THE AMERICAN LECTURES
ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

I **Buddhism.**—The History and Literature of Buddhism By T. W. RHYS-DAVIDS, LL.D., PH D.

II. **Primitive Religions.**—The Religions of Primitive Peoples. By D G BRINTON, M.D , Sc D., Professor of American Archæology and Linguistics in the University of Pennsylvania (1897)

III. **Israel.**—Religious Thought and Life among the Ancient Hebrews. By the Rev. T. K. CHEYNE, M A., D.D , Professor of the Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures at Oxford, and Canon of Rochester. (1898)

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

AMERICAN LECTURES ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

FIRST SERIES—1894–1895

BUDDHISM

ITS HISTORY AND LITERATURE

BY

T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, LL.D., PH.D.

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK
27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON
24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1896

The Knickerbocker Press, New Rochelle, N. Y.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

ON the 24th of December, 1891, fifteen persons interested in promoting the historical study of religions united in issuing a circular-letter inviting a conference in the Council Chambers of the Historical Society of Philadelphia, on the 30th of the same month, for the purpose of instituting "popular courses in the History of Religions, somewhat after the style of the Hibbert lectures in England, to be delivered annually by the best scholars of Europe and this country, in various cities, such as Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and others" There participated in this conference personally or by letter, from Philadelphia, Rev. Prof. E. T. Bartlett, D D., Rev. George Dana Boardman, D.D., Prof. D. G. Brinton, M.D., Sc.D., Horace Howard Furness, LL.D., Prof. E. J. James, Ph.D., Prof. Morris Jastrow, Jr., Ph.D., Provost Wm. Pepper, M.D. LL.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, Hon. Mayer Sulzberger, Mrs. Cornelius Stevenson, and Talcott Williams, LL.D.; from Baltimore, Prest. D. C. Gilman, LL.D., of the Johns Hopkins Uni-

versity, and Prof. Paul Haupt, Ph.D.; from Boston and Cambridge, Rev. E. E. Hale, D.D., Prof. C. R. Lanman, Ph.D., Prof. D. G. Lyon, Ph.D., and Prof. C. H. Toy, LL.D.; from Brooklyn, Rev. Edward F. Braislin, D.D., and Prof. Franklin W. Hooper, of the Brooklyn Institute; from Chicago, Pres. W. R. Harper, Ph.D., of the University of Chicago, and Rev. Prof. Emil G. Hirsch, Ph.D.; from New York, Rev. Prof. C. A. Briggs, D.D., LL.D., Rev. Prof. Francis Brown, D.D., Rev. G. Gottheil, D.D., Prof. R. J. H. Gottheil, Ph.D., Rev. John P. Peters, Ph.D., Sc.D., D.D., and Rev. W. Hayes Ward, D.D., LL.D.; from Ithaca, N. Y., Pres. J. G. Schurman, of Cornell University, and Hon. Andrew D. White, LL D.

At this conference, Prof. Jastrow submitted a plan for establishing popular lecture courses on the historical study of religions by securing the co-operation of existing institutions and lecture associations, such as the Lowell, Brooklyn, and Peabody Institutes, the University Lecture Association of Philadelphia, and some of our colleges and universities. Each course, according to this plan, was to consist of from six to eight lectures, and the engagement of lecturers, choice of subjects, and so forth were to be in the hands of a committee chosen from the different cities, and representing the various institutions and associations participating.

This general scheme met with the cordial approval of the conference, which voted the project both a timely and useful one, and which appointed Dean Bartlett, Prof. Jastrow, and Dr. Peters a committee to elaborate a plan of organisation and report at an adjourned meeting. That meeting was held at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City, February 6, 1892, and, as a result, an association was organised for the purpose of encouraging the study of religions. The *terms* of association then adopted, with slight modifications introduced later, are as follows:

1.—The object of this Association shall be to provide courses of lectures on the history of religions, to be delivered in various cities.

2.—The Association shall be composed of delegates from institutions agreeing to co-operate, or from local boards, organised where such co-operation is not possible.

3.—These Delegates—one from each Institution or Local Board, shall constitute themselves a Council under the name of the "American Committee for Lectures on the History of Religions."

4.—The Council shall elect out of its number a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.

5.—All matters of local detail shall be left to the

Institutions or Local Boards, under whose auspices the lectures are to be delivered.

