

A painting of a lotus flower in a stone pot on a lake at sunset. The lotus is golden and glowing, set in a dark, ornate stone pot. The pot sits on a small stone platform in the middle of a calm lake. In the background, there are misty mountains under a warm, orange and yellow sunset sky. The water reflects the colors of the sky and the lotus.

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**SIX LECTURES ON
VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY**

Swami Abhedananda

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SWAMI ABHEDANANDA



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Philosophy Of Good And Evil

Whosoever has made a careful study of the phenomena of the universe, has noticed that nature is bisected, as it were, by the inevitable dualism of her opposing forces. The world of phenomena bears testimony to the constant fight of these two sets of contrasting forces, which have a multitude of designations, such as: good and evil, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, heat and cold, attraction and repulsion, love and hatred, pleasure and pain, health and disease, life and death. On the one side, we see about us the signs of goodness, virtue, knowledge, love, self-sacrifice, health and all that makes life sweet and worth living; on the other side we find the expressions of evil, vice, ignorance, hatred, selfishness, murder, pestilence, disease, plague, earthquake, and all that makes life bitter, unhappy and miserable. Nature stands before us, as it were, with a benign and loving expression, ever ready to pour on our heads the blessings and comforts which she holds in one hand, while at the same time she affrights us by showing the sharp, shining edge of the drawn sword of destruction and evil which she holds in her other hand. This dual aspect in nature cannot be denied, and we are all bound to experience one or the other of these two sides at every moment of our earthly existence. Whenever we experience the good side of nature, we rejoice and feel ourselves extremely happy; but our heart trembles, our breath stops, when we are face to face with the other aspect. Nature has ever been expressing herself in these two ways. What we see today was seen thousands of years ago and will be seen thousands of years hence. Centuries have gone by, nation after nation has passed away, but has nature ever ceased to follow her course? No. Her laws are perennial; her course is eternal. If we read the histories of ancient nations, we see that these two aspects of nature were as clearly manifested in the past as they are now. Constant attempts have been made to trace the causes of these contrasting forces and contradictory events of the phenomenal world. The best thinkers and philosophers of every age and clime have devoted their energies most earnestly and enthusiastically to the solution of the mystery of the good and evil aspects of nature, and to tracing how this dualism began and what was its cause. All the religious systems and philosophies of the world are but so many attempts of the human mind to reach the proper solution of this problem of good and evil, and to discover why such a thing as evil exists, why there is so much misery, suffering, crime and vice about us, and how these can be annihilated.

All such attempts and explanations can be classified under three names; first, optimistic; secondly, pessimistic; and thirdly, monistic. We find the most ancient of the optimistic explanations of the dual aspect of nature in the Zend-Avesta, the scriptures of the ancient Persians, or Iranians. These ancient Persian optimists looked at the good and evil forces of nature as two entities eternally separate from each other, and believed that they were created by two distinct beings, or spirits. The one was called Ahura Mazda, the creator of all good that exists in the universe. The other was called Ahriman, the creator of all evil. The one half of the universe was created by the good God Ahura Mazda, who is omniscient, all-powerful, and governor of all good thoughts and ideas, and of everything that is good in the universe; while the other half, and all that is evil, was created by Ahriman, the evil spirit.

At first these two spirits were friendly and lived together, but afterwards Ahriman separated from Ahura Mazda, rebelled against him, and acted as his constant adversary. When the good God, Ahura Mazda, created the world and made it good in every way, the malicious Ahriman, who is described as a wily serpent, showed his power and tricks by sowing the seeds of sin and evil in the beautiful creation of Ahura Mazda. Although he was punished by

Ahura Mazda, he did not stop fighting with his most powerful enemy. This fight will continue until the day of judgment and the renovation of the world, when the victory of good over evil will be complete; then Ahura Mazda will create another and better world, free from sin and evil. Ahura Mazda has several good spirits, or angels under his command; Ahriman also has many evil spirits as his attendants. Both are working through their attendants. Such is the explanation of the cause of good and evil in the Persian scriptures, the Zend-Avesta.

This Persian idea of the two separate creators of good and evil .was adopted by the ancient Jews during the Babylonian captivity, which lasted from 536 to 333 B.C. The Persian paradise, Aryana Vaejo, became the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament; Elohim Yahveh, the tribal god of the house of Israel, became the creator of good and of the universe; while Satan, the old time servant of Yahveh, was endowed with the wicked and malicious spirit of Ahriman, and afterwards became the devil in the New Testament. It was at this time that the ancient Hebrews received from the Persians the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and bright spirits. They accepted the Persian belief in punishment after death and in the resurrection of the spiritual body, as well as in the supernatural Saviour of the world. Thus we can trace the origin of the mythological explanation regarding the cause of good and evil as described in the Scriptures of the Hebrews, Christians, and Mahommedans. The same ideas of reward and punishment, of good and evil, prevail amongst the Mahommedans, who believe in the Old Testament as much as do the Christians and Hebrews. The idea that good and evil are the results of two distinct and eternally separate causes pervades many of the sayings of Jesus the Christ, as, for instance, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." (Math. vii. 18.) By this simile Jesus the Christ not only separated the cause of good from that of evil, but he indicated that evil can never produce good, nor good, evil. He also described the punishment of evil when he said, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." (Math. vii. 19.)

