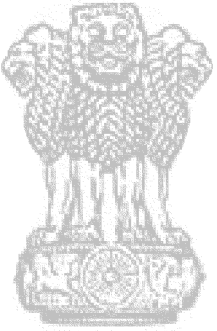
Professor of History and
Political Economy

Gujarat College

BOMBAY

B.T. ANKLESARIA, PARSI BAZAAR STREET

1909



सत्यमेव जयते

The reasons that induced me to write this little work the reader will find stated in the Introductory Chapter. The claims which Theosophy made, in the early period of its life, to be a sort of revealed religion, whose sanctity was evidenced by miracles, have been of late very advisedly abandoned. At any rate if they still live, they live only as past history; and the evidence of miracles has been displaced by the evidence of a self-evincing system of principles. We are now called on to believe in the truth of a convincing body of philosophical propositions, instead of the divine interference with the laws of nature, which occurred in the seventies of the last century. The sacred mission of the movement which, in the commencement, expressed its revealed character by missives from the dead and the mighty spirits of Tibet, is now made to rest on a dogmatic theology attractive by its symmetry and apparent clearness of thinking.

It has been repeatedly maintained by some of the theosophists—and it has been considered

by them to be a complete reply to all hostile criticisms—that the members of the Theosophical Society are not called upon to believe in any one particular opinion or body of opinions; that the adherents of the most opposite schools of thought may enter the folds of the Society without detriment to their views.

This may serve for a valid reply to those who suppose that all members of the Theosophical Society are compelled to accept the teaching of the Society as dogmatic articles of belief; it is no reply to those who, like the present writer, aim at estimating the value of the philosophical theories which they put forward before the world as objects of study. It does not matter whether all members of the society accept the theories, or only a few of them do; it makes no difference whether they are made compulsory or left to the option of the members, so long as the question is: how far do these theories serve to explain the universe around us? It is this question that has been before the writer's mind while he wrote the work; and this work will not be entirely meaningless, so long as Theosophy puts forward before mankind a body of systematised principles.

This work therefore has no quarrel with the Theosophical Society as a practical movement, if

that movement only has in view the bringing together of men of different races and religions into a kind of ideal brotherhood. The remark has not infrequently been made that the Theosophical Society has promoted the cause of psychical researches, which is gradually gaining strength in England and the civilised world, and it is a remark that the present writer fully endorses. Mr. Sinnet and Mr. Leadbeater have done useful work in that line, and it may be wished that the traditions would be kept up by the younger generation of theosophists. The present writer would even go further and acknowledge that the rise and growth of that Society is one, among the other symptoms, that mark the reaction that has taken place in our own days, against the materialism of the early half of the last century in England and elsewhere.

But a movement that aimed only at establishing a barren ideal of brotherhood, without a background of inspiring beliefs and sentiments of a wider nature, would have died long ago. If the Theosophical Society has lived, it is because it has not simply aimed at a formal brotherhood of men, but because it has supplemented that ideal, and transformed it in the light of a fuller teaching, which covers the whole field of philosophy and

the religious needs of men. The apparent bond that connects the members of the Society is the bond of a simple brotherhood; but the chain that rivets the members of the Society to one another, and makes them a compact group, consists of links, each of which spells some philosophical principle. The brotherhood is the one word formed on the brooch by the separate pearls combined, but each of the pearls in itself has a special meaning of its own. Those who imagine the formal profession of brotherhood to be the sum and substance of Theosophy betray a total ignorance of human natures. The animating spirit of the movement can never be such a cold meaningless abstraction any more than the Land Tax Act can raise the revenue of the United Kingdom. A brotherhood in what? By itself, a brotherhood is meaningless. We may be told a brotherhood in the search after truth; but the truth is pre-ordained, it is the truth which the founders of the movement preached and declared. It is that truth which has been announced to the world by teachers of a particular class.

This is therefore the spirit which underlies the whole movement, just as it is the love of the people that is at the bottom of an ample revenue.

It is this spirit, which throwing off its mask for once, distinctly declares itself in the attempt to transform the teachings of all religions and religious reformers into teachings of Theosophy, and read into foreign scriptures a theosophic meaning. They have been helped in this process by the pregnant and archaic character of all the early Scriptures; and wherever this has not been possible they have ignored them or superimposed their own views by new readings and new philological renderings.

It is with this spirit of the Theosophical movement that I propose to deal in the following chapters; I propose to consider how far the truth of Theosophy can satisfy the human intellect and heart. That Theosophy is entirely devoid of truth, that its philosophy is altogether meaningless and irrational, no one would venture to assert: and if any one construes the present booklet into an attempt to arrive at a conclusion like this, he would be misrepresenting its whole tenour and standpoint. The question at issue between the writer and the theosophists is: how far the fundamental principles of the Society afford the only satisfactory solution of the intellectual and ethical problems of the universe.

If the truth is to be found only in the teachings of the founders of Theosophy (both ancient and modern), or, at any rate, if that alone is entitled to be called truth which approaches to those teachings, the world has really been wandering in the dark abyss of ignorance all these centuries past. It has been again and again warned by the voice of one or other of the Divine Brotherhood, but it has passed these voices by with indifference; and it is the mission of the Theosophical Society once again to proclaim to wandering humanity the teachings of Divine Wisdom, to which they have hitherto been indifferent. It is this lofty claim,—and no claim could be loftier—so essential to its life and work, that will be the subject of investigation on the present occasion. If, in the course of this investigation, it appears that that claim cannot be maintained, judged by human reasoning and human faculties, it does not follow that the teachings of Theosophy are altogether worthless. They retain their place all the same in the history of thought, as one among numerous attempts to arrive at the rock of faith, standing on which the human soul can buffet the onsets of temptations and vice and philosophical scepticism.

There is one thing more for me to say before I close this already lengthened preface. It is

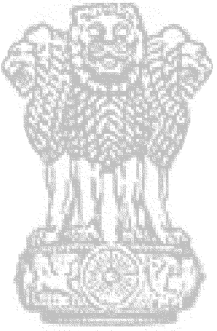
possible that I may have misinterpreted the teachings of Theosophy; it is possible I may have neglected to notice some parts of their teachings which might have modified my opinions. Need I assure my readers that the misinterpretations have not been consciously introduced? My work is an honest endeavour at reaching the truth, and I hope, the spirit in which it has been written will not be construed into a wilful and captious instinct of fault-finding and misrepresentation. If this work, by the further elucidation of problems, by mutual explanations, and by removing misunderstanding, helps on the good old cause of truth and righteousness, it will have done more than enough.

It has been inspired by the "better voice" of Tennyson, and I cannot better end my preface than with the expression of the poet's hope and wish:

> "To search through all I felt or saw,
> The springs of life, the depths of awe,
> And reach the law within the law:
>
> At least not rotting like a weed,
> But, having sown some generous seed,
> Fruitful of further thought and deed."

P. A. WADIA.

Gujarat College, Ahmedabad.



सत्यमेव जयते

CONTENTS.

AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

PRINCIPLES OF MODERN THEOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE Greeks have a story that Ixion, king of the Lapithae, was under great obligations to Zeus, but proved ungrateful to the father of the Gods by attempting to win the love of Hera. Ixion was fearfully punished for this ingratitude; his hands and feet were chained by Hermes to a wheel, which rolled perpetually in the air. We are not unfamiliar with the situation of many persons around us, who have been deservedly or undeservedly destined to move in the wheel of Ixion, revolving perpetually in the same circle of intellectual and moral unrest, which they suppose to be a condition of final rest and a solvent of all doubts.

Amongst those who please themselves in this fashion by the sincere belief that they have arrived at a final solution of all philosophical and practical problems we would rank our Parsi and Hindu friends who follow the principles of Theosophy. Indeed, such a belief appertains to all religions and to all systems of Philosophy—the belief, namely, which formulates itself in something like the following words: "*Our* principles and *our* philosophy afford the only satisfactory solution of all problems, and all others are useless so far as they do not agree with what *we* say." A belief like this is essential to every proselytising religion; and it has become essential to the Theosophical Society, which is assuming of late the part of a proselytising system of doctrines. But a body of doctrines as such, a number of philosophical principles, when they are held forth to the world as *the* truth, naturally lay themselves open to criticism. They invite us to examine into their coherency with one another, and to determine how far they afford a satisfactory explanation of practical and theoretical problems, not only to those who believe in them, but to others also, who, with instruments in their hands like the razors of Occam, try to test their truth with the aid of reason.

Such an inquiry becomes all the more necessary in the interest of truth, since of late the claim has

not infrequently been put forward on behalf of the theosophic movement that Theosophy alone can solve the problems of Indian life and Indian politics; and it was only recently that one of the leaders of the movement in a speech delivered at Poona said that Theosophy alone could work out the salvation of the Indian people; that besides giving an ultimate and satisfactory standpoint for all those who doubt, or believe in mistaken and illusory dogmas, Theosophy has the peculiar and unique privilege of saving the mass of Indian people from a political, social and religious annihilation. Such an extensive claim made on behalf of a movement, that was a few years back confined to a few lodges and groups of men, cannot naturally expect to pass unchallenged.

There is one more reason which is more important than all the rest, and makes such an inquiry absolutely incumbent on Indians. This country is passing through a stage of transition at the present moment; a stage of transition as regards social customs and prejudices, a stage of transition as regards political problems and movements; a stage of transition above all as regards religious opinions and beliefs. Western ideas and Western modes of thought have slowly been engrafting themselves on the minds of men during the course of the last fifty

years, with the result that they have dislocated the traditional customs and beliefs, and the ways of thinking sanctified by ages. The religious trends of thought hitherto revolving in the same monotonous circles of Indian philosophy have been directed at a tangent into channels hitherto unknown, and fascinating not only through their novelty, but through their profundity. The political, social and ethical ideals of the nation, engrafted into the very being and inmost hearts of the people by the unquestioning beliefs of a hundred generations, have been shaken and loosened in grip by the steady flood of Western books and Western habits and civilisation, which takes its silent course through innumerable creaks and inlets.

In such a period of transition, when what is old is losing its hold on the minds of men and the new has not taken its place, when the dissolving institutions of the past are not replaced by the construction of a more solid place of refuge, and the wavering lines are not flanked and supported by the fresh enthusiasm of an army of reserve, the greatest care needs to be taken to see that no temporary building with insecure foundations is allowed to pass as a solid edifice of truth, and that no beaten and panic stricken soldiers are included

on a large scale in the formation of the reserve forces. To be more plain, in a time of transition, when the beliefs entertained for centuries are shaken and dissolved without the substitution of others firmer and more adequate in their place, it is essential to all those who are concerned, to see that no belief is introduced which, under the appearance of being new, only aims at reviving the past, and which endeavours to lend artificial supports to a tottering framework. It is essential for them to beware of systems which might give a new lease of lingering life to beliefs that have already been proved to be inadequate and incapable of satisfying the needs of men, and particularly the real needs of the Indian nation. It is incumbent on them to see that the lessons of history are read aright, and that the same errors, which have been once corrected in the past, do not creep out again into life, only to undergo the same correction and refutation.

More than once in the history of the world the cause of truth has been hindered by the obstinate and unyielding zeal of sincere but mistaken sects and factions bent on supporting, with all their fervour, the system of beliefs, which, in their fond imagination, they supposed to be the only instrument of ultimate salvation for the human race. Let us as Indians then be fully awake to the danger

and carefully watch the progress of every new movement which professes to reedit the past and to live once again under a system of philosophic and religious ideas, whose inadequacy has again and again been demonstrated even in the history of Indian thought and culture.

We have then to deal with a system of thought that lays claim to be *the* truth and the only adequate system of philosophy, and what is more, which styles itself the only medium of salvation for the Indian races. Had it laid claim to the former contention only, it would not have excited any attention, and like other systems of philosophy, would have been confined in discussion to the coterie of philosophical students and metaphysicians. But its aggressive attitude as a practical solvent of social and political problems, and the proselytising zeal of its members, bent on creating a new kind of religion which might be styled the Theosophic Religion—for that is what their movements of late indicate—render it necessary that its claims should be carefully examined and its merits and demerits brought into the clear light of day.

It is not as Parsis alone, bent on viewing a foreign religious movement in the light of our native philosophy and theology, that we shall con-

duct our humble inquiry ; it is not as students of philosophy alone that we shall criticise and determine the value of the theosophic system; it will be also as Indians fully alive to the responsibility of our task that we shall determine the bearing of this movement on the ultimate destinies of the heterogeneous mass of Indians.

One more observation, before we enter on the subject of the day. Within the limits of time and space allowed to us it would be impossible to deal with the theosophic system, in all its detailed and comprehensive mass of beliefs and propositions. All that is possible under the circumstances is to consider briefly their fundamental philosophy, or first principles, and see how far they bear out the claims made for the movement. For if it is once established that its fundamental principles are not adequate to the task, and break down under the stress of the canons of the understanding, if once it is established that these fundamental principles are incapable of giving the mental and moral and religious satisfaction which they are supposed to give, it will follow as a necessary consequence that no more satisfaction can be given by the secondary principles and dogmas, which constitute a huge cobweb of their elaborate imagination.

Such an examination of first principles will be completely adequate, since they form in every philosophic system, the groundwork on which the subsequent structure is raised, the microcosmos, from which the macrocosmos is to be developed, and which embodies in a digested form all the factors of the bigger world of principles. Nothing can be read into this bigger world of details, which was not previously to be found in the first principles, or which could not be derived as a necessary consequence from them. Whilst, therefore, criticising the fundamental principles of Theosophy we will be at the same time criticising their system in detail, with all its elaborate ramifications into the domains of the positive sciences and others which exist only for Theosophy.

Some theosophist may bring forward against this procedure the objection that we cannot thus by simply criticising the first principles be said to criticise Theosophy in detail; because those details stand in no logical connection to these first principles, and have nothing to do with them. He may, therefore, say that our examination to-day will not be adequate, because the huge mass of theosophic secondary principles will have been left unnoticed.

Our reply to such an objection is that, if true, it overthrows *eo ipso* the entire claim of Theosophy to

be a rational and satisfactory explanation of the world with all its intellectual and practical problems. For such an explanation should aim at arriving at a first principle, capable of comprehending within its concept, all the multifarious and derivative phenomena around us and combining their heterogeneity into a homogeneous organic unity. No secondary or derivative principles could exist outside this principle, and incapable of being traced to it; there can be nothing capable of resisting its influence and independent of it. If such principles do exist simultaneously with, but independent of, the Fundamental Unity, as the objection before us supposes, they bear evidence to the circumstance that the theosophic explanation of the world does not come up to the ideal of a satisfactory and adequate system of thoughts and beliefs. If, therefore, that claim is to be even assumed as a starting hypothesis, it will be a sufficient vindication of the procedure we propose to adopt in our examination of Theosophy. For all that we contend for in vindication of this procedure is that an examination of first principles will be completely adequate and will be equivalent to an examination of the system in detail; and this is just the one essential characteristic that an ideal philosophy—and for the matter of that every adequate system of philosophy—should have.

CHAPTER II.

Method of Theosophy.

Coming now to our proper task, the first observation we would make is with reference to the method which Theosophy employs in arriving at its first principles. That method has always been the objective method and never the subjective method. We know the difficulties that invariably attend such a hard and fast distinction; and what is more, we are perfectly conscious of the slippery nature of these philosophical terms; but we will endeavour to make our meaning clear.

The history of thought has familiarised us with the circumstance that, in arriving at the solution of problems theoretical and practical, men have invariably employed one of two methods: they have either started from an analysis of knowledge, since knowledge alone involves the apprehension of reality; or have started from the world, from a contemplation of objects outside the knower.

The former method is known as the *subjective* and the latter as *objective*: *subjective*, not in

the sense that it is the knowledge of the individual from whom the start is made, because knowledge in its essence is independent of the individual consciousness; but *subjective*, in the sense that our knowledge of things is taken to be the sole method of arriving at reality,—if it is not identical with reality.

The objective method starts with some problem that is independent of knowledge and is best exemplified in the whole history of Greek Philosophy. The question with them was first to explain Being or Reality and then knowledge, to arrive at some fundamental Reality supposed to exist independently of conceptual determinations. True knowledge, if such was possible, was a derivative of and dependent on that reality, capable of being explained in the light thrown by it. The subjective method, on the other hand, starts with knowledge as something that actually exists, and inquires into the conditions of its possibility; because an inquiry into these conditions is taken to be an essential preliminary to the attainment or ascertainment of ultimate Reality.

If we now look to typical works of the theosophic movement, one characteristic will be always prominent; and that is, that nowhere is the subjective method employed for arriving

at their first principles. An analysis of the conditions of knowledge is nowhere brought into the foreground; the start is always made from particular objects in nature, or more generally, from the highest of all objective categories, the unnamable First Cause, the "rootless root of all."

This feature about the method of theosophic speculation will receive greater significance as we proceed, but what is here important for us to note is that the history of philosophic thought in the West teaches one great lesson acknowledged by all schools of thought. That lesson is that the objective method was employed on the most comprehensive scale in Greece from the times of the crude speculations of Thales and Anaxagoras to the times of the Stoics and Epicureans and even the Neo-Platonists, and the result was an inability to produce a system of philosophy adequate for the explanation of the universe.

Greek philosophy, basing itself throughout the course of its development on objective modes of thinking, and incapable of reaching the subjective standpoint, culminated in Scepticism, which denied the possibility of all knowledge, and ended in a practical suicide. Modern philosophy, on the other hand, starts with the subjective method; and from Bacon and Descartes down to the latest

exponents of Hegelianism in Germany and of Empiricism in England, the most opposite schools of thought, materialists and idealists, Cartesians and Leibnitzians, Evolutionists and Hegelians, agree in the belief that the inquiry into truth must take the form of an inquiry into epistemological questions, in other words, must follow the subjective method. If Theosophy, therefore, still prefers to follow the old objective method, it must do so in defiance of the teaching of history.

It may be said that Theosophy does not neglect problems of knowledge altogether, and that in theosophic literature we read enough to convince us of the minute psychological analysis of some of its exponents. True; theosophic literature is full of psychological observations and data, full of all the latest information about thought transference and thought communication, partly the result of the researches of their leaders, partly borrowed from the investigations of the Psychical Research Society and other sources; but all this psychological analysis stands in no intrinsic connection with their first principles. These psychological observations are not essentially connected with their philosophic standpoint, but forced and adapted to it at a later stage of thought. They are logically posterior, though they may actually

have been found earlier in time. They are the result of their philosophical concepts, instead of their philosophical concepts being the result of their psychological analysis. Their epistemology is the corrollary of their metaphysics, instead of their metaphysics being derived from their epistemology. If the study of philosophic thought in the past is useful in any way it is useful at least in this—that it indicates to us what beliefs and concepts of thought have been tried and what have been found wanting. Theosophy has preferred to adopt the objective method which the progress of thought has stamped with the mark of inadequacy; and it is only faithful to its own mission when it does so; this characteristic is entirely in harmony with the nature of its teaching.

CHAPTER III.

The Absolute.

When we proceed from the form of their teaching to its subject matter, we find that it is as open to controversy and doubt as the method itself. We will divide this examination into two parts: 1) We will deal with their metaphysics, or speculative doctrines; 2) We will deal with their ethics and religious claims and their practical significance.

As regards their metaphysics the first remark that strikes us is about their First Principle. This First Principle is the same as that of the Neo-Platonists. It is the Absolute One, to which no predicates can be given, of which nothing can be affirmed or expressed. All our knowledge is relative, hence we cannot know anything about *It* which is absolute. We can only conceive of *It* as the negative of all that can be affirmed of the finite. It is, we are told, neither consciousness nor unconsciousness, neither spirit nor matter. It is the causeless cause, the rootless root of all, that from which spirit on the one hand and

matter on the other, all things and thoughts proceed. It is impossible to for many conception of *It*, because to conceive or think is to postulate the duality of thinker and thought, and in *It* thinker and thought are one.

Such is the theosophic concept of the First Principle, which we must be careful not to call God, because they tell us their God is still to come. He is just now sleeping in the womb of eternity, and will be born in time to come. This First Principle we have already commented on in detail elsewhere,* and we will only briefly repeat the gist of our former contentions.

A cause, in order that it should be a satisfactory and complete explanation, must be adequate; it must, in other words, be competent to produce the effect. If the whole universe which is the effect traces its existence to the Absolute One, that One must be efficient or thoroughly capable of producing the universe; in other words, our conception of the First Cause or the Absolute must be such as to comprehend within itself all the differences of the world; it must be a Unity containing differences and not a Unity devoid of, and beyond, all differences. It must be a Unity

* In a lecture on Pantheism which we have reproduced in the Appendix.

in difference and not a unity *of* difference. The theosophic conception of the Absolute as an undifferentiated Unity is incapable of explaining the differences and manifold nature of the world. As we remarked elsewhere it is the grave of all things and not the source of them. If the First Cause is to be adequate and is to work as the root and source of the whole universe, it must be itself spiritual, since spirit alone can give rise to spirit ; and the universe that we have to explain is a universe which includes spiritual beings. Such was the trend of our comments then, and such are just the comments that we offer now.

But we would go further on the present occasion and endeavour to indicate the difficulties that attend this conception of the Absolute. If the Absolute is unnamable and incomprehensible—for all naming involves the distinction between the thing named and the person naming it—then we cannot even say that *It is* or *It exists*. Existence is a category of thought, it is one of the relative concepts of thought; and as such we cannot attribute it to the Absolute. If no predicate can be attached to it, existence cannot be predicated of *It* or the Absolute. It cannot be called the causeless cause or the rootless root, because cause is one of the categories of finite

thought; and to call anything a cause is to make it relative and not absolute—if we employ theosophic terminology. We cannot say, therefore, that the Absolute *is*, or exists, or that it is a cause or root or ground. To talk about the Absolute, to write about it, is absurd; because talking or writing involves the relative concept of the man who talks and writes, and the Absolute is above all relations and relativity.

Such is the logical termination of this kind of reasoning—reasoning which says that we can predicate nothing relative about the One or *It*. We thought that the controversy between Mill and Hamilton in the history of English Philosophy had once for all consigned to the grave this useless talk of Babel about the relative and the absolute;—but it seems that the relative and the absolute, in this narrow philosophical or unphilosophical sense, are again dug up and polished for giving a support to otherwise untenable positions. We thought the thorough criticism, which Kant's reasoning about the Thing-in-itself or Noumenon had undergone, in the course of the early half of the last century, may have sufficed to prevent the reappearance of like reasoning again; but it seems our theosophist friends would not pay nor care to pay any attention to Western philosophy,

since their reasoning about the relative and the absolute is just the reasoning which Kant fatally indulged in with regard to the Noumenon. Well, so let them reason; but let it not be forgotten at the same time that such reasoning ends in cutting off the very ground on which Theosophy takes its stand, since it proves them guilty of contradicting their own assertions.

But there is one more piece of verbal juggling which might be employed in defence of Theosophy. They might say that we are arguing, all this while, upon the assumption of *relative existence*, and that the Absolute One is neither relative existence nor relative non-existence. It is above and beyond both. They might say, therefore, that the existence of the Absolute is something *generically* different from our relative concept of existence, which does not apply to it. We call this a juggling with words, because we have no criterion beyond thought to criticise thought itself; and it is as absurd even to talk about existence which is different in *kind* from our concept of existence, as to talk of throwing a bandage over our own eyes and then expecting us to see better than with open eyes. We do admit and we can easily conceive that one thing may be more actual than another; *degrees* in

existence are possible and conceivable; but to talk of *kinds** of existence when our faculties allow only of one kind of existence is talking like the man in the moon. What we are enforcing here is the position that the only criterion of thought is thought, and the essence of philosophy lies in criticising thought with the aid of thought. You cannot have any other external criterion, because the moment you think of such a criterion you are presupposing thought as the basis of that criterion.

When, therefore, we are told that the existence of the Absolute is something entirely different from our concept of existence, we are launched into an inner contradiction; for what we imply is that there is a kind of existence higher than our concept of existence. But we talk of it and think about it; therefore, it forms a concept in our system of knowledge. Therefore, it is not different in kind. But perhaps these theosophic friends of ours are not ordinary mortals, and with their higher faculties and prophetic insight into things they can speak of a higher *kind* of existence which we are too gross and earthly to understand as yet! In this age supposed to be so non-miracu-

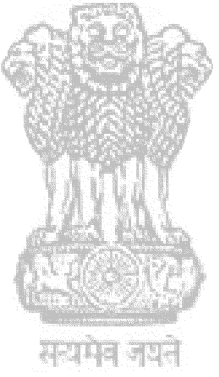
* We use *kinds* in the logical sense of the word.

lous and anti-prophetic they vindicate the dignity of miracles and supply the need of prophets!

The Absolute One, therefore, can never be unknowable, for the moment we say so, we contradict ourselves. As the Platonic Socrates long ago pointed out, we cannot even name that of which we know nothing; and after all though our theosophist friends called *it* the unknowable, it seems at the same time that they know a great deal about *it;* for they say *it* is unknowable, they say *it* exists, and they say that *it* is the Causeless Cause and Rootless Root of all. All these items constitute a good deal of information to go upon; they would constitute sufficient clue for the detective of a modern sensational novel to discover the identity of a mysterious and unknown rogue.

The theosophists moreover do not see that by admitting that the indeterminate Absolute exists, they go further than they would like to go. They would maintain that the Absolute is that which is beyond rationality and irrationality, because these are finite attributes, and as such cannot be predicated of it. But if we know that the Absolute *is*, we admit that it is so far capable of being known, and therefore *rational*. On their own suppositions therefore we can advance in our

knowledge of the Absolute, and say that it is rational to a certain extent. Far from being unknowable, therefore, the Absolute becomes the subject of a great many predicates which indicate our knowledge regarding it.