6.—A course of lectures on some religion, or phase of religion, from an historical point of view, or on a subject germane to the study of religions, shall be delivered annually, or at such intervals as may be found practicable, in the different cities represented by this Association.

7.—The Council (*a*) shall be charged with the selection of the lecturers, (*b*) shall have charge of the funds, (*c*) shall assign the time for the lectures in each city, and perform such other functions as may be necessary.

8.—Polemical subjects, as well as polemics in the treatment of subjects, shall be positively excluded.

9.—The lecturer shall be chosen by the Council, at least ten months before the date fixed for the course of lectures.

10.—The lectures shall be delivered in the various cities between the months of October and June.

11.—The Copyright of the lectures shall be the property of the Association.

12.—One half of the lecturer's compensation shall be paid at the completion of his entire course,

and the second half upon the publication of the lectures.

13.—The compensation offered to the lecturer shall be fixed in each case by the Council.

14.—The lecturer is not to deliver elsewhere any of the lectures for which he is engaged by the Committee, except with the sanction of the Committee.

The Committee appointed to carry out this plan and the institutions represented are :

Prof. C. H. Toy, LL.D., of Harvard University, representing Boston and Cambridge, President.

Prest. J. G. Schurman, representing Cornell University.

Prof. Franklin W. Hooper, representing the Brooklyn Institute.

Prof. J. F. Jameson, representing the Brown University Lecture Association (joined the Association in 1894).

Prof. Paul Haupt, Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University, representing the Peabody Institute.

Prof. Morris Jastrow, Jr., Ph.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, representing the University Lecture Association, Secretary.

Prof. R. J. H. Gottheil, Ph.D., of Columbia College,

and Rev. John P. Peters, Ph.D., Treasurer, representing the New York lecture committee.

For its first course, the Committee selected as the lecturer Prof. T. W. Rhys Davids, Ph.D., LL.D., of London, England, and as the subject, "The History and Literature of Buddhism." Prof. Davids is well known to all who are interested in the study of Indian religions. Few writers have contributed so much to our knowledge of Buddhism as he. In 1878 he wrote for the London Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge a sketch of the life of Gotama the Buddha, which was published under the title *Buddhism*. In 1881 he delivered the Hibbert Lectures, his subject being "The Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by Some Points in the History of Indian Buddhism." In conjunction with Prof. H. Oldenberg, he published in the *Sacred Books of the East* translations of *Vinaya Texts*. The long list of his works includes *Questions of King Milinda*, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, *The Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon*, *The Description of Sigiri the Lion Rock*, besides many other publications. Prof. Davids is also secretary of the Pali Text Society, and a constant contributor to its publications.

Prof. Davids' course, consisting of six lectures, was delivered before large audiences during the winter of

1894–1895 at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.; Lowell Institute, Boston; Brown University, Providence; Brooklyn Institute, Brooklyn; Columbia College, New York; and a course comprising four of these lectures was delivered at the Peabody Institute, Baltimore, and the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. It is these lectures that are now presented to the public in book form.

The object of this Association is to provide the best opportunities for bringing to the knowledge of the public at large the methods and results of those distinguished specialists who have devoted their lives to the study of the religions of other countries and other ages. It is safe to say that there is no other subject of modern research which concerns all classes so nearly as the study of religions. This course of lectures is the first fruit of the Association's labours, and it is offered to the public in the full assurance that it will so commend itself to all thoughtful readers as to win approval of the large work which the Association has undertaken. It is the hope of the Committee to provide courses of lectures at intervals of two years, or oftener, if the encouragement which the undertaking receives warrants it, and the practical difficulties involved in securing competent lecturers do not make it impossible.

Arrangements have so far been completed for two further courses of lectures, one by Prof. D. G. Brinton, M.D., Sc.D., of the University of Pennsylvania, on "The Religions of Primitive Peoples," to be delivered during the coming winter, 1896–97; and one by the Rev. Prof. T. K. Cheyne, M.A., D.D., Canon of Rochester, on "Religious Thought and Life among the Ancient Hebrews," to be delivered during the winter of 1897–98.

JOHN P. PETERS,
C. H. Toy,
MORRIS JASTROW, JR., } *Committee on Publication.*

March 29, 1896.

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BUDDHISM.

LECTURE I.

Religious Theories in India before Buddhism.

IT has often been maintained that there is no nation or tribe without religion. But what is meant by religion? The word, as is well known, is not found in languages not related to our own, and its derivation is uncertain. Cicero, in one passage, derived it from *re* and *lego*, and held that its real meaning was the repetition of prayers and incantations. Another interpretation derives the word from *re* and *ligo*, and makes its original sense that of attachment, of a continual binding (that is, no doubt, to the gods). A third derivation connects the word with *lex*, and explains it as a law-abiding, scrupulously conscientious, frame of mind. This last seems to be most in accordance with the conceptions prevalent when the use of the phrase began,

and more in harmony with the similar expressions that arose under similar circumstances elsewhere—in China, for instance, and in India. In India, indeed, the same word is used by the followers of every school of thought for law and for religion—the word Dharma, etymologically equivalent to the Latin *forma*, and constantly reminding us in its implied connotation of the English phrase "good form."

Law did not, of course, in that early time, mean legislation. It was rather custom, established precedent; and a sense of duty to the established order of things included and implied a reverential attitude toward the gods. This last side of the idea tended, even in Roman usage, to become predominant; and when the early Christians began to write in Latin, they not only limited the sense of the word religion to this part of its original meaning, but so used it in this limited sense as to fit it in with their own theology, till it gradually becomes nearly a synonym first for Christianity, and then for Catholic Christianity. The completion of this revolution in meaning was, however, only opening the door to fresh modifications.

Thus we find St. Thomas Aquinas, in one place, defining religion as "goodness rendering to God the honour due to Him"; and in another as "the mani-

festation of that faith, hope, and charity toward God to which man is, above all, ordained." But as the monastic system grew, a "religious house" came to mean a monastery, a "religious"—that is a religious person—a member of a monkish order, a "going into religion" the taking of the vows, and even a "religion" an order of monks. Most curious is it to read the decree of the famous fourth Lutherian council regretting the confusion brought about in the church of God by the diversity of "religions," and laying down that none should ferment a new "religion," but whoso desired to adopt "a religion," should select one of those already approved. Religion throughout this passage means simply an order of friars. An Irish Protestant, Archbishop Trench, finds in this use of the word a notable evidence of the moral contagion of papal domination, and asks "what an awful light does this one word, so used, throw on the entire state of mind and habit of thought in those ages!" Writers of all the numerous sects of Protestant belief have accordingly endeavoured to bring the meaning of the word religion back to those points which each of them regard as of vital importance.

But how can they hope to keep it there, and only there. For writers who discard the dogmas of Christianity endeavour to put a meaning into the

word which will harmonise with *their* newer views of life. The author of *Ecce Homo* says that religion is "habitual and regulated admiration," or "worship of whatever in the known universe appears worthy of worship." Mr. Frederic Harrison defines it as "veneration for the power which exercises a dominant influence over our life." And Matthew Arnold found in it only "morality touched with emotion."

It is evident that man's definitions of religion will be precisely as numerous, as different, and as accurate as their own beliefs. There is only one definition which all must accept, the historical one, and the history of the word goes back a long way before Cicero, and is still, to-day, in the making. For the word is a convenient expression for a very complex set of mental conditions, including, firstly, beliefs as to internal and external mysteries (souls and gods)—secondly, the mental attitude induced by those beliefs—and thirdly, the actions and conduct dependent upon both. No one of these constituent elements of religion is stable. They are never exactly the same in any two individuals, even when these profess the same faith and live under the same conditions. The beliefs especially (which are independent, except in a very indirect way, of the will of the individual) vary, and that in a definitely

progressive way, from century to century And in those countries where the expression "religion" has once obtained currency, it has been always and must still, in the future, be applied to each new variation. The connotation of the word is determined by popular usage, and popular convenience.* It can never be limited by scholars or by the self-regarding definition of the apologists of any particular creed.

Of the paramount importance of religion, there can be no doubt. The life of every individual is profoundly affected by religious views and religious feelings, either his own or those of the people by whom he is surrounded, and there is nothing which so deeply affects the happiness of a nation as the predominant religion. It is not surprising, therefore, that the present revival of historical research should have been accompanied by a deep interest in the comparative study of the history of religious beliefs. And we may congratulate the Organising Committee of this scheme of lectures on their desire to bring before American students the latest results to which these enquiries have at pres-

* Professor Max Müller, in his *Lectures on the Science of Religion*, 1873, p 287, talks of "the broad foundations on which all religions are built up,—the belief in a divine power, the acknowledgment of sin, the habit of prayer, the desire to offer sacrifice, and the hope of a future life." But popular usage has been too strong for him. No one of these five is found in Buddhism, yet he calls Buddhism a religion (p. 142 and elsewhere).

ent reached; and on the wisely thought-out arrangements which ensure to their efforts so great a measure of success.