CHAPTER IV.

The True Infinite and the False.

We have been so far commenting upon the pantheistic first principle of Theosophy from the standpoint of Hegelian Idealism. We always deprecate the idea of destroying without simultaneously constructing, and we would not leave this topic without briefly hinting at the alternative principle, which we believe to be adequate for the task which Theosophy fails to carry out.

The universe as we know it ultimately falls into a dualism, which from the speculative standpoint is a dualism between mind and matter, and from the moral standpoint between good and evil. If, as modern philosphy would teach us, we view the same dualism from the epistemological standpoint, it is converted into a dualism between subject and object.

So far Theosophy may agree with us, and may loudly say "we keep you company." But here it is that the divergence between ourselves and the theosophists will commence. The unity

that arises out of this dualism should not be a unity *beyond* the dualism, should not be something that is beyond mind and matter, as the theosophists urge. It should be as we contend, a unity *in* duality; a unity that comprehends within itself and does not abolish the distinction between subject and object, mind and matter, good and evil. As we have said before, our unity should be a unity in difference, and not, as the theosophists would urge, a unity beyond all difference. It is consequently a unity to which all predicates could be applied. Everything is derivable from it, because everything is already present in it.

Such a unity is found not in the concept of the Absolute which is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness, but in the concept of the universal self-consciousness, which can realise its true being only by objectifying itself, and which therefore implicitly contains in itself the world of difference. This universal self-consciousness would not be what it is but for the world of difference, and without it in turn the world of difference would lose all its meaning. The distinction between thinker and thought, subject and object, is not abolished in the First Principle, but is present there in all its force; and it is just this distinction which con-

stitutes the essence of the First Principle. The First Principle, therefore, if it is to be adequate for its task, should be found in the spirit of spirits, which for its self-determination requires the postulation of a world of difference within itself.

With regard to their concept of the First Principle the theosophists seem to have been carried away by that false notion of the Infinite, which has been the cause of many an error in the philosophical speculations of the past. The true infinite is not to be arrived at, as the theosophists suppose, by withdrawing the arbitrary limits which distinguish the finite; since what we thus reach is the purely indeterminate. The Infinite which is arrived at by negating finite qualities is a spurious infinite, incapable of explaining the finite. The truly infinite on the other hand is that which does not annul but realises itself in and through, the differences of the finite.

What is more important to notice is that the conception of the Infinite, as that which is beyond the finite and consequently the complete negation of the finite, destroys the Infinite in reality, and makes the finite itself the Infinite. All that we know is about the finite; all that we can know with our limited faculties is what is finite; about

the Infinite we can know nothing except that it is something different from the finite. In other words the Infinite stands absolutely out of all relation to the finite. But to say this is a contradiction in terms. When we make the assertion that the Infinite cannot stand in any relation to the finite, we relate them by that very assertion, and contradict ourselves. Even the fact that we can give it a name implies that it is so far related to the finite, and therefore not absolutely the negation of all that is finite.

Moreover psychological observations have rendered us familiar with the truth that to the man who is born blind the distinction of colours cannot exist; and if the word colour is pronounced before him, he will hardly understand what it means, unless the concept is explained to him through his touch and other faculties. Even if that man has his eyes suddenly opened and the first thing he sees is one uniform colour, he will not be able to distinguish it, and he will hardly be conscious of it. In like manner we are told that if men had been familiar only with one kind of colour, they could not have known colour distinctions and would not have formed a concept of it.

Applying this illustration to the argument in hand, we might remark that if what we knew was

only finite things, and if there was not implicitly within us a knowledge of the Infinite, we could not have come to perceive the distinction between the finite and the Infinite. If the Infinite stood absolutely out of all relation to the finite, it would have been equivalent to zero, and the only thing known to men would have been the finite. For the theosophists, therefore, finite things would constitute the only reality and the finite would be the only infinite. If they would escape from this difficulty, they could do so only on the supposition that the absolute is not quite unknowable, that it stands in the closest relations to the finite, and that these relations, instead of degrading the Infinite into the category of the finite, constitute the essence of his Infinitude.

When the theosophists, therefore, make this hard and fast distinction between the finite and the infinite (the negation of the finite), instead of holding out to the world a monistic system, they present an irreconcilable dualism—a dualism whose members are the finite and the infinite. Neither can what is finite pass over into the Infinite, for in that case we can have a knowledge of the infinite, and because so far a relation might be established between the finite and the Infinite ; nor can the Infinite become finite, because

then it would lose its infinitude, and become what it is not. The world of finitude is on the one side, the Absolute is on the other, and between them no mediation is possible. This dualism can never be overcome unless the Infinite is in some way connected with the finite, and brought into a related opposition instead of an absolute contradiction. And to do that would be to overthrow the concept of the Infinite as it is held by the theosophists.

We have seen therefore how far in this connection the theosophists differ from us; it is a difference which, though at first sight it might appear trivial, vitally affects our beliefs and thoughts, and incisively marks off the Idealist from the Pantheist. We leave to them their Pantheistic God, their Causeless Cause and Rootless Root, provided they remain faithful to it, and do not in the course of their constructive attempts exchange this God without consciousness and unconsciousness for something else.

CHAPTER V.

The Logos.

We go a step further now, and what do we find? The announcement of a *Manifested God or Logos*. Let us listen for a moment to one of their exponents. He says "In that Absolute Darkness (identical with absolute Light) appears a centre of luminosity. To drop metaphor, where there was only the Absolute, out of the One Eternal principle appears a self conscious centre, named the Logos or the Word. He is the manifested God of all religions, the Jehovah, the Ishwara, the God, the Mazda, the Allah of different faiths." *

Such is the explanation offered to us with reference to this Manifested God of the theosophists. In the first place it may be remarked that the comparison between the Jehovah of the Jews and the Logos of the theosophists is not accurate. It is intended to make us overlook just the difference which it is essential for us to note, *viz.*, that whereas the Jews never recognised anything beyond Jehovah as a first principle, the Logos is not the first

* "The Principles of Theosophy" by J. J. Vimadalal—a series of articles in the "East and West."

principle with the theosophists, but stands in the second rank.

So likewise the God of Christianity and the Allah of Mahomedanism are inaccurately compared to the Manifested God of the theosophists. Beyond the Manifested God there is their Absolute One; beyond the God of Christianity as also beyond the Allah of Mahomedanism there is absolutely nothing. There is therefore a world of difference between the theosophic Logos on the one hand, and the Christian God and the Jewish Jehova on the other. If the latter were secondary and Manifested like the God of the theosophists, they would have deservedly degraded Judaism and Christianity into Pantheistic systems, which nobody ever can venture to say they are.

Carried away by the same eagerness to discover analogies, the theosophists have compared their God to the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians; and they have founded their comparison on the circumstance that both Ahura-Mazda (more accurately, Spentô-Mainyush) and Angra-Mainyush were once derived from a higher principle *Zrawâna Akarana*. This latter they compare to their absolute One; hence Mazda they say is a secondary manifestation like their own God.

But the theosophists forget the fact that the *Zarwane Akranites* were only a sect of philosophers who flourished for a time under the Sassanides and died ; and that their views were not perhaps at all adopted into the orthodox religion which received the official stamp under the Sassanides. And can the opinions of a sect of philosophers be identified with the true spirit of Zoroastrianism, as it appears in the Gâthas and the Avestic writings in general ? We need not say that the Avestic writings, as we possess them, contain nothing that can lend countenance for a moment to this attempt at reading into them the theosophic principle of the Absolute One. To pass off as the essence of Zoroastrianism the opinion of a few philosophers commenting on the sacred writings, centuries after they were composed, is as absurd as to say that because a few Christian philosophers have called Christ an impostor, therefore Christianity as such discards the teaching of Christ.

But the theosophists will reply : what does the comparison matter after all ? " So long as we have our Manifested God, all your previous objections to our First Principle—the Absolute One—fall to the ground." They will add that their Logos or Manifested God provides them with all the advantages of a system of philosophy such as we suggested in the alternative.

Can such a reply, however, hold its own? It evidently cannot. Because if we suppose that this Manifested God or Logos fulfils all the requirements that we have assigned to *our* first Principle, it would follow that there is no more necessity for assuming the existence of something beyond that Logos. We reduce the theosophists, therefore, to this dilemma: either your First Principle—the Absolute One—is necessary for you, in which case it suffers from all the defects we have indicated; or it is not; in which case your pantheistic presuppositions fall to the ground, and we take you into our rank as idealists.

But we suppose our theosophist friends will never for a moment agree to give up their Absolute One. They cannot, therefore, contend that their derivative Logos can ever fulfil the same purpose which our First Principle fulfils. The Manifested God of the theosophists can never fulfil the conditions of an adequate explanation of the world, because they ever remind us that there is something beyond it without which it could not be; and the very name manifested tells us that there is something else of which He is the manifestation, and that consequently we must go to it for that explanation which we require. They must therefore either admit that their pantheistic position is inaccurate

and inadequate, and that they are idealists in the proper sense of the word; or stick to their pantheism, and give up all claims to their Manifested God being an adequate explanation of the world.

But it will be said : cannot pantheism and idealism be reconcilable with each other? or as it is sometimes said, cannot a belief in a *spiritual* principle be compatible with a belief in the Absolute One ? That this compatibility or conciliation is not possible the trend of our remarks will have already shown. Either your first principle must be the God of the Pantheists, the absolutely unknown, something lying beyond mind and matter; or it must be something known, a spirit, and the highest of all spirits, the God of the Idealists. One or other must be true. Both cannot be true at the same time; because the one is the logical contradictory of the other, and to try to reconcile both is to go against the law of contradiction.

There is a third alternative which can serve to reconcile the abstract concept of the One or Being with the concrete notion of the Spirit, but it is an alternative which the theosophists will never for a moment accept. Because that alternative view starts with the postulate that the concrete alone is the real and the abstract relatively unreal; consequently the most abstract is the most unreal.

The notion of Being or Pure Reality is equivalent to nothing or Non-Being. The Absolute One then would be absolute unreality and equivalent to nothing. But the theosophists would appear on the other hand to maintain that the only reality is their Absolute One, lying beyond all differences. Theirs is the objective method; they would strenuously deny that the real is the rational and the rational is the real. For them beyond thought there exists some reality which is the cause of thought, and that alone is fully and truly real.

Returning for a moment to this third alternative, which would afford a synthesis of the two opposite views, we may say it consists in maintaining that this notion of Pure Being (the Absolute One of the theosophists) is the most unreal, = Non-Being. The dialectical necessity of thought to overcome this opposition leads to the formation of a higher and more adequate concept—that of *becoming*. This again is inadequate, and thought travels from notion to notion till the highest is arrived at—that of Spirit, the most adequate, and therefore, the most real.

The Absolute One, therefore, is the starting point for thought which ultimately cancels itself in the Absolute Spirit, and is therefore, more inadequate, and emptier of reality than the concrete

notion of Spirit. According to the theosophists on the other hand the Absolute One is higher, more real, and more adequate than the Logos, which is only one of its manifestations. There is, therefore, a meaning in the proposition that the Absolute One is reconcilable with the Absolute Spirit, but it is a meaning which the theosophists will not accept.

And there is another reason why they will not accept this reconciliation. Theirs is, as we have said, the objective method; the method of our reconciliation is the subjective or epistemological method; and the conflict between the methods radiates into a conflict between Principles.

Reverting once more then to the statement about the Manifested God we find it laid down: "In that absolute darkness appears a centre of luminosity: where there was only the Absolute, out of the one eternal principle appears a self-conscious centre, named the Logos or the Word." There is here a hiatus which centuries and even aeons cannot serve to fill in; a chasm which imagination cannot bridge, much less reason. For we are told at one time there was only the Absolute: then arose the Manifested God. But what necessity was there in this abstract Absolute to make itself conscious? What necessity was there for the rise

of this Manifested God? Is there in other words anything in the nature of the Absolute which might explain to us why it should be, that the Manifested God should arise from it? Why should something which is beyond consciousness and unconsciousness produce a conscious centre like the Logos?

The scientific men of our century are literally overwhelmed by theologians and others with a mountain of arguments, because they endeavour to show how life can evolve out of the lifeless, and consciousness out of unconscious and dead matter. The theosophists themselves are the first and in the forefront to demonstrate that matter can never give rise to life, but that each atom of matter is instinct with a spark of the divine life. Here in this case, where the question is so much more important, and where the evolution of the highest manifestation of consciousness is concerned, the theosophists take a wider leap than all the scientists ever dreamt of doing; the leap not from something unconscious to consciousness, but from something beyond unconsciousness to the highest manifestation of consciousness.

Alladin's wonderful lamp which could raise palaces and cities within the twinkling of an eye is something less wonderful than this logical or

intellectual operation of the theosophists, which could from the concept of an abstract reality beyond all comprehension raise up a principle of the highest self-consciousness! In the former at any rate there is a lamp to be rubbed and a genii to be called; here the operation is spontaneous and achieved through no mediating instrument.

We thought men could no longer believe in their literal meaning those descriptions about God's working in the first chapter of Genesis: "God said let there be light, and there was light." If we remember aright the thesophists themselves have always been the most forward in denouncing the theory of a creation out of nothing. Here however the theosophists would appear to expound a thesis compared to which the creation out of nothing is infinitely preferable! Because the doctrine of creation out of nothing presupposes that there is an all-powerful Being who is capable of creating. Here, on the other hand, the all-powerful Being is himself created or evolved (because creation and evolution mean the same thing in this particular connection)! and created or evolved by whom? By or out of an airy abstraction, the Absolute! We thought the age of miracles had ceased to be. Here is however a miracle sufficient to keep the intellectual and scientific world on the

qui vive, and what is as good, a logic of miracles, intelligible only to the extraordinary astral and Buddhic powers of its founders!

Do other explanations of this same fact—the evolution of the Manifested God from the Absolute—offer any better results? Elsewhere we have the following attempt at explaining the same idea: "Diversity could not arise in the "partless Brahman" save for the voluntary sacrifice of Deity taking on himself form in order to emanate myriad forms, each dowered with a spark of his life." "The primal sacrifice that causes the birth of beings is named action, and this coming forth into activity from the bliss of the perfect repose of self-existence has ever been recognised as the sacrifice of the Logos." And again in the same passage we read "symbolically in the infinite ocean of life, with centre everywhere and with circumference nowhere, there arises a full orbed sphere of living light, a Logos."*

In the last sentence quoted we have an acknowledgment on the part of the theosophists that they practically cannot explain how it is that from the Absolute there arises the Logos; that they can express this relation only symbolically. But symbolism can never take the place of explanation,

* Mrs. Besant's "Ancient Wisdom." pp. 276-7.

and indicates gaps which the understanding can not bridge over. If therefore the theosophists consent that their principles should be judged in the light of "reasoning and the moral conscience," let them admit that they fail to give satisfaction at the stage at which we have arrived.

But looking back to the earlier sentences quoted from Mrs. Besant's work we find what might at first sight appear to be a new way out of the difficulty. The concept of *Sacrifice* is brought in and we are told that in the "partless Brahman" diversity can arise only through the sacrifice of the Logos. Here we have a distinct statement of the problem before us: to explain how diversity or difference can arise in what is an undifferentiated unity.

But the answer is no more satisfactory. The Logos is here presupposed, instead of being accounted for: we are told it is already there, and the sacrifice of this Logos explains diversity. But whence did it arise? This leads us again to all the difficulties in their method of explanation which we have already noted. The primary question is not how the Logos is induced to the sacrificial act, but how it came into being when there was nothing but the Absolute. Shall we be told that this Logos is nothing but another

name for the Absolute itself? Then the difficulty is: how can the Absolute, which you say is beyond all difference, become differentiated, and constitute itself into a self-conscious entity? How can something which is beyond all consciousness at the same time become self-conscious?

There is apparently then no way out of this circle of reasoning, or circle of unreasoning, as it may better be styled. First the Primal Absolute, then the Manifested God; *why* or *how* there should be none; the Book of Ancient Wisdom hath laid it down, and so the humble disciples must believe. Physical men on the earthly plane may question and question; they can have no answer till they have risen into unearthly planes and possess unearthly powers of insight like some of the more advanced followers of Theosophy.

When we go a step further, and ask what are the other attributes which are predicable of this manifested God, we are told that He is the object of the highest knowledge possible to man, and that He is essentially threefold. "Subjectively He is Existence, Bliss and Wisdom; these three manifesting objectively in the world process whereof He is the main spring, as Power, Love and Intelligence respectively."*

* "Principles of Theosophy," by J. J. Vimadalal.

When we come to the consideration of theosophic ethics these attributes of God may perhaps receive their full significance; what we are here concerned with is to observe that just as there was no reason in the Absolute One to produce a manifested self-conscious God, so there is no reason in this Logos why he should have these three double-toned attributes. There is here no deductive nor even inductive proof assigned for the assertion that the centre of self-consciousness should be Bliss and Power and Love and Intelligence. But perhaps they are not completely at sea for reasons here; and, for the better elucidation of this threefold nature of the Logos, we will naturally be directed to the idea of the not-self or the Root of Matter, which will accordingly form the next stage in our inquiry.

CHAPTER VI.

The Root of Matter and the Concept of Time.

What is then this not-self or Root of Matter to which we are referred by the theosophists for the better elucidation of the Logos? We will quote the words of one of their own exponents. "The Logos," we are told, "is a self-conscious entity. This implies the existence of the not-self, that which is outside his self. The eternal One having manifested, on the one hand, as the Logos, manifests on the other as the Root of Matter. The primal manifestation then is dual, the Logos or the Root of spirit and the Root of matter, the self and the not-self."

Such is the explanation offered to us about this Root of Matter. But there would appear to be some strange confusion about this explanation. We are told that self implies the existence of the not-self; but we are not told whether this relation between the self and the not-self is intrinsic and immanent or merely external and accidental; we are not told whether the self posits for itself the

not-self, or whether it encounters the not-self in the eternal Darkness by chance.

If the former meaning is to be assigned to the sentence, and if we are to hold that the Root of Matter is a self-created necessity for the Logos, in other words if we are to hold that externalisation or objective manifestation is an essential stage in the development of the Logos, then we cannot hold at the same time that the Root of Matter is one of the independent manifestations of the Absolute One. We find however that the latter statement is equally held by the theosophists; we are told "The Root of Matter and the Logos are the two aspects of the Eternal One." We are told that it is the Eternal One which manifests, first as Logos, then as the Root of Matter; and between the last two there would appear to be no connection except their common dependence upon a *tertium quid*. Either therefore the latter must be abandoned or the former.

Looking to their exposition on this subject as a whole we would be inclined to suppose that the theosophists adopted an attitude very similar to that of Spinoza. For Spinoza the Infinite is something that is beyond all finite determinations, beyond mind and matter; but at the same time matter and mind are two infinite attributes

which can be assigned to him by finite beings. So among the theosophists the Absolute is beyond all determinations, but it can be conceived as the cause of Matter on the one side and of Spirit or Mind on the other. These attributes are then objectified as the Root of Matter and Logos, and they are eternal like the attributes of Spinoza.

The Logos then can stand in no intrinsic connection with the Root of Matter; because if such connection existed it can only take the shape, as we have seen, of a monistic hypothesis in which the Logos as a moment in its self-determination posits difference (which is the Root of matter) only to overcome it in a richer unity. That positing is not an actual emanation from the Logos; the times for holding a Fichtean subjectivism are long since past; what is meant is that the two stand in such intimate relation that without the Logos, Matter would not be Matter, and without the Root of Matter Logos would not be Logos. Such inherent immanental connection the theosophists cannot postulate, because for them the ultimate source from which the Root of Matter springs is the Absolute, the indeterminate Infinite, which is so far entirely aloof from the Logos (its secondary manifestation).

The Logos therefore and the Root of Matter stand side by side in unreconciled dualism, a dualism which cannot be overcome by a thousand endeavours—if they are like those which the theosophists make—to sink the difference or dualism into an unknown gulf; to explain away the dualism instead of explaining it; to abstract from the dualism instead of digesting it into a unity.

We are thus in a position to see that the deeper meaning which we were at first sight inclined to give to the sentence quoted above—that as a self-conscious unity it implies the existence of a not-self—cannot be assigned to it in strict accordance with their other principles. As long as they hold that the Logos and the Root of Matter are the two primal manifestations of the indeterminate Absolute, which lies out of all relation to finite things, so long will it equally be incumbent on them to hold in consistency that there is no intrinsic or immanent relation between the two.

There is, in other words, no reason why the Logos should be enveloped or *veiled* by matter, why the Root of Matter should wed itself to the Logos. There is no reason why every particle of matter should have a spark of life

in it. An inductive inquiry might lead the theosophists to the inference that Matter is inextricably interwoven with Life and Spirit, and that the two are wedded for eternity; but this dualism will never be reduced to a monism, and the inductive inquiry will never enable them to explain why it is that Matter should be wedded to Spirit and why the Root of Matter should be an envelope for the Logos.

With their objective method they can start only from two possible directions: they can either start from the Absolute One or from observations of the physical world in detail.

If they start from the former, they end where they begin; they can predicate nothing of an indeterminate Being, and no human logic can ever enable them to move from the circle of the Absolute subject which is never an object to the objective world beyond. It is the same difficulty which faced the Infinite of Descartes and his followers. Their God they conceived to be infinite mind, which stood aloof and practically independent of all relations to the finite and material world. How then can this Infinite be brought into relation with the finite? How can the finite world be explained? And the Cartesians were obliged to have recourse to the doctrine of

occasionalism with which the history of philosophy has rendered us so familiar.

If, on the other hand, the theosophists start from the other end, from the physical world, they are launched as we have seen into a dualism from which they find no escape, like Spinoza, except in the inadequate concept of a third something which lies beyond the distinctions presupposed by the two sides of their dualism.

There is one thing more which likewise calls for a remark. We are told that the Logos as well as the Root of Matter are primeval or eternal. If this dualism by itself constituted the sole reality, we would have had nothing to say against the concept of eternity being applied to the members of the dual group, as it is applied, for instance, in Zoroastrianism. But we have to remember that over and above these two principles, there is a third, lying beyond all finite determinations. Is that Absolute One eternal or not? That is to say, does not the Absolute lie beyond all space and time? For that is the meaning of eternity according to the theosophists, not something that lasts through a prolonged series of time determinations, but something that is unaffected by time determinations and altogether beyond them. If the Absolute is eternal, then the Logos and the

Root of Matter cannot be eternal in the same sense. Because then instead of *one* Absolute we may have *three* Absolutes.

On the other hand the objection might be raised against us that we are forgetting to note that the Logos and the Root of Matter are manifestations of the Absolute, and as such share in the attribute of eternity. But if they were eternal, they could not have been manifestations ; because as manifestations they must have appeared or manifested in time. If they were manifestations they could not have been eternal ; because then they would have been coeval with the Absolute. And we are distinctly told that in the original Darkness (which was original light) there arose a point of luminosity. Such a concept is possible only with the presupposition of time. Otherwise the point of luminosity would have been always there and could not be said to *arise*. By giving the attribute of eternity to the Logos and the Root of Matter, they make their first Principle not One without a second, but Three.

Can the difficulty be escaped in any other way ? Yes, there is a way in which the theosophists can avoid their difficulty ; but then they will be obliged to admit that eternity when predicated of the Absolute has *one* meaning ; eternity when it is

predicated of the Logos and the Root of Matter has *another* meaning. In the former connection it may be taken to mean lying beyond time relations; in the latter connection as lasting through a prolonged series of time determinations. Only at this sacrifice of consistency can the theosophists escape the difficulty which would otherwise face them.

There is one other sense of eternity in which time may be postulated as a form of objectivity which it is of the very essence of Spirit to posit and transcend, and in which the eternal life is not that which abstracts from the temporal, but that which contains while it annuls it. In this sense, the eternal is not that which is beyond and above time, but that which stands in the most intimate relation to it. Since, even if time is an illusion, it requires an explanation as illusion; and in the eternal must be discovered a reason for this illusion.

This view of time and eternity, however, is one which the theosophists are precluded from holding by their objective method and their pantheistic views. Pantheism can admit only the concept of one true Being or Reality, and Space and Time for it can be only illusions like the rest of the world, that is to say, partial realities, whose existence must be explained away along with the rest in the absorbing light of the Absolute.

Let us for a moment contrast this theosophic explanation of the Logos and the Root of Matter with the teaching of the Hindu Religion as expounded in the *Kh*ândogya-Upanishad. Before entering on such a comparison it is necessary to bear one or two precautions in mind; and we mention these precautions to show that we are not unaware of the shoals and rocks that lie across the path which we are about to travel.

The Hindu philosophy has passed through a course of development extending over centuries; and in the course of this development its phases have been many and various, so that what is true of that philosophy at one stage does not hold good in another. If, therefore, in some of the commentaries on their early religious works we find that the tendency of thought is pantheistic, there are others where the trend of thought is distinctly in the direction of Idealism. In the contrast we are about to present, our object is only to show how even in the works, which the theosophists themselves respect, the idealistic view here and there bursts into view from its pantheistic garments.

The passage we refer to is the second Khan*d*a of the 6th Prapâ*th*aka. "In the beginning, there was that only which is, one only, without a second. It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth." Here

we have the Absolute One, the *Sat*, represented as thinking to itself, as being conscious and not unconscious.