To me, I confess, the choice your Committee have made of the first subject for exposition seems particularly happy. For it is precisely in India that, for us Westerns, the evolution of religious belief is most instructive. It can be traced there with so much completeness, and so much clearness; we can follow it there with so much independence of judgment, with so great an impartiality; and it runs, in spite of the many differences, on general lines so similar to the history of religion in the West, that the lessons to be learnt from it are of the highest value. Nowhere else do we find the records of a movement stretching uninterruptedly over more than three thousand years. Nowhere else has greater earnestness or so much ability been devoted so continuously to religious questions. Nowhere else has there been so much freedom of thought. Nowhere else has the evolution of religion been so little influenced from outside. Yet nowhere else do we find a system at once so similar to our own in the stages and manner of its growth, and so interestingly and absolutely antagonistic to our own in the ultimate conclusions it has reached. And nowhere else do we find so complete a picture of the tendencies and

influences which have brought about the marvellous change from the crude hypotheses of the earliest faith to the sublime conceptions of such original thinkers as those who put the finishing touches to the beautiful Indian picture of the Palace of Truth.

Our own religious beliefs grew up in the basin of the Mediterranean. Jews and Greeks, assisted and influenced in no small degree by Egyptians, laid the foundations. All the most earnest culture of the West has only availed, through so many centuries, to build the superstructure. Ideas similar to the two main and essential conceptions which underlie the whole—the belief in "God" and the belief in the "soul"—are no doubt to be found throughout the world. But in three places only do we find these two ideas developed into systems which can bear comparison with our own, either in the manner or in the length of the period of their growth, or in the complexity and richness of the final result. These three places are Persia, China, and India.

Now, as to Persia, the original beliefs of the Akkadians are only now just beginning to be known. Even as modified and recast by the Assyrians, the records are still for the most part unpublished and untranslated, and the few foremost scholars of Zoroastrianism are not in agreement either as to the date of its sacred books or as to the part it played

up to the final struggle when all was submerged under the flood of a ruthless Muhammadanism. The labours of many generations of scholars will be required to unravel this strange story, and to tell, with any fulness and accuracy of detail, the tragic tale. So in China history is almost a blank, a kind of battle-field for conjecture, before the time of Konfucius. Much has been done, no doubt, towards the elucidation of the religion founded by him on the more ancient faith. But Konfucius did not stand alone in China. We have only one work, of sufficient insight and authority, on the conceptions of Lao Tsu, which seem to the comparative student so much more original. And of the curious history of Buddhism in that country, of the influence it exercised on other beliefs, of the modifications it had itself to submit to, we have no systematic account at all. It is only in India that we have a very complete and authentic record, from a period more than fifteen centuries before the birth of Christ down to the present time, of the evolution of religious belief among a people practically isolated from the rest of the world. There remains, it is true, here also a great deal of important work to be done. But on the main lines at least the history is already remarkably clear. It is full of interest from the comparative point of view. And it reaches its

culminating point in the Buddhist movement,—the main subject of the present course of lectures,—a movement which carried the evolution of religious belief one step farther than has been reached by any other of the numerous religions that history offers to our view.

That step—and it is a step of the first importance—is that Buddhism, alike in its ethics and in its views of the past and of the future, ignores the two theories of God and the soul. This came about in a very curious and instructive way. The oldest records in India (as is true also of the oldest records in every country that has records at all) show us a stage in culture in which the existence of gods and souls is taken for granted. The origin of these two theories is at present shrouded in mystery. Primitive man has left no records. We have only the evidence of those beliefs which are the later outcome of his crude hypotheses. And in attempting to read between the lines of these later records—even in the light, itself very meagre and uncertain, of the existing beliefs of very savage peoples—scholars are not altogether at one.

One or two principal points seem, amid difference of opinion as to details, to be generally admitted. Primitive man, whatever the race he belonged to, made no distinction at all between his experiences in every-

day life and his experiences in dreams. And that was so, not because he looked upon life as a dream, but that he looked upon dreams as realities. When, in his dream, he saw a person he knew, on his awakening, to be dead, he at once concluded, on the mere evidence of his dream, that the person in question was still alive. And when he further recollected, as he sometimes must have done, that the body of the living man had been destroyed—his very nightmare may have been the result of his having feasted on the body of his foe,—then it was quite clear to him that there was a something (a breath, a life, he knew not what) which existed within the body, and was like the body, and which left it when the breath or life departed, to carry on a separate existence of its own. He did not reason much about it, or stay to consider whether its life was eternal or not. But he was too much frightened of it to forget it. And the dread reality afforded him a perfectly simple and a perfectly clear explanation of many otherwise mysterious things.

When he awoke in the morning after hunting all night in his dreams, and learnt from his companions that his body had been there all the time, it was of course his "soul" that had been away. The theory grew and flourished exceedingly. In all ancient books and in most modern ones too, and in travel-

lers' tales about uncivilised and civilised men, we find it cropping up at every turn. Exactly how it grew, the order in which the applications of the theory took shape, is one of the battle grounds of the students of what is so oddly called Anthropology. To discuss the opinions on this point would take us too far from our subject. Suffice to say that the souls outside a man developed into gods. Souls were believed to wander from body to body. Animals had souls, and all things that men feared, and all that moved. The awe-inspiring phenomena of nature were instinctively regarded as the result of spirit action; and rivers, plants, and stars, the earth and air and heavens, became full of ghosts.

One distinguished writer who has turned aside from the easy devious paths of philosophy to the straight and difficult one of history, thinks that all gods were, in origin, the ghosts of ancestors. So uniform an explanation is most improbable. A much more solid basis seems to support the argument that as the oldest recorded gods are godesses, and as man makes God in his own image, the original deities must have arisen at a time when women were the leaders, as in other things, so also in theology. They were born of women, for it was woman who conceived them. And we must make room in

our theory at least as much for the awe inspired by Mother Earth, and by the mysteries of the stars, as for the worship of ancestors. We have to explain how it was that the oldest divinities were almost, if not quite, exclusively feminine. We have to explain why the moon was worshipped before the sun, and certain stars before either, and the Mother Earth before them all.

It is precisely the succession of these curious beliefs that is the interesting point. It was only among the advancing peoples that the changes went very far at all. And these changes are full of information about tribal conflicts and social conditions. For the gods had no existence except in the brains of their worshippers. They were *ideas*, a rough kind of scientific hypotheses. The arrival of a new god meant the birth of a new idea; and a book on *The Birth Days of the Gods* would be not only an epitome of human hopes and fears, but a history of men's views on social questions too.

For the gods, like the men who made them, grew old and feeble and passed away, and their very ghosts were degraded in the minds of the descendants of their creators to the rank of devils. The change in the object of worship was not merely a change in name, with the same or a similar worship; it was accompanied also by a change of view as to the

relations of sex, as to mode of life, as to questions of organisation and government, and as to the forms of possession of goods and land. The worshippers of the new god thought themselves reformers, and often were so. The worshippers of the old gods looked upon the supporters of their rivals as atheists (just as the polytheists on the shores of the Mediterranean called the Christians atheists). But they were not in any case atheists, nor were they the founders of a new era, that was to last and to cure all woes. They only registered a new stage in the progress of thought, which (in this matter as in others) has, in the historic sense, an evolution of its own, independent of the men in whose brain the thought takes shape, and following (in all times and countries) precisely similar lines.

Many such changes had taken place in Indian spirit beliefs before the time of the oldest records that have come down to us. These show a very advanced stage in the ancient soul-theory. And there are no older records of its development along this particular line. The Akkadian records, it is true, go much farther back, and they have many points of analogy which seem to supply the actual historical origin of several later Hindu beliefs. But this is only because those beliefs have been incorporated into orthodox Hinduism from the descend-

ants of those Dravidian peoples, related to the Akkadians, who preceded the Aryans in India. Nothing has yet been found in the Akkadian books showing any historical connection with Vedic beliefs.