So likewise in the 8th Khan*d*a of the same subdivision (Prapâ*th*aka) we are told, "Now that which is that subtile essence (the Root of All), in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. *It is the Self*, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it." And again in the 3rd Khan*d*a of the Seventh Prapâ*th*aka, we find it laid down, "Mind is the Self, Mind is the World, Mind is Brahman. Meditate on the Mind." And in the same strain we have the final goal of all knowledge laid down as being that which consists in knowing the "Infinite as Self"; "Self is below, above, behind, before, right and left—Self is all this".*

In this particular Upanishad, therefore, at any rate, if not in others, the pantheistic teaching of the religion discards its limitations and breaks forth into a deeper conception of the Infinite, akin to the idealistic. The Infinite is no longer the indeterminate One, of which nothing further can be said than that it is; it is no longer confined to its own infinite world of nothingness; it is on the other hand conceived as conscious, as Mind, as Thought and Self. It is identical with

* *Kh*ândogya Upanishad VII-25.

the Manifested God of the theosophists, and with its own Ishwara which in other places appears as separate from it. As the Logos, the Infinite is said to evolve the material world from itself, Fire, Water and Earth successively. Here, therefore, there is no Root of Matter apart from the Logos, such as the theosophists have; Matter owes its origin equally with mind to the *Sat* which is conscious. Here instead of the three-fold scheme of theosophic speculation we have one conception, that of the *Sat*, which, being conceived of as mind and self or as Spirit, serves as a better mode of explanation of the universe and its problems.

CHAPTER VII.

The Logos and the Root of Matter.—Further remarks.

We are now in a position to assert that so far the theosophists can give us no explanation of the fact, which they find holding universally in nature, that matter and spirit go together and act and react on each other. To say that both the Logos and the Root of Matter are manifestations of the same ultimate indeterminate substance will not help them much; since *as* manifestations they have nothing in them which can lead to their reciprocal action on each other.

To illustrate, two mirrors might independently of each other represent the image of the same individual; but the simple fact that the images are manifestations of the same individual will not of itself suffice to prove that the two mirrors are directly connected with each other, and exert a reciprocal influence upon each other. Some other proof or evidence will be required, apart from the fact of their mirroring the same individual, to establish that changes in the one mirror will be

followed by changes in the other. But in the illustration our assumption is that the mirrors are things of the same kind, that they are things which are like each other, and therefore that there is no conflict or opposition between the one mirror and the other.

On the other hand, in the argument under consideration, we have to apply the same kind of reasoning to a case where the things are exactly the opposite of each other, the self and the not-self, the Logos and the Root of Matter. *A fortiori*, therefore, the simple reason that two things are the manifestations of the same *tertiem quid* cannot explain their mutual interaction—more particularly when instead of there being harmony and likeness between them, as in the case of the two mirrors, there is disharmony and direct opposition.

Is there, then, anything in the nature of the Logos on the one side, and the Root of Matter on the other, which can serve as an explanation of their mutual interaction? Do these concepts contain any elements of elucidation? On the theosophic principles there are none; on purely idealistic principles there are many. On the idealistic hypothesis, the concept of the Logos or manifested God would involve that of the Root of Matter,

and the latter would involve that of the Logos. On that hypothesis the truly real is the concrete individual, and that is essentially related to the sensual and phenomenal; the Logos would never be the Absolute unless it involved the cause of the phenomenal world as an implicate. But Pantheism, even if it is *dynamic*, like that of the Neoplatonists and that of the theosophists, cannot fulfil the functions of Idealism, unless it is prepared to desert its favourite positions.

But though the pantheistic trend of theosophic thinking leads them to an irreconcilable dualism as the next stage, here and there in theosophic literature the teaching of Idealism bursts out into view, and serves as an admission, by Theosophy itself, of the inadequacy of its pantheistic presuppositions. And this idealistic reaction appears prominently in a work of one of their best exponents, Mrs. Besant, when she calls the Root of Matter, "the self-limitation of the Logos."

If the theosophists only adhered to this explanation of Matter, their Pantheism would soon be transformed in the light of a higher synthesis and receive a new interpretation and meaning. Matter viewed in this fashion receives all its explanation in the concept of the Logos,

and needs no reference to the Absolute for its dependence. Matter would depend for its explanation on the Logos, and the Logos for its explanation on the Root of Matter; and there would be no necessity for positing an unknown Absolute beyond the two.

But the pantheistic tendency is too strong among the theosophists to yield to the outburst of an occasional idealistic explanation like this; and so this unity in difference must again give way to the old unity beyond difference on the one hand, and the dualism on the other. The Root of Matter is a limitation on the Logos, existing side by side with Him, but by no means a *self-limitation*. Because the explanation of the Root of Matter is ultimately to be sought in the Absolute of which it is a manifestation, and not in the Logos, which is only a derivative product equally with the Root of Matter. All the same, it is a matter of deep significance to note the way in which the acknowledgment is implicitly made that a thorough-going pantheistic theory needs to be supplemented by other theories, before it can be adequate for the task of explanation.

It would have been possible for the theosophic concepts of the Logos and the Root of Matter to work as practical though halting hypotheses

if the difficulties under which they worked had ended here; but there is one more difficulty which prevents the concepts from working even in practice—a difficulty which shall receive greater force and emphasis when we come to the discussion of their ethics and religious philosophy. It is this: when the Logos is said to be Existence, Bliss and Knowledge on the subjective side, and Power, Love and Intelligence on the objective, there are some important qualifications which are taken for granted by the theosophists.

In the first place, God's existence or the existence of the Logos is limited; He does not exist in one sense—the sense in which the Absolute is said to exist. Since, according to the theosophists, the One alone is truly existent and real, all other things can only have partial reality. The Logos cannot be truly existent in the same sense as the Absolute is, otherwise the Absolute will consist of *Many* and not *One*. Hence, the Logos, being only a derivation from the Absolute, or one of the manifestations of the Absolute, is not truly real and existent, but partially so. A manifestation of the Absolute cannot be as real as the Absolute itself, even if it were the only manifestation: much less so when, as in the theosophic teaching, the Absolute has more than one manifestation.

Hence the existence of the Logos is doubly inadequate; it is limited, not only by the Absolute, but also by the Root of Matter. In other words, the theosophic God is not entirely real and truly existent, but is partially an illusion: an illusion which can only vanish when He is taken in conjunction with the Absolute.

So also with regard to the other attributes of the Logos; His power is not absolute; it is limited by the Root of Matter on the one hand, which He has not been able to bring forth; and on the other by the Absolute itself, which is His postulated source and of which He is a manifestation.

His Wisdom and Intelligence again are partial realities, because the sole Reality, which is the One, is independent of and beyond all Wisdom and Intelligence. God cannot be all-wise or all-knowing, because even God's knowledge, on the theosophic hypothesis, cannot grasp the nature of the Absolute. All knowledge presupposes the distinction between the knower and the known or subject and object; God's knowledge therefore of the Absolute is not possible, because then He would distinguish Himself from the Absolute, and for the Absolute the distinction between the knower and the known does not exist. God is not therefore Omniscient and

Omni-intelligent. And so, likewise, it will be easy to show that His love and bliss are likewise limited, a statement whose bearing on ethics will have to be considered further on.

The concepts, therefore, of Existence, Bliss and Wisdom on the subjective side, and Power, Love and Intelligence on the objective, can never stand in any intrinsic, organic relation to the Logos ; they are so many stories added on to a building whose foundations are in the air, without sure footing or certainty of enduring. The structure at first sight looks sound and stately, and the heedless passer by is often attracted to admire its decorations and grandeur ; but let him look a little more closely, let him examine the frail support on which the whole edifice stands, and he will feel a kind of sympathy for its inmates who unconsciously run the danger of losing their lives.

If some modern idealist could foolishly make bold to adopt the attitude of the Prophet on the Mount, he might not unnaturally warn his auditors in the following strain : " Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built

his house upon the sand : and the rains descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell ; and great was the fall of it".

It will hardly be a difficult thing to show that the popular concept of God is that of a being who is all-powerful and all-wise and whose existence is not partial but total. In other words, amongst all monotheistic religions, the God who is worshipped is not one about whose existence there is any limitation ; to say that God's existence is limited is to overthrow the concept itself. He is the source and author of all things, whose Being is the Being of beings, and for whom there is nothing which cannot ultimately trace its dependence on Him.

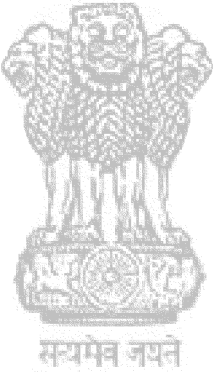
The theosophic concept of the Manifested God degrades him into the phenomenal world. He is a manifestation among other manifestations ; and a God, who is a God in this sense, is no God at all. He is not a God for the vast majority of the monotheistic nations of this world ; He is not a God above all for those who seek after an ethical and religious satisfaction in some permanent and supreme object of Love. And if He does at all give satisfaction to His own followers and worshippers, it is because they

conceive of Him with attributes which their philosophy does not yield; it is because they disregard their philosophical postulates and yield to a practical necessity which conflicts with their theories.

In their speculations about God, the theosophists have omitted to consider one thing which vitally affects the field of religious thought. It is this that, whatever the relation which may be supposed to exist *outside* the religious activity of man, at any rate in his religious attitude itself man has always associated the Absolute of speculation with the Supreme Being whom he worships. In religion men bridge over the gulf which separates the Absolute of scientific speculation from the supreme object of love, which all seek after. Granting, therefore, for a moment that in abstract speculation the Absolute can be distinguished from the Personal God of practical religion, in the religious attitude itself there can exist no such separation.

There is one further question still behind, with which we could not adequately deal in the present connection: How far, even on the more adequate concept of the Absolute as Spirit and Concrete, we can distinguish between this Absolute and the Personal God of religion: how far,

that is to say, Spirit as the most adequate Concept of thought can be supposed to be personal. For if once it is assumed that the Absolute Spirit is personal, there can be no more legitimate distinction between it and the God of religion.



CHAPTER VIII.

The Universe in Idea.

We have now seen how the theosophic Idea of the Absolute fails to fulfil the ideal of a first principle. It completely fails to give an adequate explanation of the universe as we behold it with all its intellectual problems. It breaks up into a dualism which can never be reduced to a monistic system, and it does so on its primary conception of the Infinite as the negation of the finite.

This dualism is accentuated by the further development of their first principles, which involves the gratuitous hypothecation of a Logos on the one hand and the Root of Matter on the other. Not only does this dualistic development remain unexplained, but even the mutual interaction between the two, which is hereafter taken for granted, remains an eternal or constantly repeated miracle; a miracle that must be supposed to work every time that there is an instance of action of the mind on the body or of the body on he mind.

When we now go a step further, we are told that the Logos being Power, Love, and Intelligence on the objective side, the universe was conceived in the mind or by the intelligence of the Divine architect from beginning to end. "The cosmical drama that we see unfolding stage by stage was thought out by the Divine Author ere it came into being, and He is slowly carrying it onwards to a designed end."*

The Logos, therefore, according to the theosophists, had conceived the plan of the universe first in His mind, and the evolution that we see in the phenomenal world is the working out of that plan, which work has not yet ended.

The first difficulty that faces us in this conception is whether it is God who is Himself evolving or whether He evolves the universe through His power and intelligence, acting externally.

We are told that "He is immanent in the finest atom as in the largest sun." If, therefore, God is essentially identified with the universe, it is God Himself who is undergoing a process of evolution; and if that evolution is not yet complete, God Himself must be imperfect. He

* "Principles of Theosophy", by J. J. Vimadalal :—*East and West*, January 1904.

cannot, therefore, be all-powerful, all-loving, and all-intelligent. If this view is to be avoided, it must be held that God is not identical with the universe, though immanent in it; and that He stands apart from the universe, and externally to it, so far as He helps the universe to work out the design that He has in His mind.

We suppose the theosophists would agree with us so far; because if they take the opposite view they will be launched into the perplexities which we have just indicated. If the theory of design, therefore, is to be held, God must be conceived as not entirely immanent in the Universe: He must bear an external relation to it. But again supposing God is external to the Universe, another question immediately arises: Is the progress of evolution to be conceived of as a clock which, when once it is wound, sets going, and does not require any further external help, or does it require the constant interference and help of God?

The crude notion of a constantly interfering and officious Deity would not for a moment be upheld by our learned friends: they must conceive him only as having set the hands right when winding the clock, and as keeping a watchful eye that it does not stop or get into disorder through external disturbances. Thus alone can

God be said to work upon the Root of Matter with a view to carrying out the design, which He has preconceived in His mind. What the end of that design is we cannot say; whether it is the exploitation of nature and the inorganic and organic kingdoms to the necessities of man, or the exploitation of man to the necessities of higher beings we cannot determine; the process of evolution is not yet complete, and as long as we are not in a position to read God's mind, the design He formed in the beginning remains a mystery to us.

Such an *external* teleology, however, is not likely to satisfy the cravings of the modern mind. It marks a delimitation of God's power: as an Intelligent Being endowered with power He must necessarily be supposed to have acted with an end in view. But once He has formed that end in His mind, we cannot see what should have prevented Him from framing the universe so as to fulfil the end all at once, instead of reaching it through a halting struggle which has not yet ended.

His power was limited as far as the creation of the Root of Matter was concerned; but now it would appear, it was further limited by its particular qualities, which prevent it from being

entirely pliable and ductile in the hands of the Creator. Otherwise nothing could have made the Creator undergo such a long, circuitous, and at times unsatisfactory process to bring about his ends instead of realising them by a direct *tour de force*. There must, therefore, have been a necessity for God to work out His plan by a graded series of evolutions, which have not yet ended. What that necessity was we are not told. God has to work under the same limitations that the watch-maker has to work under when making a watch. His ingenuity is exercised in reducing the intractable Root of Matter to obey laws and regularities, and to make it work towards an end that is entirely foreign to it.

Teleology is and will be the profoundest truth in the universe; but the teleology that fulfils this object is not the kind of external teleology that is here propounded,—that of God working on foreign material and imposing an external end on it,—but *immanent* teleology such as is found realised in the animal organism, *and much more especially in the human organism and in the working of thought, where the end is present or immanent from the beginning, and determines each step in the evolution.*

CHAPTER IX.

States of Matter and the Seven Planes.

There is one more topic to be cursorily dealt with before we proceed to the discussion of the ethical and religious views of Theosophy: their scientific theories about Matter and its various subdivisions.

Our remarks on this subject will be necessarily brief; because, even supposing that all their elaborate conjectures with regard to the various states of matter were scientifically supported, and correct even to the last details, they would not validate their philosophical principles, if the latter are found otherwise inadequate and unsatisfactory. Even on the most favourable hypotheses, their scientific generalisations will not affect the criticism that we have been led to offer on their philosophical presuppositions, and will equally be out of court in the discussion about their ethical and religious principles which is to follow.

As to the states of matter, we are told that matter in general first falls into seven subdivisions, which, when taken along with the forms, constitute

the seven planes or worlds. These seven states of matter are supposed to have evolved out of the Root of Matter by the energy of the Logos who is enveloped in it. We are told "Every change in the embodiment is preceded by a change in His Consciousness, and by His thought He sends out vibrations in the Root of Matter wherein He is working, and builds these different states of matter step by step, the lowest and the densest of which is the physical solid as we all know."*

Each of these primary subdivisions is again broken up into seven different states. Thus the physical world is one of the seven primary subdivisions of the Root of Matter; but it is again further subdivided into seven states, three of which are called by science solid, liquid, and gas, the fourth ether, which is again of four kinds, ether I, II, III and IV. So that ultimately matter consists of forty-nine states.

The densest of atoms, then, are the solid physical atoms which get rarified by chemical processes into the liquid and gaseous states. Next, we are told, this gaseous state of matter can be further rarified into the etheric state, a statement that is not received into our ordinary scientific text-books,

* "Principles of Theosophy," by J. J. Vimadalal:—*East & West*, January 1904.

and which is still in the sphere of scientific theory and hypothecation. But far from stopping here, where science stops, the theosophic student endeavours to reduce this etheric matter to still rarified conditions till he comes to Ether I. Then the same process of division and subdivision, rarefaction and rerarefaction is to continue, till the physical atom is reduced to the astral, and the astral to the mental, and so on, till we arrive at the rarest and finest atom which heads the hierarchy of these forty-nine Kings.

Such is a brief statement of the scientific hypotheses of the theosophists, if we may venture to call by the name of science the bold flights of a luxuriant imagination. Science tells us only of four states of matter, solid, liquid, gaseous and etheric, supposing for a moment that aether is a state of matter, a statement still ranked by many as an hypothesis. No scientist has ever talked of more than these four conditions. All else, therefore, that the theosophists tell us is based not on science but on a bold hypothesis.

We are by no means prejudiced against these hypotheses; on the other hand we would be the first to acknowledge that such hypotheses are necessary for the progress of scientific discoveries, and so far extremely valuable. What we have to

remark is that their character as hypotheses should not be forgotten, and that they should not be palmed off on us as scientific *facts*. They are suppositions pleasing to the human imagination by their fanciful symmetry, seven multiplied by seven: but they are suppositions only and no more. As suppositions they are very useful; but they must not be mistaken for facts, and work a great deal of harm when taken for facts.

The limits of scientific explanation have not gone further than the four states which confine us to the physical plane of the theosophists, and even one of these is still in the rank of a supposition. It is just possible that the further progress of science might bring to our notice other states of matter, and thus verify the suppositions of our friends; but till that is done the suppositions ought not to be denominated facts but *theories*. With these qualifications we will be but too willing to appreciate the labours of the Theosophical Society in the cause of science.

There is one more observation to be made about these scientific speculations regarding matter, which serves to emphasise what we have been trying to make out in the preceding sections. These speculations, if they are to be at all tenable, must either rest upon a deductive

argumentation, or upon induction and observation *a posteriori.*

But deductively the theosophists cannot show why their Root of Matter should subdivide itself into symmetrical groups of forty-nine. There is nothing in that concept from which we could demonstrate that it should consist of forty-nine conditions. The result can, if at all, therefore be arrived at only by observation and experimentation.

Is it, then, observation and inductive methods that lead to the ascertainment of the forty-nine states of matter? Observation can yield us, even with the help of the most elaborate scientific instruments, only four states. Whence does this symmetrical arrangement arise then? Only in the elaborate working of a richly endowed imagination.

But if there exists in the Root of Matter no cause why it should divide itself into forty-nine states, can such a cause be found in the Logos? Is there any necessity of thought in the concept of the Logos which might lead us to posit the forty-nine states of matter? The Logos is endowed with Reason and Wisdom, and therefore its working must be rational and symmetrical; but why He should subdivide matter into forty-

nine states, and not into forty-nine thousand states, the theosophists cannot say. *A priori* there is no way to the number forty-nine, and *a posteriori* there is equally none. And if to-morrow some ingenious brain, calling itself inspired with occult powers and divine insight, announced to the world a new theory in which the states of matter should be the number thirty-six, falling into natural subdivisions of six and six, it would have as much right to be received as true and scientific as the theosophic theory has!

Symmetry has been often in the history of human thought preferred to facts, and facts have not less frequently been tortured to suit symmetrical theories, the product of a rich fancy. The Pythagorean philosophy in the history of Greek thought stands as one great example among others of the dangers to truth which lie in this direction, of the sacrifice of the claims of reason to the claims of fancy and symmetry of thought. And the circumstance, that even in our own times such speculations, as palm off the theorising of an imaginative brain for truth, are swallowed with greater avidity than the cold and unsymmetrical conclusions of positive science, compels us all the more to emphasise the dangers which face us and the shoals we should avoid in our investigations after the truth.

CHAPTER X.

Ethical Theories.

We have now to consider the practical philosophy of the theosophists, which falls into two divisions, the ethics or views about morality and religious philosophy, or their views about the religious attitude of man and the final consummation.

The first question that comes up for consideration is their exposition of moral judgments, their origin and significance. We would quote, for this purpose, from one of their best exponents:* ".....at this period of his infancy man had no knowledge of good or of evil; right and wrong had for him no existence. The right is that which is in accordance with the divine will, which helps forward the progress of the soul, which tends to the strengthening of the higher nature of man and to the training and subjugation of the lower the wrong is that.....which tends to the mastery of the lower nature over the higher.....Ere man could know what was right he had to

* Mrs. Besant's "Ancient Wisdom," pp. 197 et. seq.

learn the existence of law, and this he could only learn by following all that attracted him in the outer world, by grasping at every desirable object, and then byl earning from experience, sweet or bitter, whether his delight was in harmony or in conflict with the law."

This is the first stage in the development of the individual. The second stage begins with the appearance of Will as a determining factor in action. "Desire is guided," we are told, "from without; will from within. At the beginning of man's evolution, desire has complete sovereignty, and hurries him hither and thither; in the middle of his evolution, desire and will are in continual conflict, and victory lies sometimes with the one sometimes with the other; at the end of his evolution desire has died, and will rules with unopposed, unchallenged sway. Until the Thinker is sufficiently developed to see directly, will is guided by him through the reason; and as the reason can draw its conclusions only from its stock of mental images—its experience—and that stock is limited, the will constantly commands mistaken actions. ..... During the whole of this second great stage,.....conflict is the normal condition, conflict between the rule of sensations and the rule of reason. The problem to be solved in humanity is

the putting an end to conflict while preserving the freedom of the will; to determine the will inevitably to the best, while yet leaving that best as a matter of choice."*

But there is a stage higher than the third stage of consciousness, which finds its culmination in the Thinker, who, caring little for the life of the senses, lives absorbed in the speculative mood, thinking over the problems of life and thought, and endeavouring to grasp the one reality that underlies the manifold world.

Then there ensues the fourth stage of consciousness, when "with the transcending of the barriers set up by the intellect, the consciousness spreads out to embrace the world, seeing all things in itself and as parts of itself, and seeing itself as a ray of the Logos, and therefore as one with Him." The individual thinker is one with the Universal Logos. This is the Nirvanic stage, and is sometimes subdivided into two, the Buddhic and the Nirvanic. Beyond this stage lie two others, but the imagination of the theosophists does not allow them to determine what the nature of the spiritual development in these stages may be.

---

* Mrs. Besant's "Ancient Wisdom," pp. 212 et. seq.

Such is a brief outline of theosophic ethics, and of their views with regard to the ultimate significance of human life. Confining ourselves for the moment only to the ethical development of man, the first thing that calls for an observation is that the standard of moral judgment, or the moral criterion, is in essential harmony with their first principles.

In as much as the first principle is a blank distinctionless Unity, confined to itself, and incapable of any relation to the finite world, the ultimate significance of human life cannot lie in any ethical or religious self-realisation, but in the fact of absorption and self-annihilation in that Unity. Good and evil have no meaning for the ultimate Reality, they are only illusions which must be made to vanish in the progress and development of the individual who, in as much as he is not one with the Logos, is a partial illusion in himself. They play only a temporary and provisional part in the development of the universe. The intellectual life is higher than the ethical, and can only be arrived at by the annihilation of the ethical.

The ethical life is the second stage in consciousness and prepares the way for the third stage which is non-ethical and intellectual. The latter

is non-ethical, because the conflict between the desires and the will is overcome therein; and such conflict is essential, even according to the theosophists, for the ethical life. But even this intellectual life is not the ultimate goal of human endeavours. It is, in its turn, to give place to a life of self-annihilation in the divine, where there is no distinction between the Creator and the creature. It is, in other words, to make way for a life that is no life, but death, for a state of affairs where there is no thought, no love, no knowledge, no bliss. For all these are finite relations, and as such, illusions, which can have no place in the true Reality. The development of the individual, from this standpoint, is an illusory concept, since the individual is the finite and unreal, the Universal alone is real.

If in opposition to this logical result of their fundamental principles, the theosophic writings sometimes indulge in a different strain of thought and regard life as real, and self-realisation in the divine as possible, it is because, as in all deep thinkers, the force of reality and practical life is too great to yield to the interests of a one-sided theory; it is because the logic of facts bursts the bonds of the logic of abstract speculation. And this we find to be the case even with Mrs. Besant,

when she has to admit "that the Nirvanic consciousness is the antithesis of annihilation." "It is existence raised to a vividness and intensity inconceivable to those who know only the life of the senses and the mind."

How far this conception of the Nirvanic consciousness shares in the general weakness of the whole theosophic mode of explanation is a question which will later on require fuller consideration; what is here to be noticed is the circumstance that practical exigencies and the aspiration after the realisation of a fuller life are too much even for the theosophists to resist, and burst all the shackles of theoretical beliefs, which would force them towards an abstract anti-individualistic Unity.

CHAPTER XI.

Origin of Evil.

We have now to ask ourselves what is the origin of evil and sin on the theosophic standpoint. We are told that "the right (or good) is that which helps forward the progress of the soul, which tends to the strengthening of the higher nature of man and the subjugation of the lower; the wrong (evil) is that which tends to the mastery of the lower nature over the higher."

What, then, is the lower nature and what the higher? The lower nature is that of the senses and passions, the higher that of the intellect and will. We are told that the end of the second stage of the development of consciousness is marked by the extinction of all desires, and the supremacy of will, which is identified with intellect and reason. And the Nirvanic stage of consciousness, which is the highest conceivable by us, is one in which all desires and sensual emotions have vanished, and the mind of the individual becomes one with the Logos.

The tendencies of the higher or divine nature in man are, therefore, according to the theosophists, constantly thwarted by the opposite tendencies of the lower nature; and man can rise to his full height and depth only by killing the desires and passions which belong to the life of sense. If the noble capacities which appertain to the higher and divine elements in each man were allowed to develope without hindrance from the lower nature, the life of freedom and purity would be immediately and incessantly realised instead of being attained, as it actually is, after a long struggle. The bodily desires are blind and unreasoning, the mental and spiritual aspirations are the dictates of reason. The ultimate tendency of evolution is to raise man from his lower to his higher self, and the conflict, therefore, in the case of each man must ultimately end in the extinction of material passions and desires.

Evil must, therefore, be traced to the sensual nature of man, and the origin of evil must be sought in the life of the senses. It is the natural appetites and desires of the body that hinder the moral and religious development of the individual, and it is they that are to be held responsible for the prevalence of sin and misery in the universe.