On the other hand, we have in the ancient books of the Greeks and Persians, records of beliefs historically connected with the Indian. But these records are later in time than the oldest records in India, and preserve a later phase of the common beliefs. When we find, for instance, in the Zoroastrian books, that the hypothetical beings called in the Vedas "gods" have there already become "devils," we know that we have a later phase of a common belief. For it is the new religion which looks upon the gods of its predecessor as devils, and it is unknown that, in the course of the development of the same system of faith, devils should ever become gods.

The oldest Indian books—that is, the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas—therefore, though they themselves show us an advanced stage in ancient soul theory, are still the most ancient records of the particular line of development which we have to follow. And in them we find the germs of all the subsequent steps in philosophy and in religion that were taken in the valley of the Ganges.

The collection of Vedic hymns, as we now have it, bears of course no date. It resembles in this respect all other collections of similar antiquity, without exception, known to us. The date of the earliest books of each religion can be ascertained only by historical criticism, and so in India also. We have to start with facts that are known. We can argue back from the well established date of the great Buddhist Emperor of India, the famous Asoka. For we find in the literature extant in his time a series of strata, so to speak, of literary and philosophic activity, each of them indisputable evidence of the previous existence of the one before it. The last of these strata, the Buddhist Pitakas and the Sanskrit books of the same period, belong to his time. Estimates have been made of the previous interval that must be allowed successively for each of the other strata, between the time of Asoka and the close of the Vedic period, when the hymns were put into their present shape. And scholars are practically unanimous in the opinion that the Vedas must have been existing as we now have them at least 1000–1200 B.C., to allow time for the subsequent developments. Scholars also agree that they contain a good deal of material even much older than that, and the hymns stand in this last respect again on the same footing as the Buddhist

Pitakas, or the Old Testament, or any other ancient canon.*

They reveal to us a most interesting and instructive picture of a number of clans, closely related to ourselves, engaged in forcing their way into a country already more or less occupied, and occasionally turning aside from their contests with the darker natives to fight among themselves.

Judging from the hymns, the invaders—Aryans as we now call them—were intensely religious; but of morality, except as to customs within the clans, they seem to have had very primitive conceptions. To them the killing of opponents was no murder, and the "conveying" of their neighbour's goods a matter of pride. They have left us no idea on the rights of man (or of woman either); and in foreign politics their guiding principle was conquest. Within the clan, too, life was simple for them. There were no poor, and none too rich. They were not troubled with either priests or landlords. And the desire of their hearts was for increase in children, and in cows. The picture afforded us in the hymns of their daily life, and of their habitual thoughts, has a peculiar charm. It was a childlike and clearly a

* Attempts have recently been made to carry the age of the Vedas still farther back, by arguments based on supposed astronomical allusions. But the basis for these arguments seems very unreliable.

happy race, full of activity, and but little troubled by contemplation or by doubt. Probably even their religion sat lightly upon them, but it would seem from the hymns that they had an unhesitating and childlike faith, which looked upon the great souls animating the nature round them as all-powerful in their worldly affairs.

As time went on it is evident that some of them had however commenced to speculate on the nature of the gods, and had dimly begun to think that there was a unity underlying the manifold forms of spirit life in which the people believed. This is plain from those speculative hymns incorporated into the last and latest book of the great collection called the Rig Veda.

But it is also clear that the ancient Aryans were far too manly and free to be troubled much about their own souls, either before or after the death of the body. There are only a very few short and isolated passages bearing on this side of their spirit theory. They still held with a simple faith to the ancient hypothesis of their savage ancestors as to the existence of a "soul" inside their bodies. And it never occurred to them to doubt for a moment that these souls continued to exist in a sort of misty way after death, or to discuss the question of the duration or cessation of that future life. In all this

we see the bright side of the ancient nature worship, of religion based on the soul theory as held in its early simplicity by a free and advancing and prosperous people. The darker side, which played in all probability a greater part in the daily thoughts and average life of the ordinary man and woman of those days, was that medley of strange beliefs and fears, revealed in the Atharva Veda,—the reliance on omens, and spells, and magic rites, the vague terrors of a life surrounded by all sorts of malign influences, the poisonous fruit of the superstitions of demonology.

While all these ideas, good and bad, were fermenting together, the bolder spirits were ever pushing farther and farther on into the hot plains of India. The details of their gradual progress are indeed hidden in an obscurity which we can scarcely hope now ever to clear up. But the general results are already well ascertained. Before the rise of Buddhism the whole of the country as far East as Patna, had become more or less Aryanised, either by alliance or by conquest, and the Aryan gods (that is to say, the men who worshipped them) held sway from the Kabul hills down to the plains of Bengal.