The theosophists irresistibly remind us of the Platonic explanation of evil, where the human soul is compared to a chariot led by two horses, one of which, representing the senses and passions, drags the chariot down, in spite of all the efforts of the other and nobler animal to take it up into the heavens. The senses stand in direct opposition to the higher nature, and man can rise to his nobler vocations only by overcoming and destroying his lower self.

In criticising this theory the first remark to be made is that if the senses and the desires of our physical nature are so directly opposed to the intellectual aspirations, if, in other words, matter and mind are so essentially different from each other, no conflict could ever arise between them.

Conflict is only possible between two things which have at least some thing in common, some similarity to each other. Thus, two physical forces may be opposed to each other, the result being determined by their relative strength. So likewise there may be a conflict between two desires, there may be a conflict between two philosophical or scientific hypotheses, or between two moral tendencies; but no such conflict can arise between two entirely different things, such as matter and mind are, on the theosophic hypothesis. The power

of a logical argument cannot be counteracted by the stroke of a sword; magnetic attraction or the influence of physical agents cannot be overcome or repulsed by mental abstraction or the force of concentration.*

If, therefore, the sensuous appetites and desires are to be conceived, with the theosophists, as so essentially in contradiction to the spiritual aspirations of man, no antagonism can ever arise between them; and it is impossible to conceive how the one could drag down the other to its own level. On such a hypothesis, it is as impossible for the desires to influence the higher nature of man as for stocks and stones to influence it; "a moral motive could no more be influenced by a sensuous passion than it could be melted by heat or frozen by cold."

If matter is to be held as essentially opposed to mind, and the sensuous appetites to mental aspirations, man's life will be an irreconcilable dualism. The two factors will exist side by side, each developing independently of the other. The sensual nature will demand sensual satisfactions, and the higher nature its nobler satisfactions.

* In this and the following remarks I have been in deep debt to the late Principal Caird's Works.

The incongruity of such a view can only be avoided by supposing a different relation to exist between the sensuous appetites and the higher affections and sentiments. There can be a conflict between the appetites and the reason only if mind is capable of becoming materialised or matter of becoming spiritualised ; man can control and fight with his lower nature, only if that lower nature stands in organic connection with his higher nature, instead of being opposed to it. Only on some such theory as this can the theosophic position be made consistent with itself.

But even supposing that a conflict between the lower nature and the higher is possible, will it explain the existence of evil or sin ? If this theory were true, an old man, who, in his youth, had revelled in all sensual delights, would be transformed into the type of a virtuous man simply because his passions die off with the advance of age. And the ascetic, who would flee all passions and avoid like a coward the temptations of the world, would be a more virtuous and nobler man than the prophets and martyrs of the world, who were tempted, and proved greater than their temptations. A theory which gives rise to anomalies such as these can never be a satisfactory theory.

The true theosophic explanation of evil, however, in its wider sense, (including physical as well as moral evil,) must be sought in the light of their fundamental principles. The root of evil is not different from the Root of Matter. We have seen how the theosophists explain moral evil through the operation of sensual desires and passions. The Logos is all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving. Now physical and moral evil as such can never be ascribed to the Logos, since Goodness is one of His essential traits. The Root of Matter must, therefore, be supposed to be the source of all evil. When dealing with the speculative aspect of this dualism we pointed out the difficultics that attended such an explanation. These difficulties recur with all the greater force when we consider the bearing of the dualism on ethical problems.

If, in the first place, evil is to be traced to the Root of Matter, to sensual passions and desires, it is a natural phenomenon capable of being explained like other phenomena, and rendering unnecessary all approbation and disapprobation. It is the outcome of a principle which is coeval with the Logos, and can no more be avoided than the law of gravitation and other laws of physics. But approbation and disapprobation are essen-

tial ingredients of moral judgments; and an explanation of evil, which does away with these concepts, does not explain the existence of evil, but explains it away. Evil is no longer evil if it does not carry disapprobation with it; and if evil is to be traced to the Root of Matter, it loses all distinctions of approval and disapproval. All the concepts of Ethics—judgment, obligation, duty, law,—lose their meaning in such a theory, and virtue is reduced to a natural effect like physical strength or beauty.

In the next place, such a view of Evil can leave no place in it for the freedom of the will and moral responsibility. For if sin is the outcome of a principle which is external to man, he is no more responsible for it than he is for the falling of a stone through the air owing to the law of gravity. And if the theosophists talk at the same time of the freedom of the will, they talk of a concept which is in conflict with their theory of evil.

It is the passions alone which, say the theosophists, are responsible for the degradation of man; and it is by destroying all sensual desires that man can rise to a higher stage of consciousness. But if all sensual desires can be traced to the Root of Matter, man can no more help being vicious than he can help obeying the operations

of the law of nature. And if mind is never free from matter, if even from times primeval the Logos was enveloped in the Root of Matter, Evil can never be separated from man and sin never disappear. It is in the will of man that the source of Evil should have to be sought,—in the free self-determination of the individual, who is the truly real. But a theory which calls the individual unreal, in proportion as he is an individual, and which merges all in a unity without distinctions, can have no place for freedom of will and moral responsibility.

In the third place, such a theory can never entertain the hope for a millenium, can never hold forward to mankind the prospect of a day when sin shall perish, and all will be well,—when there shall be no more tears of repentance and sighs of unpardoned crimes, but all shall be united in the kind embrace of a benevolent Deity. Such a hope is not possible for the theosophists, for the Root of Matter is independent of the Logos, and ever exists side by side with it; and the Root of Matter is the source of Evil.

When, therefore, the theosophists speak of an evolutionary process which shall culminate in the elevation of all souls into the bliss of life eternal, when there shall be no longer need for reincarna-

tion,—when they talk in an optimistic tone of the world process ever developing towards the realisation of a common brotherhood of purified souls,—they forget that their fundamental principles are in essential contradiction to this ethical optimism. They forget that their Root of Matter is endowed with eternal life and destined to be the bane of mankind, much as the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden. They forget that sensual passions will never cease to exist, and that though men may avoid them, their effects will not be completely eradicated, and their curse will not cease to affect the weaklings of nature.

Once again, therefore, their theories have to yield to the bearing of facts, and the deeper necessities of human life have to cast off the crust of a one-sided philosophical hypothesis. The admissions which the aspirations of the human soul extort from them prove stronger than the argumentative impulse of their speculative principles, and indeed it is wiser to discard these speculative principles for the more significant and profounder teaching of their better moments.

But, on the other hand, if they are not prepared to sacrifice their cherished fundamental principles to the behests of a nobler

inspiration, they must be content to accept the consequences of those principles,—an eternal, cheerless future, with no redeeming traits, a prolonged repetition of human life, revolving within its monotonous circle of unending struggles and shades. The features which redeem the Zoroastrian dualism from such a dreary fate can have no place in the rigid, statical dualism of the theosophists, where the Creator can never divert Himself from the envelope of matter, which darkens the brilliancy of His creation, and crushes out the hope of the ultimate realisation of an untainted perfection.

Is there no way, it may be asked, out of these difficulties for the theosophists? The only way by which they can avoid them is by giving up their speculative data, and above all by abandoning their rigid dualism. But to give up their dualism would be to abandon the whole structure of their speculations, and to convert their Pantheism into Agnosticism or Idealism. Their dualism, with their unknowable Absolute, must remain, if their distinction from other systems of philosophy, which they consider inadequate, is to be retained.

But it may be argued, "can we not retain our dualism, and at the same time deny that the

Root of Matter is the source of Evil?" The answer is: they cannot.

For the universe, as we behold it, with all its heterogeneous ethical values, with all its mixture of good and evil, is ultimately derived from the two principles, the Manifested God or Logos and the Root of Matter. But the Logos is Power, Wisdom, and Love, and to Him, as such, no evil can be ascribed. It can have, therefore, on theosophic presuppositions, no other source but the Root of Matter, which envelopes the Logos and acts by way of limitation on Him.

At the same time evil cannot be supposed to be a secondary product arising out of the chance operations of these primary principles, and so far therefore illusory. The struggle between the desires and the will, guided by reason, is a struggle in earnest, and on the theosophic standpoint evil can never be a pure illusion. It is something positive which requires to be avoided, or to be killed by the higher nature of man. And if the theosophists are to hold to their fundamental speculative principles, they must be prepared to face all the problems which we have had occasion to indicate.

CHAPTER XII.

Remarks on the Ethical Theories.

The next point to be noticed in theosophic ethics is the nature of the process through which the individual rises from the realisation of his lower to that of his higher nature. He is at first entirely at the mercy of circumstances, till, with the lapse of time, he learns to distinguish between right and wrong, and in this process it is necessary that he should err and be wrong before he rights himself. Thus error is the source of wrong in the first stage.

In the second stage the will intervenes, and though at first under the influence of desires, it learns with the lapse of time to master the desires, and to attain to the ideal of the Kantian good will. In the third stage the intellect supervenes, and learns to distinguish the one in the many, a process which finds its culmination in the fourth stage where the Mind, Will or Spirit knows itself as One with the Logos. In the fifth stage the individual becomes one with the Logos and realises the Nirvanic state.

In the development of this theory, it will be apparent that wrong or evil arises from the igno-

rance of what is right, and virtue is identified with knowledge. The concept of the choice of evil for its own sake, such as we find realised in the Zoroastrian Angra-Mainyush and the Satan of Milton, is here entirely a stranger. In the first stage, the gradual acquisition of experience and knowledge leads the mind to the preference of right desires; in the second stage, will appears, but till it gains adequate knowledge it is a slave to the passions, and when it gains that adequate knowledge it frees itself from their influence. The third, fourth, and fifth stages are all of them on their face intellectual.

The theosophic theory of ethics, therefore, is a branch of intellectual acquirements, and even the Socratic standpoint is out-Socratised. The ethical development of the individual is part of a wider movement of intellectual expansion—a step on the ladder of progress—which culminates in the philosophical intuitionism, which sees all things as one with God. The desires, passions, feelings, emotions and the rest,—the whole field of ethics proper—are blotted out and converted into a system of intellectual activities, which end in the Nirvanic consciousness, very much akin to the ecstasy of the Neo-Platonists.

The emotions and sensual desires have their place in theosophic speculation, but they are only a preparatory stage in the development of the individual consciousness, entirely subordinate to the intellectual development. They help forward that development only by annihilating and negating themselves. The passions must be either killed or die out of themselves, long before the Nirvanic stage is reached.

This theory of morals is essentially in harmony with the philosophical presuppositions of Theosophy. A pantheistic system, which discovers the supreme reality to lie beyond all finite things and determinations, cannot give, to ethical terms like good and evil, obligation and law, more than a subordinate position and minor significance. The ultimate goal of human life is a mysterious union with the Logos in which it loses its sense of individuality; and ethical relations, which presuppose the life of the individual and the life of society, can have no place in the theosophic scheme of the final consummation.

But though thus in harmony with itself, such a view is not without difficulties, and raises problems which it is incompetent to solve. Looking to the first stage of development, we are told that man left to himself ultimately finds out the path to-

wards the right, and by his errors discovers what are the right passions and feelings to follow.

But why should this advance be always in the right direction? Why should the individual, left to the operation of chance circumstances, always discover the right passions? And why should it not sometimes happen that he may sink lower and lower in the scale of existence till he is lost for all practical purposes? Will has not yet come in at this stage; and an object of nature as he merely is, why should he not sink to the position of inanimate things?

It is possible in many ways satisfactorily to answer this question. It might be answered, for instance, by the remark that there is no difference in kind between the life of a stone and the life of a man, but only a difference in degree; and that life, though it may sink to a lower stage, is again capable of rising into a higher. We are not here concerned however with the value or cogency of such an answer. It is more important for us to notice that even if the individual thus sinks in the scale of being, the distinction will be a distinction not in morals but in the operation of a natural law. And the theosophic contention that the Love of the Logos tends to give a progressive tendency to the development of the universe and its con

stituents is a contention that has no meaning, unless the ethical field is given a wider scope, and its concepts acquire a deeper significance.

In the first stage, therefore, whether the individual follows the right through the acquisition of knowledge and rises in the scale of existence, or sinks through ignorance, there is no ethical significance, and his rise or fall is only the rise or fall of a stone.

To express it in plainer terms, right and wrong when used with reference to the first stage of the psychical development of the individual have no exclusively ethical meaning, till the will comes into play. And that happens only in the second stage. Psychological Hedonism and even evolutionary ethics would read in the first stage ethical ideas, and constitute it the essential source of the more complex concepts of duty, obligation and conscience. But theosophic ethics is not Hedonism nor evolutionistic Utilitarianism, and so far the first stage in the development of the race consciousness or individual consciousness is a non-ethical stage.

It is only in the second stage that the conflict arises between the desires and the will; and for Theosophy the purely ethical sphere is confined to this second stage of the development of consciousness. Will comes in here for the first time;

it was all the while latent in the first stage, and gradually acquires strength enough to conquer or at least to wage a conflict with desires.

Will is defined as determination from within, and is opposed to desires as determination from without. Will is reason, desires are irrational; and the conflict between will and desires is determined not by converting the irrational element into an instrument of reason but by the destruction of the desires. The will instead of rationalising the desires kills them. It gains the victory by evasion or destruction rather than by absorption and assimilation. And this is but natural. For what is irrational can never listen to reason and the direct opposition between the will and the desires can have no other conclusion than the destruction of the one or the other. As we previously remarked a conflict is impossible in the proper sense of the word, and the result can never be a synthesised product, but only the effacement of one and the strengthening of the other.

In the end, therefore, the will is supreme, and the desires are shaken off. But as Caird long ago observed: "A purely self-affirming intelligence, or otherwise expressed, a rational will which has no materials of activity outside itself, is a mere abstraction. Reason can never realise itself

merely by willing to be rational, it can do so only by willing particular acts which come under the form of rationality."

A rational will can only express itself through particular desires, impulses and feelings, that point to their own ends. An intelligence that lives on itself alone never lives in the real sense of that term; for its life can express itself only through objects different from itself, *viz.*, the sense manifold for knowledge and the particular desires for ethical life. A will that wills nothing is inconceivable, and an intelligence that annihilates passions annihilates the materials of its own existence. The passions, therefore, play an important part in the realisation of the individual consciousness; they form the ground-work for the building of its own higher life; and when they become rationalised, they fulfil their proper function in the economy of life.

But it may be observed by a theosophist that he never holds to the view we have ascribed to him, that Theosophy never preaches the killing of desires, and he would quote from the "Ancient Wisdom" itself in his support. "It is important never to drill out or strive to weaken the affections, as is done in many of the lower kinds of occultism. However impure and gross the affections may be, they offer possibilities

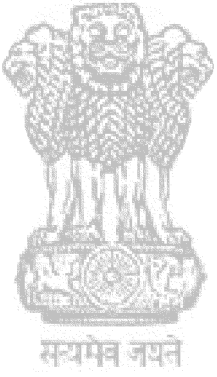
of moral evolution from which the cold-hearted and self-isolated have shut themselves out."*

Undoubtedly the theosophists would have to acknowledge the force of the passions and affections in the creation of a morally good character; but the value of these affections is distinctly subordinate; and they can have no place in the higher stages of evolution, where the soul shaking itself free of all trammels, loses its individuality in the Logos. The affections and passions are products of the physical plane, and though their tincture may survive in the higher stages of development, they thin and thin away to death.

Besides, let us consider the bearing of this reply on the highest of all affections, love. Love, when viewed at its highest, is love towards the Logos, the divine, permanent, unchanging object of all Love. But in the higher stages of the evolution of consciousness, when the sense of individuality is lost in unity with the Divine, Love can no more exist. For love implies a distinction between the lover and the beloved; and without some distinction of that kind the concept of love itself would become impossible. The idealistic concept of

* Mrs. Besant's "Ancient Wisdom," p. 217.

Love, which implies the union between two which is still a distinction between them, is impossible to the theosophists with their pantheistic solutions. The ultimate goal of life, therefore, is to avoid or crush out all desires, for the attainment of that intellectual ecstasy which ends in union with the Divine.



CHAPTER XIII.

Philosophy of Religion.

Coming now to the theosophic development of the higher stages in the life of the individual consciousness, we have seen what the nature of that development implies. It consists in the attainment of a kind of intellectual knowledge which sees all things as one in God, and it culminates in that stage in which the individual becomes one with the Logos. But does the individual, when he unites with the Logos, retain any sense of his individuality?

Frequently the answer given by the theosophists is in the affirmative; but if it is so, it is in spite of their theories, and not in accordance with them. Because the realisation of the higher nature presupposes, as we have seen, the destruction of the lower; and the sense of individuality is an illusion due to the influence of the lower nature on us.

Besides an individual consciousness, that expresses itself in no action, that has no memory,

no affection, no passions, no knowledge, no cognition, is an abtraction without any shade of reality in it. Because in that Nirvanic state where the individual becomes one with the Divine, the consciousness is devoid of all passions, and of all affections. These presuppose distinction and difference, which can find no place in that psychic gaze of intellectual abstraction. There can be no memory and no cognition, for that would equally imply a multiplicity of things and thoughts, which do not exist for the Nirvanic stage. Reason itself must be silent, in order that the blessedness of the perception of God may come upon man.

Thus all the channels through which individuality can express itself for us are closed, and the union with the Logos is a union in which the individual is lost in the universal.

This conception of the ultimate union of the individual with the Divine is not without significance. In one way, it proclaims the great truth that immortality can be truly predicated of thought alone, and of thought only as universal self-consciousness. In another way, it proclaims the efficacy of the idea of corporate immortality, which disdains to think that the individual could be immortal, and assigns immortality to the

human race as a whole, in which is summed up the history of the universe. The truth expressed here is that, regarded from the point of view of the individual alone, perfection and happiness are never attained by men. The key to the riddle of human life, with its boundless pledges and inexhaustible desires, is this: that he who lives a noble and universal life is a sharer in the life of humanity, the progress of which is never arrested and which shall never die. It is this aspect of human life that is emphasised in the theosophic concept of the absolute absorption of the individual in the Logos.

But the Logos is not the final word for all reality; behind it there still remains the Absolute of which it is the manifestation. We are naturally told, therefore, that this union of the individual with the Logos, which constitutes the Nirvanic stage, is not the final end and aim of all things and persons. Behind the Nirvanic state of consciousness there are two others which human intelligence can never adequately realise, but which correspond to the engulfment of all things and thoughts into the indeterminateness of the Absolute Unity.

Natural as this view about the final consummation of life is, a different tone of thought is

found now and then pervading the theosophic writings. The force of the necessities of life has proved greater than the necessity for speculative self-consistency, and the theosophists have often admitted that even in the Nirvanic state, the individual does not lose all self-consciousness, but somehow lives his life of separateness even in the Logos. The life of the individual is not extinguished in the Divine, but is said to receive its highest expression therein; and the life of the Logos is conceived as the life of a community of spiritual beings the highest of whom is the supreme Deity.

The theosophists, so far, approach that conception of the Divine, in which the universal life is the sole condition of individual life, in which the individual attains to his full individuality in proportion as he identifies himself with the Infinite Creator. It is not, therefore, as the theosophists themselves have to admit in the face of their theories, an absolute merging of the individual in the Logos that takes place in the higher stages of development, but a fuller self-realisation; it is not the death of the individual, but his fuller life, that is realised in the union of the finite with the Infinite. The theosophists, indeed, speak of stages higher than this. If these

stages imply a destruction of self-realisation, their theory may be once again said to be too strong for their practical insight; but if they emphasise therein this self-realisation as receiving fuller confirmation, their theory of the indeterminate Infinite may be said to have been thrown to the winds.

This glimmer of light in the pantheistic darkness is, however, only occasional and temporary, and gives to the shades a deeper hue. The pantheistic envelope again clouds the transcendent brightness of the sky; and pantheism once more comes to the fore front when we ask the question: is the Logos to be conceived of as individual or universal? It cannot be the former, since then it would be absolutely unreal; it must necessarily be universal. But again, He is not the absolute universal, since beside him there is the Root of Matter enveloping and limiting Him. So far, therefore, He is not absolutely real; and, as we have shown elsewhere, He is not all-powerful, He is not omnipresent, and not all-existent.

Can the ultimate goal of human life, then, be union with such a defective God as this? Though the individual *ego* may unite with Him, it will still find that the Root of Matter, as an irrational principle, hampers the union and prevents it from being complete. And though all

things might be seen as in Him, the Root of Matter will be outside *him*, a second god who cannot come within the Unity of the Logos. God's Love moreover will not be universal; because though all things ultimately may unite in a common Love, the Root of Matter will be a cloud overshadowing the brightness of the universal harmony.

But even supposing that this dualism is done away with, and the Root of Matter admits of reconciliation with the Logos, there is one distinction which will still characterise the theosophic mode of thought,—a characteristic which shares the weakness of the Eastern modes of pantheistic thought in general. The Logos is conceived of as purely universal, as object, and never as subject.

The Western mode of thinking has constituted the Creator into a Spirit, into a concrete subject, over and above His being an objective determination as Substance. The union of the individual with his Creator, therefore, is a union in which the former is able to perceive his growth into the fuller self, which is termed unity with God. On the other hand, with Theosophy the Unity is conceived as pure Substance, as that which underlies all reality, and though Love and Power

are ascribed to Him, these do not constitute him a Concrete Spirit. Hence the union of God with the individual, which Theosophy speaks of, is a union in which what is individual must vanish. To realise himself and develope his inmost being man must become one with God. In such a union there is a total merging of the individual in the universal. The individual in his ultimate union with the Logos does not live in the Logos but dies in Him.

However much the theosophists may protest against this way of stating their views, as being a perversion of truth, their first principles can yield to them no other theory of the final consummation of things and Spirits. The higest spirits are reduced to the same level as the most inanimate things; all ultimately will be absorbed in a death-like stillness and nonentity in the indeterminate Absolute.

The final religious word for Theosophy, therefore, is *death* and not life, as the final word for Christianity and Zoroastrianism is *life* and not death. However long the life of the soul may be prolonged by successive reincarnations, its final consummation is in negation of itself, just as the final consummation for Christianity and Zoroastrianism is realisation of its highest nature in

union with the Divine. And if at times, as in some of their best exponents, the admission breaks forth that the Nirvanic stage of thought, the highest conceivable by man, instead of annihilating life, brings into a harmonious unity the life of individuals and the life of the Logos, it is an admission which we receive with delight; since, going as it does against the whole trend of their thinking, it implies a healthy reaction in favour of a better view, the longing of the human soul for life eternal. As the great poet has sung:

> "Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath,
> Has ever truly longed for death.
>
> "'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
> O life, not death for which we pant,
> More life and fuller that I want."

If we now ask ourselves whether Theosophy with its thorough going pantheistic basis can admit of prayers, the essential characteristic of all religious life, as well as love and reverence towards God, the answer is plain and inevitable. Prayers can exist only where there is a distinction between the man who prays and Him that hears his prayers. But the union of man with God, of which Theosophy speaks, is a union without distinctions, it is a state of consciousness akin to the "I am He" of Higher

Brahmanism; and where there is such absolute merging of all individuality in the Absolute, prayers can have no meaning.

Theosophy has indeed its Logos, but the Logos like the Ishwara of Brahmanism is only partially real, and to address prayers to a person who is partly an illusion is as absurd as to address them to an inanimate object. And if prayers have no meaning, equally meaningless are love and reverence; for these can only be where the human individual feels himself as in some way distinct from the Being whom he loves and worships. All the elements that go to make up the religious life of man find no place in Theosophy; and religion degenerates into the dry intellectual abstractions of the philosopher devoid of all affections and aesthetic emotions.

We have now examined the twofold claim of Theosophy:—to give a satisfactory explanation of the universe as we behold it with its many and strange problems, and to offer from the practical standpoint an ideal of life and thought, capable of responding to the higher needs and aspirations of the human soul.

Has this claim been proved? The efficacy of Theosophy as a philosophical explanation of the universe has been marred by all the defects

which attend a pantheistic solution, and we have found the explanation essentially halting and unsatisfactory. Its philosophy, at least in outline, has been the product of an alliance of Neo-Platonic modes of thought with Hindu Pantheism. This alliance, however, is far from being the organic absorption of the old beliefs into a new speculative system. It is of the nature of a mechanical compound, in which the elements can be clearly distinguished and separated out. And round this nucleus have been gathered all the mystic writings, sayings and doings, which human industry can discover, both in the East and in the West, from the times of the Neo-Pythagoreans to the times of the Mediaeval alchemists, from the beliefs of the Rosicrucians to the declarations of Swedenborg, from the Buddhists in China and Tibet to the latest tomfoolery of the modern Indian snake charmer and *jâdûgar*.

Does Theosophy fulfil the other part of its claim? Does it afford a sympathetic repose to the highest needs and aspirations of men? As we have seen, Theosophy has no sympathy to extend to the vast majority of ordinary human beings; they are doomed to struggle everlastingly in the bodily prison, time after time, till they understand the principles of Theosophy and con-

form themselves to its preachings. There can be no salvation for men, till they all attain to the theosophic intellectualism, perceive the universe and themselves to be one with the Deity, and learn to regard their own selves as partial illusions, which require to be consumed in the infinite fire of the Absolute.

As blind instruments in a vast process of evolution, man must remain content with understanding that process; the highest satisfaction for him can only be the satisfaction of seeing himself whirled onwards in that never-ending rotatory movement, which consists in emanation from and reabsorption into the Absolute. He must turn away from the world and the sweetness of social communion; his "City of Peace" will be a stranger to the inspiriting sounds of life and action and to all desecrating pursuits that may enlarge the mind or elevate the soul.

Such a system may appeal to learned men and philosophers who could grasp the high flown abstractions of Theosophy; it can never appeal to the masses who want a concrete hypostisation of the Divine, and whose aspirations can be satisfied only by a living and moving being in whom are realised all the perfections of the Divine nature. Personality and the force of personality,

with which the history of a Christ and a Buddha and a Zoroaster renders us familiar, cannot be replaced by abstract dogmas; and we cannot find that harmony and love, which personality inspires, in the rigid formalism and coldness of an impassive intellection.

Thousands of years have not exhausted the love and reverence with which men have been inspired by a Zoroaster and a Christ, and the simple historic significance of the sacrifice on Calvary has been merged in the deeper practical significance of a permanent reconciliation between man and God. The lapse of centuries has strengthened, instead of weakening, the significance of the prophet's life, and though Christianity has assumed a thousand varied forms, and religious zeal has often misled the Christians into an anti-Christian persecution, the essence of Christianity has remained unshaken in the life of the prophet of Nazareth. Such a practical attractiveness and satisfaction Theosophy can never afford, and if it ever prolongs its narrow-compassed life, it will only be amongst the confined circles of a few schools of learned sectarians.

Of Christianity and Zoroastrianism it may be said, men received a new sanction in the prophets' words, a powerful motive in the prophets' love,

an all-sufficient comfort in Immortality, made sure by the doctrine of Resurrection. Theosophy has not gifted men with a new sanction, it has produced no imposing personality whom men can unite in worshipping as a prophet; it has not stirred the hearts of men with the proclamation of a divine message.

Two thousand years ago, a similar movement arose, only to meet with a similar fate. Stoicism under the Roman Empire aspired to save mankind from an approaching moral and social dissolution. It was, however, a movement essentially exclusive, like Theosophy. It could appeal only to the learned and educated; for the suffering millions it was a sealed book; and it carried no consolation to the heart, whilst it appealed to the intellect.

Stoicism, therefore, failed with all its elaborate system of reasoning to do what the humble fishermen from Galilee did; and men now remember it only as a system of philosophy which flourished for a time and died. The philosophic historian might say what he likes; the historian, who candidly faces facts, has to acknowledge that the influence of good men and living personalities has been greater than that of cold theories and the enunciation of moral laws.

The doctrine of universal brotherhood which Theosophy preaches, it has inherited, if not borrowed consciously, from Christianity; and if theosophists sometimes speak as if they had no other distinctive doctrine than this of brotherhood, it is because the Sermon on the Mount has been spreading and germinating under the soil for more than twenty centuries.

But will the theosophists, in their love of brotherhood, give up their Absolute so far as to acknowledge that it may be supplemented by the Absolute of Idealism? Will they give up their doctrine of Nirvana so far as to admit that there may be other ways, in which the individual can unite with the Deity? Will they give up their Reincarnation theory, and say that it is only one amongst other hypotheses which are equally satisfactory? Will they say: "All philosophic systems are partial truths; Theosophy is one of them and therefore, a partial reflection of truth. Let each one, therefore, follow what system of philosophy he chooses?" If they do, then alone can they be said to do something towards the realisation of universal brotherhood. Otherwise universal brotherhood is a farce, and a cloak for sectarian proselytism.

Thus Theosophy has been weighed in the balance and found wanting; it has failed to assert its two-fold claim; it has not even been able to confirm one aspect in the alternative. Far from establishing its claims as a practical solvent of all human perplexities, it cannot even satisfy the intellectual needs of the philosophic inquirer, and like the owl of Alfred Austin, draws

> "Betwixt "Tu whit" "Tu-whoo"
> Distinctions nice and nicer"

but without making us one whit wiser. And may we not endorse Austin's verdict:

> "While brains mechanic vainly weave
> The web and woof of thinking,
> Go, mount up with the lark, and leave
> The bird of wisdom blinking."

CHAPTER XIV.

Reincarnation and Transmigration. The Law of Karma.

In our discussion of the ethical and religious theories of the theosophists, we have especially omitted the consideration of the hypothesis of Reincarnation or the Transmigration of souls, which we reserved for special treatment. It is natural, at this stage, to revert to that subject; and we will commence with a statement of the theory.

Briefly stated, the doctrine may be placed in the following form: Reincarnation is but one instance of the general theory of evolution. Every form has its own life-principle, and the evolution of physical forms, stage by stage, carries with it a similar evolution of the life-principles, associated with them. Life evolves from form to form, storing up continually accumulating experience, and the reincarnation of the human soul, that is, its reappearance in a human body on earth after a certain interval, is "not the introduction of a new principle into evolution, but the

adaptation of the universal principle, to meet the conditions rendered necessary by the individualisation of the continuously evolving life."

Theosophy in fact would adopt the whole theroy of evolution with one striking difference. Whereas the evolutionary theory, pushed to its logical consequences, would say that matter with the simplest properties evolves into higher and higher stages, till it gives rise to life and the highest organisms, with man at the apex, Theosophy would maintain that there is a twofold evolution, an evolution of form and an evolution of life, in strict parallelism. Matter cannot, say the theosophists, give rise to life; every particle of matter has a life-germ in it, and evolution takes the form of a double evolution, of form and the life principle.

This life-principle is present in the mineral kingdom. It assumes a higher stage of development in the vegetable kingdom, a higher still in the case of animals and men, till the life-principle becomes absorbed in the Logos from which it originally issued. Reincarnation comes in as a subsidiary hypothesis saying that this life-principle, which is known as the soul in man, passes from body to body, at certain intervals, and returns again to the earth in another body after quitting

a previous body. This process goes on till the soul has purified itself from the contamination of all sin, and has been rendered fit for union with the Logos.

As regards the actual details of the way in which the soul after the death of the body transfers itself to another body, and is reborn on earth, we leave these to the theosophists with their divinely gifted minds; for our ordinary intellects cannot raise the veil which surrounds the life after death and penetrate into its working. We cannot pretend to follow the life after death and count accurately, as the theosophists do, the number of years and months before the soul, after passing away from one human body, enters another. What we can do is to offer a few suggestions on the general nature of the theory, and consider how far it can satisfactorily answer the problems which it is intended to unriddle.

In the first place, then, the question before us is: how far the theory of the transmigration of souls is an adequate explanation of human problems. With regard to its alleged connection with the doctrine of evolution, it may be remarked that if evolution is to be understood as the scientific theory which has in modern days received the support of Darwin and Spencer, that theory does

not yield reincarnation. About the physical evolution of the bodily framework of man from the lowest organisms there can be no doubt ; but with regard to the spiritual entity which we call self-consciousness in the individual, it is one of the acknowledged defects in the evolutionary hypothesis that it cannot derive that self-consciousness as the product of simpler forms of life or consciousness.

While we are tracing the development of self-consciousness from the lowest forms of the life-principle, we are implicitly postulating the existence of the very thing we profess to derive, we are employing the self-consciousness itself to explain self-consciousness. The end is prior to the beginning. What appears posterior in time is the logically prior ; and the end is implicitly present from the earliest stages of the supposed process of evolution. The scientific doctrine of evolution, therefore, traces only the development of the highest known organism in nature from the simplest forms of the life-principle. The account which it gives is exclusively an account of the development of the physical framework of man and the lower creatures, and not an account of mental or spiritual development.

When the theosophists speak of evolution, they speak not of the *scientific* doctrine of evolution which has received the undivided assent of thinking men and has passed into the sphere of acknowledged facts, but of that *philosophic* hypothesis, incapable of verification, which assumes an uninterrupted development from the finest atom of inorganic matter to the highest manifestation of the life-principle—self-conscious thought, and whose validity would depend upon its ability to offer a satisfactory explanation of all phenomena and problems.

Supposing, now, that this philosophic hypothesis has all the requirements of an adequate theory, would it enable us to deduce the doctrine of reincarnation as a necessary corollary from it? By no means. What the theory of evolution says is this: that the life-principle has evolved through a series of forms to its present stage. It is a law of nature, supposing it to have attained to that degree of certainty. It has no *moral* value about it.* It does not therefore tell us that the life-principle should, after having once passed through the human form, return to that form repeatedly in the course of its evolution.

* Reincarnation, on the other hand has an exclusively *moral* value, since its *raison d'être* lies in its being an explanation of moral conflicts in the universe.

The doctrine of evolution by itself can never, therefore, yield reincarnation; it is only when that principle is combined with the ethical determinations of Theosophy that it serves that purpose.

But let us turn to the question, what are the problems in this universe which have suggested the hypothecation of this doctrine, so familiar to Eastern modes of thought. These problems are just those which have attracted the notice of thinking men in all ages: they bear on the conflicts between the life of virtue and the life of happiness. Why should there be in our present life inequalities of opportunities and injustice of awards? Why should one child be born of noble and rich parents and reserved for a life of virtue and honours, and another be born of poor and vicious parents and doomed to a life of sin and misery? Why should one be born with high intellectual endowments, and another to drag out a life of idiocy? Why should one man, in spite of all his virtue and laudable struggles, lead a life of miseries and unrequited humility, while another, with fewer temptations and fewer merits, lives comfortable and happy in his surroundings?

Men have always been struck with the existence of anomalies in life, and the soul alive to the keener aspects of religious love has felt

these anomalies more forcibly than the rest. The rich man leading a life of calm indifference to everything around him passes his hours in comfort; but whilst he is reclining at ease on his luxurious couch, he little thinks that in the neighbouring street, in a dingy cell or a crowded hovel, lies a fevered sufferer, whose precious life is hurried away to its close in consumption, by the chill breath of poverty and winter. Many a waif of life, born in misery, bred in misery, dying in misery, ends his life in tortures that he did nothing to deserve, paying the penalty of sins his ancestors may have committed, when the favourites of fortune dream away their lives of moral insensibility in careless unconcern. Why should there be these inexplicable sufferings? Why should men suffer for what they have not done?

It would appear that these questionings of the human heart can have no reply, and that human curiosity is never to be satisfied. The painful contrast between the ideal and the reality has attracted attention since the earliest times; and is not likely to become less painful in the immediate future. This contrast appears in nature and in the relations of nature to man. It oppresses our feelings as a painful contradiction

that creation in all its beauty must submit to decay; that the animal world should be subjected to such cruel tortures; that blooming manhood, just when it is about to give out its most glorious fruits to the world, should be blighted by a gnawing worm. This feeling is intensified when we see the ideal life of free will so often struggling, perishing under sickness and suffering, in poverty and want.

But this feeling of contradiction reaches its height when we pass from the outer to the inner aspects of human life, and perceive how many noble lives pass away like plants brought from a foreign land and too tender to grow in our bleak and uncongenial climate. An Eva St. Clair hardly blooms for long in this world, and so likewise Marianne and Aurelia in *Wilhelm Meister* quickly fade in death whilst more prosaic characters live. It is this contrast or contradiction that is expressed in the words; "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, but ye would not!" The real nature of the world displayed itself nowhere so preeminently distinct as in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. The earthly fate of sacred truth and righteousness was typically exhibited on the height of Golgotha.

It was this tragic significance of life or rather its want of significance and meaning that inspired the tragedy of the Greeks, and lends their charm to dramas like Hamlet and Faust. It is this that has led the lyrist of our age to sing

> "Cease to wail and brawl!
> Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
> There is one remedy for all."

And it is to this aspect of life that is to be attributed the circumstance that the French historian of the tribes of Israel doubts in many a later writing the reality of human progress and civilisation.

It is not therefore to be wondered at if the same contradictions in human life should have appealed to the theosophists, and led them to seek relief in the construction and elaboration of a theory already familiar to the Eastern mind.

We are told, all these difficulties and contradictions would receive an answer if we suppose that in their previous births and lives men had done some good or evil deeds, the *rewards* or *penalties* of which they carry with them into their present lives. The law of *Karma* explains all the anomalies in life, which we see around us; and the law of *Karma* is the twin sister to the theory of Reincarnation.

But are the difficulties really answered in that fashion? Do you solve the difficulties by taking them back into earlier lives? Before we answer this question, it is necessary briefly to notice one circumstance. The difficulties centre, as we have seen, round the conflict between a life of virtue and a life of happiness; and the theosophic solution aims at establishing a harmony by the supposition that the sufferings which are apparently undeserved are the penalties of sins committed in earlier lives. But why should sin arise in the universe? Can any explanation be offered as to the origin of sin? Do the theosophists accept the doctrine of a fall from an original state of perfection? *

They tell us that the earliest stage in the development of self-consciousness is that wherein will has not yet evolved, and the individual is at the absolute mercy of circumstances. If he transgresses in that stage, it is no real transgression or sin; because transgression presupposes responsibility, and freedom of choice. If the

* The reader will find that there has been, in the remarks that follow, a repetition of what has been said in Chapter XI. Chapter XI is devoted to the general theory of Evil, the standpoint of the present remarks bears on the nature of Sin and its origin. Besides the importance of the subject can well afford a repetition of statement.

individual, therefore, yields to the current of desire, and is dragged down towards the indulgence of the lowest of them, the only result which would follow would be the physical consequences which may involve pain, but which would never involve the moral category of punishment for sin. These consequences follow immediately as effect does a cause, and do not differ from the circumstance that a stone falls to the ground when thrown down from a height.

Coming to the second stage where will appears, does there any more arise the idea of sin, and punishment for sin? The will, if it chooses a lower to a nobler desire, is said to sin. But what constitutes the distinction between a lower and a higher desire? What is the standard which thus enables us to perceive a difference in kind between one desire and another?

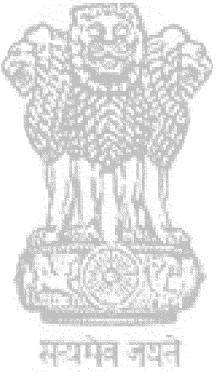
Theosophy would tell us that will is one of the aspects of that individual self-consciousness which, in another aspect, is the cognitional and rational faculty; and that in that latter capacity it creates a distinction between the desires which come from the sensual side and those which come from the mental side, preferring the latter as higher than the former. The theosophic ethics culminate in a type of intellectual Gnosis which enables

man to reach his highest development in the blessed rapture which intuits as one the Universe, the Logos, and his own individual self.

In the second stage of conscious development, therefore, the will makes possible a struggle between the sensual desires and the nobler aspirations of the soul. But these nobler aspirations are generally the intellectual cravings, and not the higher emotions of the aesthetic side. Sin, therefore, consists in preferring a desire like sympathy or love to the pursuit of knowledge. And it is for this that the individual has to undergo the penalties which, not ending with the life of the soul in one particular manifestation, extend to its life in other bodies and other manifestations on earth. That is certainly a peculiar explanation of sin, and an equally peculiar explanation of its penalties!

That this is not a caricature of theosophic views but the logical development of their own doctrines, we have already endeavoured to show. The second stage in the evolution of consciousness, which is the purely ethical stage, is succeeded by a third and a higher, where the passions drop off and the soul endeavours to lead an intellectual life, seeing all things as in God. The life devoted to contemplation is higher than the life devoted

to action. The life alive to the emotions and higher affections, which clings to the social world, is inferior to the life which has subdued all these affections, and killed them in the monotonous devotion of an intellectual intoxication. A theory which reduces sin to a preference of what is intellectual over what is emotional is a theory that can never attract any attention and can never satisfy thinking men.



CHAPTER XV.

Intrinsic Difficulties in the Theory.

Even if the theosophic explanation of sin was an adequate explanation, the doctrine of Reincarnation has difficulties of its own, which would still remain independently of all other considerations.

What would constitute the individuality of the soul, which is presupposed in transmigration and reincarnation? The individual is real in proportion as he loses his individuality and becomes an abstraction, for the highest reality is the highest abstraction. Evolution consists in the development of the best capacities of the soul and its highest realisation. And this can be only attained by the gradual loss of its individuality, until in the end the individual becomes the Universal. The concept of the individual is unreal and an illusion—relatively, not absolutely,—and the evolution of the soul means the loss of that individuality.

The doctrine of reincarnation must, therefore, be prepared to give up that part of itself which has

the greatest weight with others, *viz.*, that it is the individual souls which are born and reborn. Souls may be reborn, if reincarnation is correct; but they are reborn not individually, but in a manner which tends to remove gradually that individuality, till the individual merges in or becomes one with the universal, and has no necessity for further births.

Looking at the same question subjectively, we ask ourselves again: what is individuality? Does memory constitute it? No. Do the sensations give individuality? Apparently not. Is it your own ideas and reflections upon them that constitute individuality? No, again. Is it a combination of all these? If it were, then the soul in its rebirth would know everything about its previous life and work.

The concept of individuality is therefore only the synthetic apperception of Kant, the I=I, if it is anything at all for the theosophists; and such a unity, without diversity, without the current of the sense-manifold of which it is the unity, is no unity at all. But this current of the sense-manifold is distinctly broken in the interval between one bodily life and another; and hence the unity is no longer a unity, but a diversity; the one individuality breaks up into two, having no con-

nection with each other. There is no more one and the same soul that is born and dies and is reborn, than there is one and the same ball if a white ball is seen rolling at one moment and an exactly similar ball the next moment. There is, indeed, a teleological continuity which marks off the former from the latter*; but the teleological continuity, presupposed in this case, instead of being evidence of the unity as effect, is assumed as a cause.

But even granting that this question of individuality is solved by Theosophy, and transmigration thus made possible, there is one consideration which would militate against its claims to a valid explanation. From the religious standpoint, the distinction between good and bad, to which we have been so much accustomed in our ordinary human life and social relations, cannot hold. All the gradations in worth, which we assume from the purely ethical standpoint as dividing one man from another, vanish when we consider men in relation to God. In God's eyes the man of the most rigid virtue and strictest habits is on a level with the reprobate and sinner. Both are equally guilty and equally condemned

* By the *latter* we mean the analogy of the balls which we adduced.

before God. The man who, in *our* eyes, would appear to be a follower of truth, honesty and virtue is a sinner when compared to the purity of God, and the distance in depth of virtue and goodness which divides men from their Creator is more than enough to sink all petty differences between man and man into a not unreasonable dead level of merit or demerit.

Thus where morality introduces innumerable, hard and fast distinctions of worth, religion brings all men together, the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, into a common humiliation and a common exaltation. Man is a strange medley of good and evil, and the worst of sinners is not without his redeeming qualities. All alike are sinners in the eyes of the Creator, but all alike can hope to be saved by faith, and to be received into the fold of the Lord. Even the purest of men and the exalted prophet, when some one called him good, said "Call me not good, for there is none good but one, and He is the Lord;" and even the worst of sinners is not so hopelessly lost as that he cannot rise again through an act of faith.

Religion, therefore, tends to abolish all moral distinctions of worth between man and man. The son of God disdained not to be a friend of pub-

licans and sinners, for he had come to call, not the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. The publican, who went up to the temple only with the consciousness that he was a sinner and prayed for mercy, returned home *justified* rather than the man who, in his exaltation and consciousness of virtue, compared himself favourably to others. The woman taken in adultery found mercy where others had to go away unsatisfied. There could be no greater disregard of the ordinary distinctions of moral judgment than that implied in these scriptural paradoxes. And the profundity of thought involved in these parables expresses itself as a condemnation of the practice of treating our own private standards of worth as the final measure of things.

But it may be asked: what is the bearing of these remarks on the question of the adequacy of the idea of Reincarnation? It is this: Reincarnation, with the Law of *Karma*, is offered as the only hypothesis which could explain to us the anomalies of life: why one man should be favoured by nature towards the realisation of a good life and another crushed to death, why men should suffer for no fault of their own, why some children should be born to lead a life of misery and sorrow, others to be happy without having deserved that happi-

ness. But is not the explanation that we have just sketched in outline an equally satisfactory explanation?* Does not the apprehension of religious phenomena in their true light open for us a way out of these difficulties? Does not a true reading of religious life evaporate the mists raised by a tentative knowledge in the beginning? For the all-merciful Father in Heaven there is no distinction between the just and the unjust; He is equally kind to all; and the greatest sinner will find the same treatment as the virtuous man of our every day ethics. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."†

* We have been mainly indebted to A. E. Taylor's "Problem of Conduct" for the suggestion of this explanation.

† Strange as this view may appear to the majority of men, it is a typical illustration of the ways in which religion transforms the distinctions of morality. Say what people might, morality and the sanctions of morality can never be an adequate substitute for religion, can never give that lasting satisfaction and joy which we seek after all our life through. An adequate theory of morals, which dispenses with the presuppositions of religion, has not yet been discovered; and so long as that is the case, moral distinctions must consent to be interpreted in the light of the higher categories of religious life. "It is because our hard and fast moral distinctions are so far from expressing differences which go beneath the surface, and are rooted in the heart of things, that the act of 'faith' is capable of working the revolution which mere morality fails to accomplish, and of making the 'child of wrath' into one of the children of God.'"

The virtuous, therefore, may here and there undergo undeserved suffering, and the vicious prosper; one man may be born and bred up in misery, another in virtue and happiness. All these may, in the first place, be the fancy of the observer; the apparent sufferings may prove to be no sufferings, but a source of contentment; and the pleasures may be only the momentary gratification of the senses, which are followed by a reactionary torture unrelieved by alleviating factors. Indian life has rendered us not quite unfamiliar with men who delight in the infliction of self-torture and mutilation; and in the face of this phenomenon, it would be extremely rash to apply a subjective standard of pleasures and pains to others, and to universalise it in its scope.

But if in the second place, these sufferings and misery are real, and not mere appearances, the inequalities vanish when surveyed from the standpoint of religion; they dwindle into insignificance when we remember that all are but children of one common Creator, who extends His benevolent protection to all, and sprinkles His benedictions alike over the *morally**

* The reader will perceive the distinction we have drawn between *moral* righteousness and righteousness proper or *religious* righteousness.

righteous and unrighteous. The sufferings which from the ethical standpoint seem to point to an unresolvable anomaly vanish from the religious standpoint. Good and evil acquire the wider connotation of Righteousness and Unrighteousness, and the petty inequalities of human life are lost in the realisation of a glorious end, where the individual finds his true place in a world of spirits divine.

What we have been urging might be put in a different way. Underlying the doctrine of Reincarnation and *Karma* one can easily perceive a single presupposition, which runs through the entire extent of their exposition. This presupposition consists in identifying earthly happiness with spiritual bliss, or at least interpreting earthly misery as spiritual unhappiness. If we once distinguish between happiness and bliss, and consider bliss in its proper light as the final aim of our being, then the problem of sufferings, with all its anomalies, melts away into a derivative and easily explicable factor of life.

For whatever may be the organic connection between earthy happiness and spiritual bliss, and however closely they may be related to each other, it cannot be denied that oftentimes a man may be really blessed on the *ruins* of his earthly happiness,

blessed even under sufferings and tortures.* Blessedness, which as a heavenly grace has come down to man—"for no one can himself procure it, or draw it forth from his own inner being—returns with him from earth to heaven, there to unfold itself in its true home." Happiness, even if it is evenly preserved throughout a long life, must depart with the departure of life. The earthly elements remain behind; only those that have been fashioned into spiritual bliss, love and wisdom, faith and reverence, are taken up into the kingdom of heaven. Earthly miseries and earthly happiness are therefore irrelevant when we are arguing about the final realisation of the individual's being; and the kingdom of heaven can safely afford to neglect the proportional distribution of temporal rewards and punishments.

It is this truth that one of the chapters in the Vicar of Wakefield so beautifully expresses: "Happiness and misery are rather the result of prudence

* That there is no such organic connection between the two will appear latter on. The lives of the prophets both in Zoroastrianism and Christianity are lives of physical sufferings and trials, but at the same time lives of spiritual contentment and bliss. But though such organic connection is denied, it is not asserted that the life of earthly happiness is incompatible with spiritual bliss. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." So likewise in the Gâthas, spiritual bliss is an imperceptible transition and complement of earthly happiness and prosperity.

than of virtue in this life; temporal evils or felicities being regarded by heaven as things merely in themselves trifling, and unworthy its care in the distribution."*

What mattered it to the prophet of Nazareth, whether in wilderness he underwent a fierce struggle with the powers of temptation, or sat on the green slope preaching to the people and sending them home with the peace of God upon their souls? Whether his walk was over a path of flowers or beneath the weight of the heavy cross, whether he was accosted with the cries of "Hosanna" or the murderous shout, made no difference to him. The difference was all of pain—"none was there of conscience, of trust, of power, of love." The cry of doubt at physical suffering was a stranger to the prophet's heart; and the harmony of his life was broken by no element of discontent. And if the prophet's life is the ideal of human perfection, the problem of sufferings is a product of human imperfections which vanishes with the attainment of knowledge and goodness.

There is no need therefore for the hypothesis of Reincarnation and the law of *Karma*; life loses none of its meaning in their absence; the apparent anomalies in the moral world themselves turn

* See "The Vicar of Wakefield," Ch. XXVIII.

into illustrations of the operation of a deeper spiritual law ; and men are none the poorer for the lack of a belief in the transmigration of souls.

Without Reincarnation, man is still a "dignified, immortal being, involving towards a glorious end ;" without that belief, he is by no means degraded into "a tossing straw on the stream of chance circumstances, irresponsible for his character, for his actions, for his destiny." Without it he has still a reasonable ground of assurance for the future, since he rests his faith in an all-merciful Being, in whom he lives and moves and has his own being. Without it he has still strength and dignity conferred by reliance on a law-abiding Creator ; and far from being left tossing helplessly on an unnavigable ocean of life, he glides smoothly on towards an inviting shore of bliss and glory.

The contention, therefore, so often urged by our theosophist friends that the doctrine of Re-incarnation, with the accompanying law of *Karma*, is the only hypothesis capable of affording a rational explanation of moral anomalies, and a complete satisfaction to the cravings of the heart is far from being a valid contention. As we have seen, there are other explanations which would afford as rational a solution of undeserved sufferings and undeserved happiness, which bring on

"that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened."