The religion was, however, not altogether uniform. As the tribes pushed on, their language, partly by the ordinary and necessary growth or decay, partly

by intercourse with other peoples, continually changed. The favour of the gods was to be won only by the spell, as it were, cast over them by the faithful repetition of the ancient words. The words themselves had now become but dimly understood. Schools of priests had been formed to guard the words from destruction, not by writing—which was unknown—but by constant rehearsing. To aid them in their task, elaborate commentaries were composed and handed down, also by memory. Rules of grammar and of exegesis were devised and formulated into schemes of exposition. The whole intellectual power of the nation became for a time concentrated on these subsidiary studies. Works of original power, with the free and child-like spirit which animated the older hymns, became unknown.

The training in these schools was of a curious kind. History in our sense, and science too, were of course entirely unrepresented. The chief weight was placed on memory, and the ingenuity of commentators was much exercised in reconciling the diverse statements of the ancient texts—which could not err—and in finding mystic reasons to explain all the various details of the sacrifice.

Now one of the most striking things about the ancient hymns is the way in which each poet, partly no doubt through his want of expertness in

the use of language, his inability to give due expression to shades of meaning; but partly also through the real fervour of his religious feeling, directed at the time on the one object of his praise—is the way in which each poet so often refers to different gods (Indra, Agni, Prajāpati, Varuṇa, etc.), as being, each one of them, the greatest and the best. There was not really any clear sense of comparison, though the words now seem to imply it. It was simply that the one God, that is to say, the one idea, loomed largest at the time before the mental eye of the poet. And in the explanation of such passages the Brahman Commentators carefully avoid all appearance of rivalry. A truer and—what was probably of more importance from the theologian's point of view—a more edifying explanation lay close to their hands. Already in the Vedas certain of the great souls, the gods, are identified with certain others, and there is even reference to a divinity which, as it were, lay behind them all, and was the basis of their godhead.

Thus there is a reference in the often quoted passage, Rig Veda, iii., 55, 1, to that "great godhead of the gods which is one." And the Brahmans gradually elaborated out of such expressions a conception of a single being out of whom all gods, and all men, and all things had proceeded.

It may be noticed in passing that a precisely similar result was reached, though not exactly by the same process, and at a slightly different chronological stage, in both Greece and China. And though we have no evidence of a like logical process in Assyria, it would seem that Egyptian thinkers also had their speculations of a similar sort. There is nothing strange in this coincidence. It is the exception of Assyria that is really curious. And we need not think to explain the coincidence by any theory of borrowing by anyone of these peoples from the other. For the fact is, that, whenever there is sufficent intelligence and sufficient leisure in a country where the soul theory is held, there, by a logical process which is inevitable, men will come to believe in a number of gods; and then, later on, to perceive a unity behind the many, and to postulate a single divinity as the supposed source of the many gods whom they themselves have really fashioned.

The characteristics of the new divinity, of the one god—that is to say, the connotations of the new idea—will differ according to the different conceptions out of which it has arisen. And in this respect the speculations of the Brahmans in India are especially worthy of consideration. With them the first conception was reached, not as among the Jews, by gradual additions to, and modifications of the char-

acter of one divinity, but by a purely philosophical reasoning as to the necessary nature of, the first cause. The predicates they applied to him—or, more accurately, to it—were almost exclusively negative. It is the unknowable cause of the knowable, itself however without cause. It is the light in which all that is perceived is seen, but there is no light by means of which it can be seen. It is invisible, incomprehensible, without descent or colour, without eyes, or ears, or hands, or feet, the everlasting, all pervading, ever-present, extremely subtle, unchangeable source and support of all that is.* All the rest, including the great gods whom the ignorant worship and rightly worship as the highest that they know, is delusion. And the real insight, the only abiding salvation, consists in getting to know the impermanence of all else, and the identity of one's own soul with this Great Soul in which all else lives and moves and has its being.

There is great beauty and poetry in the passages in which this very ancient Pantheism is set out in the literature older than the rise of Buddhism, and though the exact formulation of this system of thought—well known as Vedāntism—is due to later hands, it is evident that there was much earnest thinking and fearless philosophising in the time of

* Mund., Up., i., 1, 5.

the oldest Upanishads in which these ideas find their earliest and most poetical expression.