The whole spirit of the Christian teaching with regard to suffering is perverted by the theosophic view of Reincarnation. Did the Vicar of Wakefield suffer on account of the sins that he had committed in some preceding life? Did the Prophet of Nazareth, above all, suffer because he was a sinner in his earlier births? Were Zoroaster's sufferings due to his sins in his past lives? The men whom we have been accustomed to look upon as the brightest types of purity are turned into sinners, and the prophets inspired by God are at the same time lower in the scale of moral purity and goodness than many of their thousands and millions of followers who do not suffer like them! If sufferings are to be made the measure of sins, then Christ and Zoroaster are the worst of sinners, because their sufferings exceeded those of the rest of humanity! The holy truth, so beautifully expressed "that we through tribulation shall enter the kingdom of heaven," is perverted into a meaningless dogma, when the same sufferings are changed into the inevitable consequence of past transgressions and that alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

Extrinsic difficulties.

But we will now go further and affirm that the hypothesis of Reincarnation gives rise to as many new difficulties as it solves all old difficulties. Far from being the only rational hypothesis, it is a hypothesis that is not completely rational and satisfactory, and is attended with perplexities.

In the first place the doctrines of Reincarnation and *Karma* taken together do not constitute a sufficient explanation of the problem of sin. If the return of the soul to the earth is necessitated on account of sins committed during earlier lives and if its reincarnation is to be considered in the light of expiation for past misdeeds, it is essential that the waylaid soul should remember those deeds and those earlier lives, if it is to attain to a higher level of psychical development. Punishment to be effective must appeal to the consciousness; and the man who is ignorant of the misdeeds for which he is punished receives no moral impetus towards the performance of the good, and the realisation of righteousness.

Transmigration, therefore, is useless as a "reformatory discipline". It has no meaning for man. The sufferings he encounters in this world are only misfortunes, if he does not know of the sins for which he suffers. They are as much mysteries to him as they would have been without the belief in transmigration. The doctrine of transmigration, therefore, leaves the problem of sufferings and moral guilt exactly where it found it. We suffer in our present lives, say without any misdeeds and undeservedly—a proposition far from being true; the theosophist tells us it is because of the sins of our past lives. But anything more than this we are not in a position to know. Let the theosophist console himself with such an explanation if he will—to us it can afford no consolation.

But in the next place, what is the idea of the Creator that is implied in such a theory? It is that of a Creator who is only a *human judge* meting out distributive justice, so much of punishment for so much of crime, and so much of reward for the exercise of so much of virtue. The penal code of God in no way differs from the penal code of a human judge; and the Creator is supposed to have no idea of a higher justice, that would aim at converting all men to the path of righteousness by an inexhaustible flow of mercy and benevolence.

The theosophists have frequently railed against the tendencies towards anthropomorphism so natural to man; but nowhere has that tendency been carried so far forward as by the theosophists themselves in their concept of a Creator. He is incapable of pity, and metes out his inexorable sentences of penalty, and his unalterable awards of virtue, unaffected by other considerations. A God who has mathematical rules for his distribution of justice, and cannot rise above those rules, is not the God whom men so eagerly seek after. It is only a reedition of a human judge.

There is another difficulty that attends the theory of Reincarnation. If sufferings and pain be regarded in the light of a punishment, which is continued from life to life, these sufferings have no moral or spiritual value. Sin is an evil belonging to the realm of spirit, and can be wiped off only by an atonement of its own kind. Physical torture continued throughout ages will not have anything in it commensurate with, nor can be regarded as a compensation for, a single sinful act. The sin that is committed cannot be wiped away by animal pain, and the done could not be undone by a sentence of imprisonment and hard labour. The restoration of the sinner to his Creator can never be brought about on the penal theory which Reincarnation presupposes.

Christianity has rendered us familiar with a different theory of sin and its atonement. The theory of vicarious punishment and vicarious sufferings, though it may be attended with as great difficulties of its own, serves to point to a deeper truth, in as much as it hints that the sufferings of sin can be realised thoroughly only by the *spiritual* tortures of the sinless man. Reincarnation would lay the stress on *physical* sufferings, since it is the bodily life which declares the sufferings of the soul; the theory of vicarious sufferings would emphasise the *spiritual* and *mental* anguishes of the erring soul, sufferings more adequate for atonement than those purely physical.*

* The statement that Reincarnation lays stress on *physical* sufferings needs no effort to prove. We are told that the return to the human body is in atonement for sins. No atonement would be possible,—at any rate no adequate atonement,—if the soul did not reincarnate. The Christian and also the early Zoroastrian concept of mental sufferings and tortures, which does not necessarily require physical tortures and temporal want and misery, renders superfluous a return of the soul to the earth. Theosophy, on the other hand, requires such return, and renders it absolutely imperative, if the soul is to be purified of its sins and is to return unto the joy of the Lord. Earthly life is a penalty which is inflicted on the soul, and the penalty cannot cease so long as sin winds it in its embrace. The supposed joys of the flesh are not real blessings, the pangs and tortures of the bodily life alone are valuable as purificatory instruments.

The theory of vicarious punishment and sufferings, moreover, rests on a basis which has been found often verified in our ordinary life. We live under a moral order, of which the suffering of the innocent for the guilty is one of the most undoubted features. "The innocent child is born to a heritage of disease and suffering on account of the vices of the parent or ancestor; the selfish spendthrift entails penury and hardship on those who are dependent on him; the benefactor sacrifices ease, wealth, health, life itself, for the sake of the miserable, the down-trodden, the ignorant and the degraded. The pioneers of civilisation sow in tears what subsequent generations reap in joy, and often it is the lot of the noblest of men, whose ideas are in advance of their time, to pass their lives in unfriended persecution, and to leave to future ages the precious legacy of their thought and labour."*

When to these circumstances is added the fact that by faith we can become one with the sufferer and identify ourselves with him, his sufferings become our sufferings, his perfect life the very life we lead, we can understand how it is that what appears at first sight a strange paradox may be the expression of a profound truth. Thus

* Caird's "*Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*", Vol. II, p. 225.

the theory of vicarious sufferings may avoid the difficulties that attend theories which, like that of Reincarnation, aim at improving man and restoring him to his original perfection by inflicting physical sufferings for his sins. Whether this theory be adequate or inadequate as a complete explanation of atonement for sin, is a different question; however it may be, the doctrine of Reincarnation fails to offer even the haziest account of the possibility of moral restoration and atonement for sin.

In short, from the religious standpoint, properly so called, ethical distinctions are subordinated to more comprehensive categories; and the theory of Reincarnation, in so far as it is alleged to be founded on anomalies which are anomalies only for the ethical consciousness, is superfluous from the religious point of view. For the latter these anomalies do not exist. The difficulties which the theory is intended to solve are no longer difficulties when viewed from a higher ground; and the *raison d'être* of the theory is removed when these difficulties disappear.

"For religion", it is said, "the classification of acts and men as "good" and "bad" must appear unsatisfactory and superficial. For, on the one hand, ultimately all acts and all characters are good as

fulfilling, each in its own place, the perfect world system; and on the other every act and every character is bad as failing to release the perfect world system in more than an infinitesimal fragment of its concrete fulness. Religion thus knows nothing of merit and demerit."*

From this standpoint, the theory of Reincarnation is a superfluous hypothesis, in so far as the alleged problems, which it is intended to solve, vanish as the necessary factors of a preestablished harmony. Thus it would appear that the moral anomalies on which the theosophic doctrine of Reincarnation is chiefly founded, do not constitute good grounds in themselves, since they dissolve in the light of a deeper reading of the universe, without the help of any such hypothesis.

The adherents of Theosophy, however, bring forward sometimes other grounds for establishing Reincarnation as a necessity for thought. Their deduction of this theory from their philosophic presuppositions we have already touched on. It is sometimes said that this doctrine alone can explain the phenomenon of "infant prodigies," and the strange contrast these prodigies offer to the men of average intellect and idiots. But what has Reincarnation to do with these

* Taylor's "*Problem of Conduct*", p. 474.

phenomena? The pre-existence of the soul is the only hypothesis which is required, if any is required at all, for the explanation of these phenomena; and preexistence does not necessarily involve reincarnation.* And the same remark may be made with reference to all the other anomalies supposed to require an explanation; for instance, the dissimilarity found to exist between people of about equal intellectual power in assimilating particular kinds of knowledge.

To say, therefore, that the soul must return to the earth in human forms after regular intervals of hundreds of years, and the process to be repeated a symmetrical number of times, at symmetrical intervals, is to subordinate reason to fancy, and to enter on a realm of speculation where reason has not the power of controlling or verifying. It might appear to the uneducated, unphilosophic mind a rough and ready explanation of moral difficulties, which would otherwise

* Even pre-existence is not necessary or adequate for explaining "infant prodigies"; for on such an explanation all men should be "infant prodigies." If the knowledge acquired in previous lives was the cause of these "prodigies", these "prodigies" ought to be counted by hundreds, and would be no more "prodigies." In short, pre-existence would take the question back into earlier lives, it would not solve it.

remain unsolved for it; and hence the rapidity and eagerness with which it has sometimes been accepted.

From the philosophic standpoint, Reincarnation may give a plausible explanation of some facts of moral life, but it, at the same time, raises as many difficulties as it solves. The problem of evil and sin is the stumbling block for all philosophers and philosophic systems; for that problem as such, the theory of reincarnation does nothing. It leaves it absolutely untouched. So far its value as an explanatory hypothesis is diminished; and the subsidiary value it may have is still further diminished, because it does not succeed in its object, without raising new difficulties of its own.

If, as the advocates of that theory contend, the doctrine of Reincarnation is the only satisfactory hypothesis for explaining moral problems, it is surprising to find that it should not have been accepted for a period of two thousand years by the most civilised nations of the world, by Europe and European America. The Greeks of old in their traditional religion had not only no belief in Reincarnation, but also generally no belief in a future spiritual abode of bliss. The Pythagorean belief in the transmigration of souls was foreign

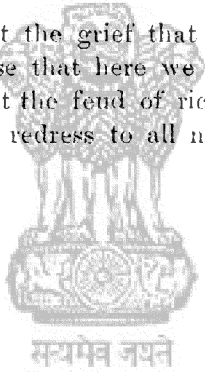
to the Greek soil, being as it was a reflection of Egyptian and Eastern influence. And a not dissimilar observation may be made with reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries, an exotic which did not take deep root on Greek soil until after the decline of national freedom and glory. Greek civilisation as such was a stranger to the belief. European civilisation, as it finds expression in Christianity, has done without it, and has been in no way the poorer for its absence. And if we look for a moment at the other fruitful source of Western Civilisation,—Roman Civilisation—we find that the practical, prosaic Roman never looked beyond the present life even in his solemn moods.

And yet one might have thought the unconditional necessity, if such existed, for mankind in that belief would have been felt the earliest amongst nations foremost in intellectual culture! May we not then say that Reincarnation is but one amongst other parallel hypotheses, framed for the practical and speculative necessities of mankind, none of which has been found completely satisfactory by itself?

Perhaps a deeper religious view than has hitherto been attained may enable us to interpret Reincarnation in a different light, and may enable us to base it on a sounder bottom. But till that

time comes we must be content with recognising its inevitable shortcomings, and while accepting its partial truth, with supplementing that truth by the aid of other and better hypotheses. We must be content, till then, with appealing to other theories than Reincarnation alone for the satisfaction of our innermost cravings: and with Tennyson only sing the wishes and hopes that are still to be fulfilled:

"Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind."



CHAPTER XVII.

THEOSOPHY AS A PRACTICAL PANACEA FOR THE NEEDS OF INDIA.

There remains now only one more subject for consideration—the claims made by theosophic teachers and enthusiasts that an adherence to theosophic principles will alone secure salvation for the Indian people, and that Theosophy alone will regenerate them from the gradual decay in social, political and religious life which is overtaking them.

To form a correct estimate about this claim it will be necessary for us to take a brief survey of the social and religious outlook for the Indian nations at the present day, and to determine what happen to be their real needs for the day. We shall be then in a position to determine how far Theosophy in its theoretical as well as practical aspects supplies these needs of India, and succeeds in its promise of working out the destiny of the Indian nations towards the appointed goal.

We are not quite unaware of the difficulties which lie before us when we propose to review in brief such a vast and comprehensive question as that of the social and religious as well as political currents of Indian life, and the directions in which they point for the future. We know that a rough and ready answer such as we might suggest will be far from being an adequate expression of the situation of affairs. We will no less unwillingly admit that such inadequate answer, as we might offer, will be still further diminished in value owing to the circumstance that the Indian nation is not one homogeneous body, but a vast aggregation of heterogeneous races differing from each other in race, language and religion. To make any adequate and fruitful generalisation about the needs of these innumerable races, that are brought together under a common rule, is a task next to impossible. But at the same time it may be observed that the circumstance of being brought under a common rule by itself, as well as the common civilisation under the influence of which they have consequently fallen, make it possible to trace, in the social and religious life of the nations, tendencies that are not peculiar to any, but shared by all.

A

RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF INDIA.

To begin with the religious question, the statement has very frequently been made that the religious history of India is entirely devoid of progress, and that it has been a history of decay since the times of the Vedas rather than a history of progressive evolution. A sober study of the religious history of India would enable us to modify this statement to a large extent.

The pragmatic hymns of the Vedas, with their highly suggestive hints, were, with the lapse of time, developed into a systematised philosophy in the Upanishads. How far the system of philosophy developed in the Upanishads was the direct evolution of the Vedic declarations, how far they embodied and harmonised the beliefs derived from the non-Aryan aborigines of India, is a question with which we are not concerned. It would, however, at the same time, be interesting to note that the doctrine of the transmigration of souls so prominent in the Upanishads does not find the faintest shadow or reflection in the Vedic hymns.

The Upanishads, however, do not form a single system of philosophy. Whilst some among them

are distinctly pantheistic in their teaching, others have a monotheistic current of thought, and still others lend themselves to a polytheistic interpretation. Thus we find later on the Brahmans interpreting them in a pantheistic fashion, Ram Mohan Roy interpreting them in a monotheistic light, while the large majority who have not been able to penetrate into their inmost depths read polytheism into their teachings; and it is not impossible that many a passage might be found in the commentaries proclaiming an idealism, that is neither theism nor pantheism nor polytheism.

Whatever be the nature of the philosophy propounded in the Upanishads, one thing was common to all of them, namely that they could appeal only to the learned few. Professing to be books on religious questions they addressed themselves only to highly trained intellects, instead of propounding any teaching which might appeal to the masses of men with average understanding. At any rate, their original vitality was lost when the teachers of the Vedic commentaries degraded religion into ritualism on the one hand and an abstract juggling with words on the other. The result was that, with the lapse of time, the necessity made itself felt more and more for the rise of a religion which would give a new moral impetus

to the Indian masses. The minds of men were prepared for a revolution which discarded the abstract intellectualism of the Upanishads, and gave rise to a practical religion with a direct appeal to the hearts of men. Buddhism supplied this much felt need and brought about this revolution. Taking its stand partially on the ground prepared by the Upanishads, it developed an ethical religion of the highest type, which rejected all speculation as vain, and denied the necessity for revelation.

But, though Buddhism in its first stage was a religion for the masses, it soon degenerated into a type of philosophic Buddhism, and as such its authority was less valued than that of Brahmanism. This degeneration of Buddhism led again to the revival of Brahmanism. Higher Brahmanism which had in the meanwhile developed into the six systems of Indian philosophy now mixed with higher Buddhism, and the result was the philosophy of Sankara with his doctrine of Maya. But the vast majority of the illiterate population could never find a sure resting place in philosophy, and the necessity was once again felt for the establishment of a more popular form of religion which the illiterate could appreciate, and whose teachings they can imbibe with ease.

This time it was supplied by the Puraṇas. The Puraṇas "were filled with attractive nursery stories for a nation of adult children. They kindled in their hearts a love for the traditions of the good old days, when a *Satya Yuga* or Golden Age existed in the land. They filled their imaginations with the holy romances of the true or supposed good, and supplied the nation with new ideals of life. The teachers of the Puraṇas moved in the land, carrying their works into every nook and corner of society, and recited, explained, and enlarged their texts according to the aptitudes of their audiences in royal courts, in temples and in streets."* But the Puraṇas, though they had a great deal of historical significance for their times, and so far fulfilled their purpose, degenerated with the lapse of time into systems of polytheistic beliefs, suited to the illiterate imaginations of the masses. They gave rise to scores of conflicting sects, and emphasised the social divisions which had already torn up the land in the shape of castes.

Such is the history of the evolution of religious ideas in India till the time of the establishment of British supremacy in the country. Since that time the spread of education and the gradual

* G. M. Tripathi "*A lecture on Higher Brahmanism*," p. 13.

infusion of Western ideas into the country, through the centres of schools and colleges in the various towns, have given a new direction to religious thought; and, as we have already observed, wherever education in its higher branches has prevailed, there has set in a tendency towards disintegration of the old beliefs and the old modes of thought.

The old polytheistic sectarianism has been the first to yield to the pressure of this influence; and as early as the thirties of the last century the influence of Western thought was distinctly displayed in the rise of the Brahmô Samâj of Raja Ram Mohanroy. It was an attempt at establishing a purely Unitarian theism without the intermediation of an Incarnate personality. It was followed by the rise of other like institutions; and all of them have gravitated towards a kind of Christian Unitarianism. They have adopted Western methods besides Western ideas. They have copied the zeal of the Christian Missionaries by establishing Samâjes, homes, and lecture halls as centres for the dissemination of their views throughout the land. Unlike the ascetics of the East, they have adopted an attitude of active controversy through papers and pamphlets.

But their progress has not been encouraging; their votaries can not be counted by more than thousands in a land whose population is to be reckoned by hundreds of millions; their harmony and unity of action have been undermined by the rise of sectarian parties amongst themselves; and their influence has not yet penetrated beyond the towns into the villages, which constitute the far larger element in Indian social organisation. They have not succeeded yet in attracting the attention of any but the educated classes in the towns, and amongst them, too, there is generally wanting the spirit of active enthusiasm and zeal which is so particularly prominent amongst the founders of a new religion.

Whilst the old beliefs, therefore, in the towns are dissolving with the rise of a new order of ideas, there have not yet been any constructive efforts of a successful nature to take their place. And whilst this dissolution of the *Ancien Régime* of religion has been slowly advancing in the towns and centres of education, the vast majority of the Indian population, scattered in village organisations, illiterate, and sunk in the polytheistic beliefs engrafted on their minds through the course of centuries, has remained unaffected and indifferent. The electric shock which has passed so rapidly

through the towns will take centuries before it penetrates into the thick jungles of the village populations, unless a social revolution or the rise of a new prophet helps on the work of demolition and the introduction of a new order of things.

Such is the history of the religious development of India in the past, and such the tendencies of religious thoughts in the country at the present moment. A purely theistic movement which denies the necessity for a prophet incarnate, and which aims at the establishment of direct communion with the Universal Creator, can never succeed in appealing to the hearts of the majority of men, since they require something more than this abstract idea of a benevolent Creator for the satisfaction of their religious cravings. It can never be accepted by a people accustomed since ages to have gods of their own with whom they might enter into the closest personal relations.

A system of philosophic pantheism, such as the Upanishads proclaimed ages ago, equally failed to catch firm and lasting hold of the Indian mind, since it could appeal only to the learned few capable of understanding philosophic abstractions of the most abstruse kind. It could never appeal to the average Indian fond of his household god, who can now enter into his

body and again inspire him with his thoughts and foresight. Philosophic pantheism might offer to the Brahmins the raptures and ecstasies of the god-intoxicated mind, which conceives itself as one with Brahma ; it could never find acceptance with the people to whom nature had always been kind, and who looked upon the elements of nature as so many gods whose favour was essential for human welfare.

The fruitful nature of the Indian soil had prevented a struggle with the powers of nature for the support of life ; and the Indian had always looked on nature as a power to be dreaded instead of being mastered and brought into subordination to his aims. This tendency towards polytheism could never be affected by a speculative system like that of the Upanishads, which could not reach the intellectual capacity of the masses. Buddhism succeeded ; but it retained its influence only for a time. So long as it was faithful to its practical character, it found a sympathetic reception amongst the people whom the very fertility of nature had satiated with the delights of physical life, and whose minds were consequently prepared for a pessimistic tone so favourable to the spread of Buddhism. But as soon as its practical character was lost in the

elaboration of philosophic doctrines, it ceased to be a moving principle of life, and an agent of spiritual fermentation.

Is there then any way out of this religious stagnation? Christianity has been in the field for more than a century, and in its Roman form, indeed, for more than three centuries; but Christianity, if it is to continue its present modes of dissemination, can never hope to offer any adequate solution of the difficulty. During years of general distress and famine the Christian missions effected a vast amount of good work, saving the lives of thousands and elevating them into a nobler sphere of life; but they have not had that purely missionary success which would ordinarily attend on the preaching of a religion acceptable to the masses. The conversions achieved are not proportionate to the energy and money employed in the work, and Christianity, as hitherto presented, has been alien to the spirit of the Indian intellect.

The Christian missionary, with his different habits, ways of life and civilisation, can never come into that intimacy of contact with the Indian which is necessary for successful proselytism. The effects of a hundred generations and the traditions of centuries can never be undone all of a sudden

with the preaching of a new religion; and the differences of thought that have characterised the East from the West can never be so suddenly dissolved as to ensure the immediate success of the Christian religion in India. It is possible that Christianity may slowly spread amongst the educated classes with the lapse of time, and Christian ideas permeate Indian soil, though there may be no external evidence to bear witness to this spread; but it is not possible for a long time to come that the direct preaching of Christianity in its aggressive attitude will ever reap a good harvest in the shape of conversions on a large scale among a people so essentially conservative. It is certain that Christian ideas will form a factor and an important factor in the future organisation of Indian social and religious life; but it is more than doubtful that the Christian religion in its concrete form, and with its present ecclesiastical accretions, will ever be professed by an important section of the Indian people.

There is, indeed, a sense in which Christianity can solve the religious problem of India, but it is at the cost of sacrifices which the Christian missions would not be willing to make. Christianity has often been said to be the highest expression —the high water-mark—of Western civilisation:

not the Christianity of the Catholics or that of the Protestants, not the Christianity of Puritans or that of the Anabaptists, but the Christianity of Christ, the Christianity in which are summed up the loftiest imspirations of thought and the best ideals of the human race. It is in this sense that Christianity can become the medium of salvation for the Indian races, as much as for all other races.

But will the Christian missions forget their mutual differences? Will they sacrifice the outward form for the substance? Are they prepared, in other words, to give up something in order to gain a great deal? Are they prepared to lead Indian lives, to work through Indian moulds of thought, to forget that they are Catholics or Protestants in order the more effectually to be the soldiers of Christ?

That the work of the Christian missions is hopeful and in the right direction is to some extent evidenced by the circumstance that they have commenced with the lowest strata of the Indian people, men who were outcastes and beyond the pale of human society before their conversion—and who have been raised to the full dignity of human life after their conversion. But so long as the missions are not prepared to make

the sacrifice of their ecclesiastical accretions, and to convert European Christianity into a new Christianity of the East, with Eastern habitats and Eastern functions, there is no probability that their work can leave a solid landmark in Indian religious life.

B

Place of Theosophy in this History.

The great question then for the religious life of India is, what new development will religion assume to meet the new conditions of life? The educated classes have discarded the susperstitions and polytheism of their own religion, and are in a condition of unstable equilibrium. The vast majority of the Indian population is not yet directly affected by the new order of things, but in a hundred indirect ways their religious beliefs have been affected, and will be affected in the near future—through Government legislation, through Sanitary reforms, through improvements in agriculture, through the introduction of a new social organisation in which industries count for something. With these changed conditions of life there must come a change in the religious sphere, if the history of the past is to make itself heard not in vain.

If the rise of an industrial era in the land implies the growth of industrial and economic freedom, and the centralisation in government as well as the importance of town life emphasise the disadvantages of social inequality and disabilities, these tendencies must inevitably bring with them a dissolution of all those religious institutions and ideas, which sanctified the odious distinctions of castes, and treated a part of their fellow creatures as outside the pale of society. Society is so intricate in its organization that a change which affects one member affects the rest, and thrills through the whole organism.

Can Theosophy solve the difficulty? Can the teaching of Theosophy supply a satisfactory religious system to the minds of the wavering educated Indians? Can this teaching offer a rallying ground for those whose faith in the polytheistic superstitions of their ancestors has been forcibly shaken by the advent of Western thoughts, just as a thousand years ago Higher Brahamanism performed a similar task for the materialists and sceptics, who arose as the logical offshoots of speculative Buddhism? Will it above all offer a new form of religious satisfaction to the vast majority of the Indian population, in conformity with the change of life and ideas

brought about by the advent of British Rule? Will it preach a new religion based on the old, capable of enabling the masses to shake off their polytheism in favour of better and healthier beliefs? Will it, like Buddhism, effect a religious revolution in India, but, unlike Buddhism, give that revolution a Western bent so as to enable it to come into harmony with the new conditions of life? Will it, in short, solve the great problem of so revolutionising the Indian religious life as to enable the population to turn a new page in their history, and to absorb without danger to itself those ideas of the West, which are so essential for the growth of political, social and religious life?

We are afraid such claims are not likely to be ever fulfilled by Theosophy. Even with regard to the educated classes what Theosophy offers is a revival of the pantheism of the Upanishads.* Their absolute Unity is the Brahma of the Upanishads, and the individual soul attains its bliss by union with the Logos, just as in Brahamanism.

* The pantheism which we attribute to the Upanishads is said to be distinctly traceable in some if not in all. And even if it were true that Brahamanic Pantheism is corrected by idealistic strata of thought, as is maintained, for instance, by Mr. V. J. Kirtikar in recent numbers of the *East and West*, what Theosophy at any rate preaches is the same Pantheism without the relieving idealism.