The Indian formulation of this monistic theory of the universe is indeed in all probability the most logical and most thorough-going of all similar attempts that have been preserved to us. The very striking analogies in Greek philosophy, more especially in Parmenides (though he was a century later), cannot even be properly worked out owing to the fragmentary condition in which alone the earlier Greek speculations have survived. And the corresponding Chinese conceptions, either of the Konfucian or Taoist schools, seem to be altogether wanting in clearness and precision.

This very able and beautiful monistic philosophy was the dominant factor in Indian thought, when Gotama the Buddha appeared. Many centuries afterwards it was elaborated and systematised, more especially by Śankara, into that Vedāntist philosophy now quite supreme in India. In those early days it had no doubt stronger rivals. When the Pañcarātra books have been made accessible to scholars it will be found, I think, that they contain a systematic philosophy—built of the same cards, perhaps, as the Vedānta (god and soul)—but independent of it, and at least equal to it in beauty if not in logical power. We hear also of Lokāyatas,

or Materialists, who must have preceded Buddhism, as they are mentioned in the oldest Buddhist books. The Jaina faith, which arose at the same time as Buddhism, has also a voluminous literature. When that is published it cannot fail to throw much light upon the religious life of India at the time when the founders of the two new religions were rivals. But there was little original thought in Jainism. Its views are rather isolated propositions than a system of philosophy, and it would never have been a formidable rival to Vedāntism.*

It was quite otherwise with the Sānkhya system. Centuries afterwards, when Buddhism had become corrupted, it would seem that the Sānkhya was almost about to supplant the Vedānta; and as it has often been held by European scholars that Buddhism is more or less based on the Sānkhya, it will be necessary to consider the question of its priority. Logically it stands half-way between the Vedānta and Buddhism, and was therefore a possible stepping-stone to the Buddhist position. And the Buddhists themselves acknowledge that Kapila, to whom the Sānkhya books ascribe the foundation of their philosophy, lived several generations before the Buddha. It is therefore, to say the least, pos-

* See the remarks of Professor Jacobi (and there could be no better authority) in his *Kalpa Sutra*, p. 3.

sible that the Sānkhya system also preceded the Buddhist, or was the outcome of the same intellectual movement.

But what we know is, that in the centuries immediately before and after the birth of Christ (that is, some centuries after the rise of Buddhism) it was the Sānkhya rather than the Vedānta, which was the predominant school, and that its adherents claimed a still more remote origin for their speculations. Professor Garbe, of Heidelberg, who is the best authority on the subject,—he has done for the Sānkhya the same sort of service as has been so well rendered to the Vedānta by Professor Deussen, of Kiel,—is of opinion that the Sānkhya teachers are right, and that their teaching does indeed go back before the rise of Buddhism. The point seems to me, I confess, to be most doubtful. All the Sānkhya books are much later in date. The very oldest of them—the Sānkhya Kārikā of Īśvara Krishṇa—cannot be fixed at an earlier period than a full thousand years after the time of Gōtama the Buddha. And though it is quite certain that the system, as a system already well worked out, was older than that,—we find it referred to, and in great part adopted, along with Vedāntism, in books, certainly two or three centuries older; in Manu, for instance, and in the Bhagavad Gītā,—yet there is still a great

gap to be bridged over. All the available evidence on the point is collected, with great care and completeness, by Professor Garbe, in his just published *Sānkhya Philosophie*, a book which will, I hope, soon be translated into English. And on weighing all the evidence it seems to me that the only conclusion to be rightly drawn is that, though there is no evidence that Kapila was the real author of the whole Sānkhya philosophy, there were, before the time of the Buddha, isolated thinkers, of whose words we have no trace, who elaborated views similar to those out of which the Sānkhya was eventually developed.

For what do we find? There is ample evidence even in the books of the orthodox body of Brahman teachers to show that when Buddhism arose there was not only much discussion of the ultimate problems of life, and a keen interest in the result, but also that there was a quite unusually open field for all sorts of speculations. In no other age and country do we find so universally diffused among all classes of the people so earnest a spirit of enquiry, so impartial and deep a respect for all who posed as teachers, however contradictory their doctrines might be.

It is true that the orthodox books are filled with the orthodox view. But this is only quite natural. How very little of precise and accurate information