The transmigration of the souls, a doctrine so preeminent amongst the theosophists has its analogue in the Upanishads. As in the Upanishads, so in Theosophy, not exertion but inertia is the path to liberation. "There is no truth and no peace in the plurality of experience; truth and peace are to be found only in the one beneath it and beyond it." This one existence is the self, the highest self which is Brahma. Both for Theosophy and Brahamanism the epithets of the sole reality are negative, and each individual becomes that sole Reality when he loses all sense of finitude, and becomes merged first in the Logos, and, in the higher stages, in the absolute in a way inconceivable to our human minds.

The history of the religious life of India has been a history of the development of Brahamanism till it came into conflict with Buddhism. After the degeneration of Buddhistic teaching into systems of materialism and scepticism, pantheism once again revived in its old shape of Brahamanism; and it is this pantheistic teaching that is proposed to be strengthened by the teachings of Theosophy.

But will Pantheistic teaching in this old form survive? Has it any prospects of making a

long stand when European thought and European civilisation will have introduced a new order of ideas in the educated Indian classes? Western Philosophy throughout its whole career with a few exceptions has been a strong protest against the pantheistic teaching, which would merge the interests of the individual and abolish his identity in the Divine; whether in European literature or philosophy, in politics or in theories of ethics, in the past economic history or in the present industrial organisation, the individual has always reckoned for more than what pantheism would allow him to be. Christianity has lent its strong support to the process of thought which has placed the individual in the fore front, and the social and political institutions of Europe have all been based on the same groundwork. In short, no more fruitful or deeply laid distinction can be drawn between the East and West than that which is involved in the amount of emphasis laid on the significance of the individual in the economy of life.

If, therefore, the educated classes in India with the lapse of time gradually imbibe Western ideas and Western associations, it is not likely that they will ever remain satisfied with the crude pantheistic teaching which it is proposed to revive in Theo-

sophy. As soon as they come to perceive the real character of Theosophy, which hides its pantheism under a mass of names, and professes to modify it by a variety of doctrines, they will cast it aside as alien to the new order of things.

But if Theosophy is not likely to be accepted by the educated classes as a new religious rallying point, and is not likely to give satisfaction to the cravings of their hearts, is it any more likely to offer satisfaction to the vast masses of uneducated Indians? Is Theosophy capable of awakening the Indian mind from its usual inaction into renewed activity? Will it suit the new conditions of life among the people brought about by British rule? Will it enable them to shake off their old polytheistic superstitions, and endow them with the vitality of a new religion thoroughly in harmony with their new modes of thought? Can Theosophy, in short, supply the needs of the hour, and enable the Indian masses to fight out their fight against the old superstitions?

The answer is again in the negative, and with stronger reasons. Here we have the past history of India to guide us, and the verdict of that history is clear and decisive. Philosophic pantheism has been more than once tried in India, and more than once it has proved itself inadequate

for its task. Abstract speculation has no attractions for the masses; and Brahamanism as it found expression in the Upanishads was confined as a religious theory only to the learned classes and speculative minds. As one of the leading organs of Hindu thought observed "the Vedantic God is a cold, dreary, philosophic conception, which the Hindu masses have never cared for, which the vast majority of mankind can never be brought to reverence, and which is quite incapable of influencing them in the formation of character."*

The strength and vitality of a religion can be judged only from its ability to attract the masses and to give their minds and hearts spiritual rest and satisfaction. It can be judged from its ability to enable men to fight against the degrading superstitions of a dead religious formalism, which might be a legacy of the past. And such vitality has nowhere come so prominently to the fore front as in the history of Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. Brahamanism has been a religion which appealing to the learned few has enabled them to lead a life of seclusive meditation, merging in union with the Divine. It has

* Quoted from the "Hindu" of Madras in Slater's "Higher Hinduism," p. 123.

never been a vital religion in the proper sense of the word enabling the teeming millions of Indian to cope with energy against the sloth and letharg due to nature's bounty to man in the country.

Has Theosophy then any more chances of reviving the Indian life with a new activity and a new enthusiasm? As we have been endeavouring to point out all through, Theosophy is only a form of philosophic pantheism, though it may not be identical with Brahamanism. It can appeal only to the speculative intellects of the few, and will never be any thing but a closed book to the vast majority of the uneducated Indians. For them Brahma is only Vishnu or Siva or one of the thousand and one deities who are all supposed to be incarnations of the one deity. They can never apprehend the philosophic concept of the absolute Unity which alone is the Sole Reality. Such a philosophical religion can never be accepted by the masses without the intervention of more tangible mediating principles, capable of being apprehended without difficulty.

The imposing personality of a Jesus of Nazareth and a Buddha does not frequently repeat itself in the course of history; and in the absence of such personality the strictly moral and noble lives of the votaries of a religion can alone ensure its

success. But this nobility of life must for that purpose express itself not in a life of pious self-meditation but in the life of a Francis of Assissi and an Ignatius Loyola. Theosophy would favour the former rather than the latter ideal, the Eastern rather than the Western; and so far Theosophy has no chances of attaining to the noble task of working out India's salvation through the preaching of a new religion suited to the needs of the time.

It might gain a cheap popularity by appealing to the names of the Indian deities. It might win a temporary success through palming off its doctrines as parts of the Hindu religion. It might command applause by appealing to the sentiments of the Hindus, and professing to recover the glories of the splendid historical past. It can gather a band of educated Indians fond of novelty, and eager to rush to the first system that gives them relief from their state of scepticism and religious uncertainty. It might command the attention of those classes which, dissatisfied with materialism as a coherent system of philosophy, wish to have a haven of unquestioning rest. By its warfare against materialism it can attach to itself others who hope to find a healthy system of beliefs, giving scope to individual self-realisation.

But it cannot, like early Christianity, create a body of enthusiasts to face martyrdom. It can never, like the solid protests of Luther and Calvin, enable the majority of the nation to shake off the trammels of authority and superstition. It can never raise the Indian masses to a higher tone of thought and life. It can never, with its ascetic tone of morality and with its pantheistic tendency of thought, make them work out their own social regeneration by a spontaneous and self-initiated movement.

And when some centuries later all shall have become a matter of past history, and some future historian shall happen to survey the religious movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he will say that amongst the temporary movements which agitated the surface of Indian religious life there was one which acquired a rapid popularity,—the theosophic movement. Aiming at the revival of a pantheistic philosophy, it won the hearts of the Hindus by associating their philosophy with the Brahamanism of the Upanishads, and by their emphasizing the doctrine of transmigration. But the movement undertaken in the interests of sectarianism had not any firm hold on the minds even of its immediate followers, and did not at all appeal to the uneducated masses

of the Indian nations. Internal conflicts and differences soon broke up the outward unity of the movement, and if it subsisted thereafter it subsisted only as one among the thousands of other religious sects which have always characterised Indian religious history. Such will be his verdict, a verdict that has greater likelihood of seeing itself verified than that of Meredith Townshend with reference to the fate of the British Rule in India.

C

Bearing of Theosophy on the Social and Political Life of India.

If from the consideration of the bearing of Theosophy on the religious life of the Indians, we turn to its bearing on their social and political life, the outlook for Theosophy is in no way more encouraging.

Progress in the political life of India will always depend upon progress in social life. As long as the majority of the Indian nations are blindly obedient to the trammels of caste rules and caste despotism, so long they will never be in a position to enjoy political rights and privileges. The question then is ; can Theosophy enable the Indian masses to advance in social life, and can it help on social progress ?

The one direction in which social progress has hitherto been most prominent has been the gradual overthrow of caste barriers and the freedom of the individual from industrial, professional and social restraints. The caste system with all its regulations and restraints almost crushed all life and activity out of its individual members ; even the most trivial occupation of the individual, every minute action of his life was watched over by the caste ; and the disastrous effects, which were said to follow from the Catholic rule of the middle ages in Europe, were insignificant as compared to those brought about by a subtler despotism on the Indian continent. It was this caste despotism that was the cause of the degeneration of political life in India. It is to this system that must be attributed the killing out of all intellectual life from the Indian people during the last thousand years. Finally it alone may be said to be responsible for the state of social, moral and religious stagnation that overtook the land centuries ago. There was one brief exception in the period of Akbar's rule when there were signs of returning life. But the result of his happy rule died with him.

The signs of returning life are once more distinctly visible under the healthy operation of

British Rule, when the spirit of British Individualism and European civilisation is slowly breaking down the artificial barriers of human ingenuity, and once more endowing the individual with a sense of his importance. The overthrow of feudalism with all its strange barriers and restrictions on the life of the individual by the advance of knowledge, the outbreak of the Reformation, and the spread of civilisation is the only event in the history of Europe that offers any analogy to this vast movement in India at the present day. The assertion of the rights of the individual in all directions, industrial, commercial, domestic and social, is the one great movement that has been set agoing by the spread of Western ideas through the land.

Can Theosophy help on this movement? We are afraid it cannot. Instead of fulfilling its own ideal of a vast human brotherhood embracing men of different views and different religions under a common banner, Theosophy has created a sectarian movement. Instead of overthrowing the influence of castes, so essential for social progress in India, it has strengthened that influence; it has added one more caste to the thousands of others that ravage the land; it has produced one more religious sect which, with all the acrimony of reli-

gious fanaticism, wages a warfare with other sects. And as its doctrines begin to be better understood by Indians, they will emphasise this sectarianism instead of removing it; since they have a system of beliefs peculiar to themselves and different from that of others.

With their different stages of moral and intellectual development even amongst themselves, they create divisions which separate those who stand at the highest level of conscious development from those who stand below them, and these latter from those who stand still lower. And it is this sectarian movement that is held forward by the theosophists to be the only possible medium for the social regeneration of Indian life! They create parties and divisions wherever their movement attains strength; they have created parties among the Parsis; they have created new divisions among the Hindus. And it is *their* movement which is held forward as enabling the Indians to advance by uniting their strength in the fighting of a common cause!

And after all where is the brotherhood of which there is so much talk? In India we have the story of the uncle and the two brothers so often repeated. There were two brothers who wanted to drink wine without letting their uncle know

about it, being an old-fashioned man. And so one night they began their work telling each other "Silence! uncle might wake up." The shouts increased with the drink till they ended by awakening the uncle in the neighbouring room. And so we shout about universal brotherhood, till we end by making that belief a sectarian belief, and create a new sect. And such has not untruly been the position of the theosophic movement. The brotherhood consists only in a brotherhood of men having similar beliefs. The materialist or atheist alien to their sentiments and beliefs is an enemy whose theories must be overthrown, and who cannot enter the pale of theosophic bliss till he has renounced his views for better ones. He may become a member of the Theosophical Society, he will not become a Theosophist, he will not belong to the initiated brotherhood, till he renounces his own views for those of his great masters.

Where is then the help which Theosophy gives to the Indian in rising in the scale of civilised life? What new life or doctrine does it preach for him? What prop does it afford in his moral and religious improvement? To sum up what we have been urging, the doctrine of universal brotherhood proclaimed so loudly from all house tops is intended

to mean only brotherhood among men of similar views. For the rest, the theosophic theories about the Absolute and the Logos and the seven stages of psychical development are too philosophic for the average Indian mind and cannot appeal to him. To the educated, Theosophy offers no more than what India already possessed since the early times of Vedic Brahamanism; and, though as a revival of the past it might continue to attract temporary attention, it can never satisfy the changed conditions of Indian life and Indian thought for a long time.

So long as Theosophy confines itself to its claims as a theory formed by the human intellect for explaining the problems of the universe, it will continue to be heard with attention at the same time that its shortcomings are criticised. But if it goes further and claims the authority of a *revelation*, it lays itself open to ridicule instead of commanding reverence. With those *higher claims* we have had nothing to do. We have abstained from examining its claims to be a religion communicated by the *Mahâtmâs* to a chosen few; since we felt that an examination of those claims would lead to an examination of living and dead personalities, which we sincerly wished to avoid. Judged simply as a philosophic theory, held up by ordinary

thinking men, we find that it fails to give the ultimate satisfaction that is claimed for it, and that it fails in a greater degree to be a solvent of the Indian religious and social crisis. If India enters a new phase of intellectual, religious and social activity, it will enter it without the help of the theosophic ideas and the theosophic ideals.

D.

The Ideal of New India.

How then can the social and religious necessities of India be satisfied? This is a question with which we are not directly concerned; but a few remarks will not be entirely misplaced.

The changes brought about by British rule in the intellectual and religious condition of the upper classes, and in the social organisation of the Indian people, are tending towards the overthrow of the old religious and moral beliefs. This movement towards dissolution must inevitably be followed by a period of creation, if the nation is not to efface itself from the earth's surface. How this reconstruction will come, what shape it will assume, and what its nature will be, are questions which hardly admit of any answer yet. But the remedy ought to be proportionate to the disease, and the disease is so virulent that nothing less than the rise of a

new prophet or teacher, with the magnetic powers of attraction which generally characterise men of that type, and with a proclamation of a new Gospel bristling with the fascination of startling revelations, will be sufficient for curing it. And history is not without precedents of that type. Christianity arose at a time when the world was sinking hopelessly under the weight of dead formulæ and superannuated religion; even in the history of India itself Buddhism arose at the very critical moment, when the minds of men despaired of a final solution of difficulties, and reconciled themselves somehow to the hopelessness of reaching "the other shore." It is not, therefore, impossible that with the hour the man might come, capable of helping on a movement of regeneration.

But till that time comes are we to seat with folded hands? Is there no way out of the slough of despondency? Are the educated classes at any rate to look quietly on at the dissolution of their cherished beliefs without moving in the matter?

Western civilisation, which is the cause of this disintegration of thought and beliefs, may be rendered subservient to a higher purpose, and what is a cause of decay may be turned into a cause of renewed activity. This cannot be done by simply attempting to revive the old pantheistic phase of

Hindu teaching, as the theosophists endeavour to do. A simple revival of the past is no more capable of proving successful in religion than in politics or social organisation. The history of the world is that of a gradual evolution, whether that evolution be progressive or regressive; and institutions which are appropriate at one time cease to be appropriate at another. Old institutions need to be transformed in the light of new ideas if they are to serve their purpose; and they can renew their lease of existence only by changing with the change in circumstances. The physical law of the adaptability of organism to environment equally applies to human institutions and the growth of ideas; they must change with the change in environment if they are to retain their vitality.

India, therefore, with the change in circumstances that has been brought about by the advent of British rule and the spread of Western ideas, needs or will need, sooner or later, a change in her bodily and spiritual organisation; and the direction of such a change will be essentially the reverse of that which Theosophy proposes. The religious institutions that new India requires are not the institutions which she possessed in the past uninfluenced by Western thought, such as Theosophy proposes to restore to her; those have

been tried and have been found wanting. Theosophy must, if it is to succeed, presuppose the new order of things, and if, it is to revive the past, must transform that past in the light of the present, and fuse Eastern products with the Western. The religion that can claim a hold on new India must necessarily presuppose the Western ideas of individualism and freedom, and must be based on Western trends of thought. It must evolve a higher synthesis out of the union of Eastern and Western ideas. It must base itself on the past, if it is to work in the present; but it is not the past as past, but the past in the present, that it must seek to realise.

If Hinduism is, therefore, to work as it did of old with all its force and vitality, its leading ideas must be modified in the light of Western civilisation, till the interaction of Eastern and Western ideas evolves a higher unity. That will be the higher Hinduism or the Higher Brahamanism of future India. The Brahmô Samâjes of India have been an effort in this direction, but we have already noticed the causes which preclude them from answering to the needs of new India.

What shape this Higher Hinduism will probably take we are not called on to determine; nor do we feel ourselves competent for the task. It must,

however, like Buddhism of old, protest against the traditional methods employed in endeavouring to gain "the other shore"; reason alone, pure intellectualism by itself, can never buffet against the storms of doubts and sorrow and despair. It must therefore point out how Love is life's innermost strength; and its *Nirvana* must be a new *Nirvana*, a state of perfect rest, arising not from the ascetic extinction of all desires and emotions, but from the feeling of duty done, and righteousness realised. The blossoms of the future religion of India must thrive not in the stony soil and chilly atmosphere of the intellect alone, but in the healthier climate of the wider concept of Love — the Eros of Plato — which would leave room for all pursuits, all truths, all enthusiasms; a harmony of character in which action would not be subordinated to contemplation, in which the life of the thinker would not be depreciated in comparison with the life of the honest worker. "There should be schism in the body, but the members should have the same care one for another." The future religion of India, the Hinduism that will appeal to the country, will be a Hinduism in which the interpretations of a S'ankara will have to be subordinated to the interpretations of a Râmânuga; in

which, in other words, the Western ideal of the personality of God will have to be substituted for the Eastern ideal of impersonality.

To quote what we have said elsewhere: "Western modes of thinking are slowly engrafting themselves on Eastern soil, and the result that is to be desired is not so much an absolute return to the past with the aid of modern thought, as the reorganisation and transformation of the old in the light of the new. The end to be aimed at is not simply the re-edition of an old phase of thought, but the constitution of a new phase which, with the light of Western philosophy and ideas, can combine into one the Eastern and the Western intellect, and can read a new meaning into, and throw fresh light on, the early scriptures of the Aryan nations. The ideal to be looked to is not simply that of vindicating the religions of the East, with the help of Western knowledge and Western principles, but that of rendering the old religions vital, and giving to them a fresh lease of progressive life by the introduction of new elements from the West, in harmony with the old ideas and principles. There should be, in other words, not merely a mechanical agglutination of the new with the old, but an organic absorption and assimilation."

And there is particularly one aspect under which this union of the East and the West would bear the greatest fruits. The ideal of the East has been an ideal of quietism and mysticism; the ideal of the West, and particularly the Christian ideal, has been an ideal of action and individual self-assertion. For the East, the individual has always been summed up in the intellect; and the highest goal for him has been conceived to be knowledge. For the West, the individual has been summed up in the Will, and the highest goal for him has been conceived to be a life of action and endeavour—social endeavour for a common good, which provides a sanction for the humblest effort, and gives a meaning and attaches a value to the simplest act. In the East a "privileged caste has been set aside with the approbation of the mob, not for a disinterested guidance of ordinary affairs, but for an idle or contemptuous contemplation of their own perfection and the passing show of a universe which has no meaning. The Yogi or Sanyasi is respected by the people, not because he helps, but because he despises them."

And this is exactly the ideal which the Theosophical Society proposes to revive in the interests of India! The gradual infusion of Western ideals has slowly undermined this Eastern ideal, at any

rate, amongst the advanced and educated classes in India; and woeful shall be the day for India when turning once again to the fatal circle of Eastern mysticism, it discards its newly adopted, but still weakly grounded, Western ideal of action! Woeful shall be the day when at the instance of the Theosophic movement it once again comes to look upon quietism as the highest ideal of life!

But let us hope the seeds that are being sown will bear abundant fruit, and the dawn of a new era for India will be followed by a glorious epoch, when it shall subordinate her Eastern intellectualism to the demands of Western self-assertion. Let us hope that the infusion of Western ideas into India will lead to the formation of an ideal, in which individual self-realisation will find its due place, in which action will be revered as higher than contemplation, in which the life of the Western Monk, whose best devotion is active service for the poor and afflicted, becomes the type of life for her Eastern devotees and recluses.

The teaching of modern Idealism in the West needs to be organically united with the teaching of Mysticism in the East. The aspiration of the Indian sage, seeking for participation in the divine life by the suppression of feeling and thought,

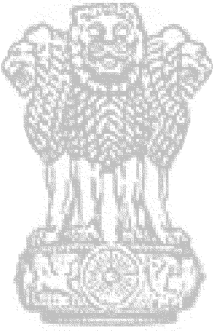
needs to be subordinated to the Western ideal of participation in the life of God through strenuous endeavour, noble feelings and nobler thoughts. The Eastern pursuit of perfect characterlessness needs to be transformed into the Western pursuit of character. Plato long ago laid down in the Phaedo that philosophy saved the human soul from the need for transmigration. Let us hope that the introduction of Western civilisation into India will enable the nation, in a similar fashion, to escape from the necessity of acquiescing in that ideal of final absorption and inaction, which her religion and philosophy have taught for ages, and which the Theosophists would like to revive for what they fancy to be the interests of India.

It is the Christian concept of God, from which that of the Zoroastrians does not differ widely, and not the Theosophic concept of the undifferentiated Absolute, that needs to be proclaimed from the house tops, if the country is to be revived from its long sleep of unprogressive or stable equilibrium. It is "the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," not the "God of the dead," but "of the living," whom India really needs. It is the Western ideal of the God who is a God for individuals, and who realises his Being in them, and not the Theosophic ideal

of the Absolute, which is self-centred and completely isolated, that can plant the seeds of a fresher life in the intellectual wilderness of a one sided and inadequate philosophic development.

Some years ago, in the course of a convocation Address at Calcutta, Lord Curzon talked of the dawning of a new political era for the country, and of the growth of a cosmopolitan civilisation, in which the rulers of the land feel themselves united with the ruled by the ties of common labours and common ideals. Let us hope a parallel movement in religious thought will supplement the political cosmopolitanism. The religion of new India will, by absorbing the teachings of the West, bear evidence to the truths expressed in Christianity and Zoroastrianism. "The Lord shall be one and his name one." The prophesy of Isaiah of a day when he shall bless the nations saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance" will come to pass. The poet's words will come true as much in religion as elsewhere.

"Not by eastern windows only,
When day light comes, comes in the light
In front the Sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward look, the land is bright."



सत्यमेव जयते

NOTES.

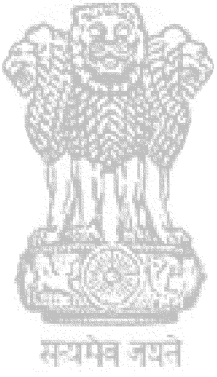
CHAPTER X.

There is one thing to which it is necessary to draw the reader's attention. It is with reference to the use of the word "Nirvana." The Nirvanic condition of the Buddhists has nothing to do with the Nirvanic condition of the theosophists. We have used "Nirvana" to denote not the Buddhist idea of positive bliss and happiness brought about through the suppression of the causes of suffering, but the purely pantheistic and negative idea of the annihilation of the individual soul, and its absorption into the ultimate source of all existence, which is found repeatedly turning up in theosophic literature.

CHAPTER XVI.

It is necessary incidentally to refer to one aspect of the reincarnation theory to which we have not adverted directly in the text. The theosophists seem to be under the impression that they can escape the difficulties of the creation theory by making the soul an uncreated principle, and endowing it with pre-existence as well as post-existence. The soul, they say, is by its nature immortal; how then can it have begun to be? How can it have started into life all of a sudden? What they do not notice, however, in this reasoning is the circumstance that the theory of pre-existence and earlier lives does not escape the difficulties of the creation theory; it only puts the question back by a few stages. Ultimately the question will remain: how did the soul begin to be? how did it come to the human body? And it is as rational or irrational

to believe that it starts with our present life as that it started with some earlier life. If it was from God that a spark of life—a spark of His essence—entered the human body, so far as it is a question of *becoming*, it does not much matter whether the soul commences its life for the first time, or has led earlier lives. And then we are referred to other considerations for conjecturing that this life of the soul is a continuation of its earlier lives. So far as the question of *coming to be* is concerned, Reincarnation does not help us.



APPENDIX.

PANTHEISM. *

It shall be our endeavour, on the present occasion, to lay before you a brief exposition of the fundamental concepts of a pantheistic system of philosophy and theology, and to determine, if possible, the limits within which such a system fulfils the object of affording a satisfactory solution of the problems of life and thought. In other words, it shall be our endeavour to determine how far pantheism can satisfy the longing of the human mind, to arrive at a kind of intellectual satisfaction with the environment in which it lives and by which it is surrounded. We shall, if possible, ascertain the true place and significance of pantheistic modes of thinking in the historic development of philosophic thought, and answer the question whether pantheism as a working hypothesis can fulfil the conditions of a *vera causa*. We shall examine its claims to being an ultimate and the only possible solution and explanation of the universe and its heterogeneous contents.

In undertaking such a task, we are afraid, we have no Delphic oracles, such as the Greeks of old had, to put an end to all doubts and satisfy the cravings of the dissatisfi-

* The following paper was read at a public meeting under the auspices of the Bazmó Jashné Ruzé Hormuzd at the F. C. Institute on the 19th December 1903.

ed heart. We cannot, like the heroes of Homer, expect Zeus and Athene, Venus and Minerva to fight on our sides with human weapons and human passions. We cannot even rely on the intellectual authority of some spiritual giants in an age of controversy such as we are in; and we have no magic wand, such as the enchanters of old possessed, to bring about by some mysterious process the result which we have an eye to. We have to rest satisfied with such humble instruments as God has given us, the instrument of reasoning lighted up by faith and reverence, which in their turn are transformed and purified in the light of reason. With such help, we shall handle the task before us, and see how far pantheistic modes of thinking and their main principles satisfy the requirements of the wandering intellect and the craving heart.

But the question might naturally be asked: what is the occasion for this examination of pantheistic theories? A few words will not be entirely out of place. Those who are familiar with the history of modern Zoroastrian thinking well know that attempts have been made of late to read the principles of pantheism into the Mazdayaçnian Scriptures and commentaries. How far those attempts have been attended with success is a question with which we are not concerned to-day. What we think of doing to-day is to endeavour to show that, even granting for a moment that the explicit dualism or monotheism of the Zoroastrian Scriptures could be transformed into the moulds of pantheistic teaching, such teaching and such a philosophy are not adequate to the task of affording a thoroughly satisfactory explanation of the problems of human life and the universe. Our object is to show [illegible]

attained to or grasped the idealistic ethics and philosophy, which is so dimly foreshadowed in the Gâthas, and the constituent elements of which are so chaotically scattered in the various Pahlavi commentaries which we possess, cannot for a moment remain satisfied with the principles of pantheism.

Western modes of thinking are slowly engrafting themselves on the Eastern soil, and the result that is to be desired is not so much an absolute return to the past with the aid of modern thought, as the reorganisation and transformation of the old in the light of the new. The end to be aimed at is not simply the reedition of an old phase of thought, but the constitution of a new phase, which, with the light of Western philosophy and ideas, can combine into one the Eastern and the Western intellect, and can read a new meaning into, and throw fresh light on, the early Scriptures of the Aryan nations. The ideal to be looked to is not simply that of vindicating the religions of the East by the help of Western knowledge and Western principles, but that of rendering the old religions vital, and giving to them a fresh lease of progressive life by the introduction of new elements from the West, in harmony with the old principles. There should be, in other words, not merely a mechanical agglutination of the new with the old, but an organic absorption and assimilation. And if pantheism is proved to be inadequate as a philosophic system and as a practical religion, to read pantheism into the Zoroastrian Scriptures, supposing it were practicable, is to read into them something which, far from giving a fresh lease of life to that

religion, is likely to weaken its hold on the minds of men, both thinking and ignorant.

Coming on to the subject matter of our discourse we have to ask ourselves: what is pantheism, and what are its leading principles? Within the limits of time to which we have to confine ourselves, it would be practically impossible to deal with pantheistic thought in detail, impossible to trace its principle in its logical development and application to all the various divisions of life and the universe. Nor would it be in any way more practicable to deal with the history of pantheistic teaching, as it has now and again appeared in the course of ages. We will, therefore, only briefly touch on the essential principles of a pantheistic philosophy, and see how far those principles will enable us to explain the universe with its manifold problems, and what would at first sight appear its chaotic condition.

These essential principles of pantheism may appear in history under forms which we can hardly recognise as pantheistic: with these historic forms as they have now appeared in the Hindu systems and again in the Eleaticism of Parmenides, now in the Gnostic Schools and again in the system of Spinoza, now in Schelling and again in Schopenhauer, with these we shall not deal for want of time and for fear of entering into technical discussions of the most specialised character. If we touch on them at all during the course of this discourse, it will be, not so much with a view to pronouncing an opinion on their merits or demerits, as with a view to illustrating the actual working of the pantheistic principles in the religious and speculative history of mankind.

What then is pantheism? In popular and familiar use vague and contradictory meanings are very often attached to this word. We will begin with overthrowing these misrepresentations, and sweeping the ground clear before we begin to build. One of the most popular mistakes made about pantheism is that which consists in thinking that pantheism identifies the world with God. According to this view, all things and beings are parts of the divine nature, all events and incidents that happen in this world are manifestations of the divine energy. The forces of nature, the most trifling as well as the most important incidents in the history of the individual as well as nation, every object of thought and subject thinking, are the visible expressions of the being and life of the first principle. Nature, the Universe, is identical with God: and man does not need to rise above nature to find God.

Pantheism, thus understood, is only another form of animism, the deification of the finite world. But such a notion would appear to be entirely devoid of any religious meaning. It is of the essence of religion, even in its most attenuated form, that it should raise the individual above the world. Religion arises from the fact that man gets dissatisfied with his surroundings and seeks after something beyond the visible and the temporal; and a religion that makes nature into God is no religion at all. Much less can such pantheism stand the test of philosophic truth. An explanation of the universe, that confines itself to repeating that it is itself and alone divine, and that its heterogeneous laws are capable of no further organisation, is no explanation at all.

Such is not true pantheism. When we inquire into the real significance of pantheism as a phase in the religious history of the world, we find that it is something entirely different from, and even the very opposite of, this deification of nature. It means, not the divinity, but rather the nothingness and insubstantiality of things temporal and visible. One of the earliest manifestations in which religious feeling declares itself is the sense of the mutability and evanescence of earthly things and the finite world. The brevity and uncertainty of life, the disappointing nature of its fleeting pleasures, the lack of any permanent object which our thought can grasp and on which our hearts can rest in repose—the feeling, in short, of the vanity and unreality of earthly concerns, is the germ from which pantheism naturally developes.

A pantheistic conception of the universe, therefore, is that in which "*God is all*" and *the world is nothing*. It is a conception at which all must arrive in the course of the development of their religious life. It means that the mind's discernment of the finite as finite is due to the presence of the Infinite within it; the power of the eternal betrays itself in the very capacity to recognise the evanescence of temporal things; "it is the rock on which though we know it not, our feet are resting, that enables us to perceive the flux of the rushing stream which is bearing all finite things away." Such is the psychological history, if we may so style it, of the development of pantheistic religion and pantheistic philosophy.*

* In this and a few following paragraphs I have been specially indebted to Caird's "Fundamental Ideas of Christianity"; I have almost condensed Caird's own words.

To put it more definitely, the history of the origin of pantheistic belief may be thus summarised:

When man is freed from all anxieties about maintaining his body, he naturally begins to reflect about himself. And in the course of his reflections, he grows dissatisfied with himself and with all things surrounding him. His aesthetic and moral natures require that there should be something or some being so good and perfect as to deserve his love and so share his confidence, a being on whom he could perfectly rely and in whose happiness he could find his own happiness. Does he find this longing satisfied by things or persons in this universe? He soon comes to answer the question in the negative. His friends are not real friends, his best hopes soon get disappointed, and the persons, whom his imagination may have pictured to him as angels, prove, as Balzac somewhere remarked, to be but bed-posts of iron. If earthly things and earthly persons could not then afford him the means of satisfying his best hopes and longings, he must seek consolation in the thought that these are but deceptive shows and illusions of the fancy, behind which all there must be some ultimate reality. He finds himself soothed by the reflection that the present world is all a dream, friendship and true love a pleasing deception; and when all these dreams vanish there will remain one true reality, without good or evil, without change and motion, without passions and feelings, without even the basis of consciousness which is one of the instruments of deception.

Thus we have seen what its fundamental principle is, and how it arises. Looking for a moment at the history of

Pantheism in the East, we find that it assumes its best expression in what may be styled Brahamanism. The pantheistic element which is said to be latent in the early Vedic phase of Hindu thought here becomes explicit and systematises itself in the shape of a theology and speculative structure.* The trend of thought that underlies Brahamanism may be thus summarised for our purpose: When we talk of objects, of plants, flowers, men, animals, and recognise their identity day after day, and say that they are the same now as they were yesterday, what is this sameness or identity? The matter that composes these plants and animals never remains the same for two hours together, whence then do these things derive their permanence?

The answer given is, that beneath and behind all the varying qualities and appearances of things there is an unknown, invisible substance, a hidden something that remains constant amidst all changes, and that this is the true and permanent reality of the thing. Beneath all the changing phenomena of the universe there is one Being who never changes, and that is *Brahma*. The Supreme God in Brahamanism is represented as declaring "I am the light in the sun and moon. I am the brilliancy in flame, the radiance in all shining things, the fragrance in earth, the sound in air, the eternal seed of all things that exist, the life in all; I am the goodness of the good, I am the beginning, middle, end; the eternal in time, the birth

* It is very doubtful to say that Pantheism was latent in the Vedas. However that may be, that *some* of the Upanishads teach the kind of Pantheism that we have been speaking of is beyond question.

and death of all." Such is the way in which Brahamanism speaks of the Supreme Creator : and such is the way in which a pantheistic religion may be expected to express itself.

If we turn now from a pantheistic religion to a pantheistic system of philosophy to illustrate its main principle, we can not find better illustration than in the philosophic system of Spinoza. We are not unmindful of the difficulty of condensing Spinoza's main thought into a popular form, but none the less will we attempt it. As Caird puts it, Spinoza's philosophy took its rise not primarily in the search for intellectual satisfaction, but in the endeavour to discover some true and abiding object of love, something in finding which he would find a perfect and eternal joy—a joy which could not be found in the ordinary objects of human desire like riches or pleasures.

As he reflected on this universal experience, the great thought dawned on his mind that the secret of human unrest and unhappiness lies ultimately in this, that the whole point of view of ordinary intelligence is a false one, that it does not see things as they really are, and that looked at from a new point of view the entire aspect of the world would be revolutionised. We are unhappy because the things on which we lavish our affections have literally no reality. The senses and the imagination are the sources of deception, and to attain the end we seek we must subvert this false view of the world and substitute for it the higher view of reason. The ordinary view of the world depending on the senses and the imagination gives to finite things and beings an individuality and reality which does not really belong to them. Reason tells us that there are no

individual self-determined beings like men, nor are there individual things, but that all depend on the ultimate reality which is the source of them all. To quote Spinoza himself, "Every idea of every particular thing necessarily involves the eternal and infinite essence of God," or the Infinite Substance. Such is the pantheistic aspect of Spinoza's philosophy; perhaps few of you know that Spinoza's philosophy is pervaded in its entire extent by two opposite streams of thought, running side by side with each other. It is the pantheistic aspect that we have just now expounded to you, recognising, as we do, the circumstance that it was modified by individualistic factors.

We will take one more illustration from the history of philosophy to illustrate the working of pantheism, and that will be the Neo-Platonic philosophy. The Neo-Platonists endeavoured to elevate the conception of God above all the limiting conditions of human existence, and their idea of God was therefore that of the First Principle of all things, absolutely indeterminate. God is the absolute One, unity beyond all difference, to which no predicates can be attached, of which nothing can be said. He is inexpressible, for all speech names some definite thing; He is incomprehensible, for thought distinguishes between itself and its object.

But when the idea of God has been thus rarified to an abstraction which is simply the negation of the finite, every way back to the finite would seem to be cut off. The Absolute One in which Neo-Platonism found the explanation of all things would seem to be shut up in its own self-identity. The concept of *Emanation* is then employed to explain how the universe can be reconstituted along

with this First Principle, or as they would say, how the universe could be deduced from the First Principle. Everything that is in any degree perfect, and most of all, therefore, the absolutely perfect, tends to overflow itself, to stream forth and produce that which is other than itself. Fire produces heat, snow cold, medicine healing; the most perfect then cannot remain powerless, shut up in itself. Accordingly the Absolute is conceived to stream forth in a series of emanations, descending through successive stages, till it reaches the realm of darkness, of that formless matter which is below knowledge. The successive orders of emanations which constitute the world are only phantoms, unreal as the reflections in a mirror; its only reality is the absolute Unity from which their phantasmal existence is projected.

We have now seen what the fundamental concept of pantheism is; it may be summed up as—God is all: the world and everything that it contains are illusions. It remains for us to determine how far such a concept is capable of affording a satisfactory explanation of the universe, and of satisfying the cravings of the heart after some permanent reality. We will divide the inquiry into two parts: 1) pantheism as a speculative system, 2) pantheism as a practical solvent for all moral and religious troubles.*

* It might be said that we are here fighting against shadows, since the objections we find to a pantheistic system are objections which have no application to any particular pantheistic system. A thorough-going pantheistic creed, it may be said, is unknown and impossible. Our reply would be that we are fighting against the logical consequences of a pantheistic philosophy which is true to itself; and if no human pantheistic creed is true to itself in this sense, it is because men recognise the necessity of taking the world to be something more than a pure illusion.

The aim and object of every philosophical system is to give an explanation of the universe in which the finite world may be accounted for and organised in a unity. All the manifold distinctions of things and thoughts must be so conceived as to be capable of being comprehended in one organic whole. All philosophy which is not atheistic finds this ultimate unity in the idea of God. Pantheism is valid and impregnable, so far as it maintains that the ultimate explanation of all things is to be found in an abstract impersonal first principle which is called God, and that there is nothing in the universe which has any individuality that cannot be brought back into harmony with His Being. But its validity as an explanation stops here, and its limitations and difficulties commence.

1) A philosophy which extinguishes the finite or merges it in God is equally defective with a philosophy which gives it an exaggerated independence. Even if we say that it is only imagination which lends to things seen and temporal a semblance of reality, that the existence of finite things is an illusion, we must still seek in the idea of God a reason at least for their illusory existence. Though we have reduced the world to a mere appearance, yet as appearance it still needs to be accounted for. If we are such stuff as dreams are made of, yet our dreams presuppose a wakeful world. If God is a lifeless abstraction, unchangeable, unchanging and self-subsisting, whence comes the illusory world? The idea of *emanation* which the Neo-Platonists employed is only juggling with words; for emanation cannot be conceived without change, it presupposes change; and it is a contradiction in terms to speak of an unchanging abstraction as sending forth

emanations. Spinoza cannot solve the difficulty: and thus pantheism, though it may call the world an illusion, is not capable of affording a satisfactory explanation as to how it comes to be an illusion.

2) Further, what about the mind that discerns the illusory nature of this world? If the mind is capable of saying that the world is an illusion, it must itself be something more than an illusion, it must have a reality of its own. If the mind were an illusion it could not speak of other things as being illusory. If, therefore, on the one hand, mind belongs to the finite world which is negated, on the other hand, it has a side on which it belongs to that infinite and eternal reality which negates it. A pantheistic system, therefore, in which there is no reality save that of God is incapable of working as an explanation of the universe, since it cannot account for its own validity. If the human mind is an illusion along with other things in a world in which God is the sole reality, the pantheistic system which that mind frames for itself is equally an illusion. On the other hand, if the mind is something more than an illusion, and has a reality of its own, it is something alongside of God, and God is not the sole reality.

3) It is obvious that the God of pantheism is a conception from which no explanation of the finite world, even as finite and contingent, can be derived. The Infinite Substance or first principle is a gulf into which all things are absorbed and from which nothing returns. The regressive movement by which the God of pantheism is reached is simply the removal of the limits by which sense gives a fictitious reality to finite things. Do away with the limits and you are supposed to get to the idea of

God. But the Infinite which we thus reach by the cancelling of all determinate thought and being is simply the absolutely indeterminate, an abstraction without life, and not an organic unity. This abstraction can give no reason for the manifold phenomenal universe. All differences vanish in it, and none can proceed from it. In this God of the pantheists there is no predicate by the help of which we can reconstitute the finite world. "It is the grave of all things, the productive source of nothing." When we have arrived at it, what we reach is not the living, creative origin of all thought and life, but the unfathomable gulf where all is still and lifeless.

If the object of every philosophical system, worthy of that name, be so to explain the universe as to derive it from a first principle by a law of natural necessity, pantheism fails to come up to that standard, since its unity is a unity without difference, a bare abstraction confined to itself and incapable of giving a reason for anything outside of it.

If we turn now from this speculative aspect of pantheism to its practical aspects, we find the same limitations.

1) A thoroughgoing pantheism knows nothing of moral distinctions. With the ideas of freedom and individuality, the ideas of responsibility and of moral good and evil disappear. If in the universe there be no being but one, no life but one, a finite moral agent is a contradiction in terms. The individual man has here no life of his own to live, no ideal to fulfil or frustrate, no destiny to accomplish. All is illusion; our best instincts and feelings, those of love, reverence, affection, sympathy, benevolence, all must vanish, because the individual who

is the subject of them all is part of the illusory world. Our life and actions are dreams, unmeaning gambols of the unmeaning mechanism which we call the human body and mind, and the final end of all men and of all things an absorption into the divine which is itself lifeless and motionless. Death is the ultimate word, a final annihilation of all things and thoughts; time and space are illusions, and life after death equally an illusion. The only reality is the unspeakable first principle, which the vast majority of men can never apprehend, can never strive after, can never reach except in a condition of absolute unconsciousness.

There is indeed a kind of morality that pantheism preaches—a morality which consists in killing the flesh, in keeping aloof from the world and its pleasures, in leading a life of ascetic self-devotion. But the logical outcome of that morality is a life devoid of human affection and emotion, a life of dreamy vacuity and contemplation akin to the abstraction which is the source of all.

If the Pantheists try to escape this position by the remark that all is not pure illusion, but that all passions and feelings, things and thoughts are real so far as God is present in them—so far, in other words, as they share in the life of the Absolute, the reply is obvious. The question, again, takes the form of the *One* and the *Many*; if the *One* alone is real, as the Pantheists urge, the *many* are unreal, and it is unmeaning to say that the *many* can share in the life of the *One*.

2) A religion, in which God is the Infinite that lies beyond the finite, can take no account of any distinctions

within the finite. He is at once equally remote from, and equally near to, the highest and lowest of finite beings. A Being who is thought of as the substance of all things is equally related to all—to things mean as to things lofty, to gross matter as to intelligent mind, to the vilest and impurest as to the noblest and most exalted natures. The saint and the sinner, the wise man and the fool, the philanthropist and the criminal are alike to him, devoid as he is of all moral distinctions. The only solace possible to man under these circumstances was to kill the body, destroy all passions, and by death in this world to become one with the First Principle. And it was this step so logical and necessary on the presuppositions of pantheistic Brahmanism, against which Buddhism revolted, when it preached a fuller life for the individual in *Nirvâna* than was possible in the Upanishads.

And in this connection we may observe how the ethical precepts of pantheism to kill the flesh and root out all passions are in essential conflict with conclusions that may be legitimately derived from their presuppositions. For, while all true morality implies a struggle with nature, it is of the very essence of a pantheistic religion to discountenance any such struggle, and to foster a fatalistic contentment with things as they are. In a religion which finds God in all things and events alike, in which whatever is is right, simply because it exists, all natural passions, simply as natural, carry with them their own sanction. For immersion in the natural is absorption in the divine, and even the wildest orgies of sensual excess may be part of the homage rendered to the object of worship, seeing that in yielding ourselves up to nature we are yielding

ourselves to God. The natural corollary from pantheistic principles would be a gross sensualism in morals, a life of animal pleasures and satisfaction of the animal appetites.

If, then, the question is asked : can Pantheism work as a religion, and give satisfaction to the cravings of the human heart ? the answer will be more likely in the negative than in the positive. In the first place, it may be said that religion must be a thing attainable by all, and therefore cannot, like knowledge, be dependent on gifts and acquirements accessible only to a few. All need it, none can be saved without it. Science and philosophy are noble things. Literary and artistic culture are most desirable attainments—dignifying and beautifying life, and opening up to their possessor the springs of purest enjoyment. But they are not indispensable. "It is possible to live and die without them, and there are thousands of men who must and do contrive to live tranquil, happy and useful lives, to whom these blessings are but a name." But religion is something altogether different. It is not a luxury to be enjoyed by a few ; it is the very life, the source of all happiness, of the ultimate salvation of man, that without which man's noblest capacities lie undeveloped, and without which his life is a meaningless dream, and death only an eternal sleep of darkness and horror. Its attainment cannot therefore depend on conditions which would render it the monopoly of a learned and cultured class.

Pantheism as a religion suffers to a large extent from this circumstance that it can appeal, if at all, only to the reflecting mind and to the philosophic mood. To the vast majority of men, enveloped by a partially hostile

environment, who can find solace from the troubles and anxieties of this life only in the belief and trust in a personal Creator capable of listening to their appeals, and sympathising in their troubles, and encouraging them in the midst of their struggles,—to this vast ignorant illiterate mass of our fellow-creatures pantheism can never appeal; its impersonal first cause can never attract them. Its promises have no human ring about them. The cry for help to God when human sufferings are too great for human patience to bear can find no answer in the cold reasonings of the pantheistic teacher. Pantheism with its ultimate ideal of absorption into the Deity without any hope of individual self-determination and self-realisation, has no chance of ever recommending itself to the multitudes of human beings around us.

Religion can exist in all its reality and purity in minds in which intelligence is yet undeveloped, in minds in which its vigour has become enfeebled, even in minds in which it is all through life defective and uncultured. And yet the pantheistic religion can never subsist except in the reflecting developed consciousness of the adult man. The little child, acquainted with no books, breathing forth from its stammering lips its first prayer of wonder and awe and reverence to the Great Father in Heaven, as it is taught to utter the same by a fond mother, can have no place in a theory where the first cause of the universe is a lifeless abstraction. The weak worn out sufferer, lying stretched on a bed of pain, incapable of the faintest approach to consecutive thought or intellectual effort, bereft of every other power save the power to love and pray, and appealing to the prophet's help who lived

and died for his sake, can find no explanation in a system in which the passionless and emotionless ecstasy of the inspired recluse is the acme of human perfectibility.

The humble faith that inspires the meek sufferer to bear his trials with cheerfulness and resignation, that lights up the humblest cottage with a glow of the divine, and transforms the ordinary, prosaic, monotonous duties of everyday life into the poetic and inspired expressions of a higher life can have no significance for him who looks on earthly things as illusions of a deceptive imagination. Prayers even the most sublime, the converse of spirit with spirit, and of man with his Supreme Creator, cannot exist where that Creator has no life, no will, no intelligence, no love, no goodness, no benevolence. And if prayers constitute one of the best expressions of the religious life, a thoroughgoing pantheism may be said to be lacking in one of the most essential traits of a vital religion.

In short, then, we might say that pantheism is unable to deal with the fact of human personality and all that it involves. If the self, the true, the higher self is real and not an illusion,—if the self that cognises, feels and acts, and calls itself a moral agent, be no deception of the senses but has a place in the system of being,—it cannot be accounted for except on the supposition of a personal Creator. An abstract, lifeless principle, without will and intelligence, cannot have evolved a living, thinking, willing creature like man; it cannot have given rise to what was not in itself before. To say that the human personality with its moral implicates was developed from a lifeless first cause is to believe in the doctrine of creation out of nothing. The lower cannot evolve the higher, any more

than it can explain the existence of the higher. The stream cannot rise above the fountain; and the origin and the primal cause of a universe which consists of beings like men with souls can never be lifeless and soulless. Personality alone can explain personality; and pantheism must either end in theism or be prepared to identify mind with matter and believe in the perishability of the soul after death. If the soul, according to pantheism, is part of God, that God is lifeless and motionless, without thought and action, and therefore the soul must equally be motionless, thoughtless, and lifeless. A soul without thoughts and will is no soul at all, and cannot be distinguished from the stocks and stones which surround it.

But pantheism might urge: the first principle evolves the universe out of itself, and therefore gives a kind of independence to individuals in the universe. But the notion of evolution or development requires that the seed should contain in germ the potency of the flower, and that the flower can contain nothing that was not in an undeveloped form in the seed itself. The idea of development or emanation or evolution, therefore, requires that the personality implied in the human individual, with its thinking, feeling and willing powers, should have existed in germ in the first cause itself. We are thus pushed forwards in the direction of personality by the hypothesis of development or emanation.

If, then, pantheism as a philosophic system and as a religion has thus proved incompetent for its task, is there no escape from it? In the place of that absolute negation of the finite, which pantheism teaches in knowledge, in morality, in religion, there is a kind of self-negation or

self-renunciation which is the condition of self-realisation. Thus in the sphere of intellectual life, we might say that scientific knowledge is the revelation to or in our consciousness of a system of unalterable relations, a world of objective realities which we can neither make nor unmake, and which only he who abnegates his individual fancies and opinions can apprehend. The intellectual life is one which we can live only by ceasing to assert ourselves or to think our own thoughts, and identifying ourselves with an intelligence that is universal and absolute. Yet the negation of which we thus speak is not an absolute negation, such as pantheism would teach. The finite intelligence is not absorbed or lost in the infinite to which it surrenders itself. Surrender or subjection to absolute truth is not the extinction of the finite mind, but the realisation of its true life. The life of absolute truth is not a life that is foreign to us, but one in which we come to our own.

And the same thing is true of the moral life. In becoming moral and realizing our moral activities, we do not kill all passions but transform them in the light of reason. There is a rational meaning or end underlying the passions, and what we seek blindly under the influence of passion we may seek deliberately under the influence of reason. Even the lowest appetites are capable of being thus transferred from the sphere of passion to that of reason, from the passive to the active side of our nature. The wise or free man is no longer impelled by hunger or lust, but after the rational endeavour after that to which his appetites point—the preservation and continuance of the life of the individual and the race. A passion-

less reason, or a will that is capable of realizing itself without the end of passions or emotions and desires, is a contradiction in terms from the standpoint of psychological observation ; and to kill our appetites and passions, instead of subordinating them to the purposes of the higher self, as pantheism teaches, is to kill the individual and to be akin to stocks and stones.

It is impossible, therefore, to suppose that we could escape from sin by crushing our sensuous desires and passions. The moral life is not a life without passions. Often the noblest moral natures, the men who have played the greatest part in the drama of human history, its heroes and patriots, philanthropists and reformers and martyrs have been men of keen natural susceptibilities, men whose very greatness has been due to this that the element of feeling and passion, the pulse of natural emotion, beat with intense activity within them. But it was not mere passion, be it borne in mind, that made them great; nor was it the killing out those passions, but rather the transformation or ennoblement of those passions through the rational and moral activity of a will devoted to noble ends.

So likewise in the religious life, the life of best perfection, the individual does not lose his individuality, and is not absorbed in indistinguishable identity with the divine, as pantheism would teach. The negation of the finite as finite is not the negation, but the realisation, of that affirmative essence of humanity which is the eternal object of the love of God. The ideal of religion, when we thus think of it, so far from being the negation of that finite, so far from implying the suppression of the finite in

order to reach it, is an ideal in reaching and realising which, and only in that, does the finite spirit realise itself. It is the elevation of the spirit into a region where hope passes into certitude, struggle into conquest, interminable effort and endeavour into peace and rest. It is not a life of negations,—a life of absorption into an abstraction of the thought that tends to abolish itself,—but a life that consists in devotion to a higher will, in obedience to a higher law, and in self-renunciation to a loftier personality, that strengthens and beautifies the self-renouncing individuality. So that in the life of unity with God, far from losing ourselves, we live unto ourselves. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever," and not death but life is the final word of philosophic and religious truth.