According to the synoptic gospels, as they have been handed down to us, Jesus believed that the punishment of evil is the casting of the evil-doer into fire. This idea gradually developed into the hell-fire doctrine of Christian theology. Jesus also believed in devils, when he cast them out, as well "as in Satan, the creator of all evils, and Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and in their attendants. (See Math. xii. 26, 27.) Moreover, he believed that he cast out devils by the spirit of God, thus proclaiming that God, who is all good, can never produce any evil.

According to the New Testament, all diseases, sorrows, suffering, misery, crime, sin and all that is evil, are the works of Satan, or the evil spirit. Satan, in the New Testament, is a personage of great importance, as he is the cause of the numberless and immeasurable evils which exist in the world. He is the prince, or ruler of this world. (John xii. 31.) In short, he is the pillar of the systems of Mazdaism, Judaism, Christianity and Mahommedanism. If that prominent pillar were taken away the whole world of evil would remain causeless and unaccounted for. Although, ever since the beginning of the Christian era, the Biblical explanation of the cause of good and evil has been accepted and preached by the priests and theologians of Christendom, yet the majority of minds have never stopped to ask the question, why does the good God, who is the Creator of the world, at once omnipotent, omniscient and all-merciful, permit Satan to tempt mankind, to bring evil into the world, and to spoil the goodness and purity of His beautiful creation? That question, however, is of vital importance. The solution of this problem has been sought for again and again, and the Christian theologians, up to this day, have failed to give any satisfactory answer. All their attempts have ended in making the good God either limited in power, partial, unjust, or cruel. Some of the Hebrew prophets, however, believed that God was the creator of evil as well as of good. "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make

peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”(Isaiah xlv. 6, 7.) Again Nehemiah said, “Did not our God bring all this evil upon us?”(Nehemiah xiii. 18.)

This idea was afterwards accepted by the Calvinists of the seventeenth century. They believed that God was responsible for the good and evil of the world, otherwise He would be limited in power. By attempting to solve the problem in this way they left God partial and unjust. St. Augustine tried to solve the question of good and evil by formulating the dogma of predestination and grace. This was no better than the solution offered later by Calvin. Instead of tracing the cause of good and evil, it made the great God unjust and merciless in relation to suffering humanity. Why should one man be predestined to suffer and another to enjoy? The doctrine of predestination does not give us any reason. Such explanations have made many a thinker an unbeliever in God and pessimistic in his views. Many a soul, saddened by the spectacle of wickedness and suffering in the world has cried aloud in despair, “There is no God who can be called merciful, just and loving”.

From the time of the Gnostics of the Middle Ages, who believed that this world was originally created, not by the good God, but by a devil, and that it is to be slowly and gradually purified by the power of the merciful God through Jesus the Christ, down to the present day, there have been many free-thinkers who have held that the creator of the world is not an all-merciful and just God, but a being with a diabolical nature. August Comte, the most prominent of the modern free-thinkers, after seeing the imperfection of this world, regretted, like Alfonso the King of Castile, that he had not been present at the time of the creation, as he could have given such excellent advice to the creator!

Another class of optimists say it is true that this world is full of sorrow, suffering and misery, but it is the best world that God could create. Let us shut our eyes to evil, which can never be avoided as long as the present conditions exist, and make the best use of our time, because matter, by its inherent nature, possesses a diabolical character of its own. A similar opinion was held by Plato, Leibnitz, Dr. Martineau, and other optimists of this class. There are other optimistic thinkers who deny the existence of evil in the creation of a just, merciful and good God. They say it is all good, there cannot be any evil. They try to see good everywhere and in every act, and declare that all sufferings, misery and hardships are for our good. If any blow comes to us, it is for our good. Everything is for our good, and must be so, because the nature of creation is inherently good. They deny the creation of evil, and explain that good is a positive reality, and that what we call evil is only a negation of good. Good predominates in the world although we may not see it at present in all cases. Thus, instead of tracing the cause of evil, they deny it and shut their eyes to it. This kind of optimism is one extreme; pessimistic thinkers, on the contrary, go to another extreme. They make evil a positive reality, and good a negation of evil. They make destruction, death and misery the goal of the universe and deny the existence of good. They say that suffering and misery are the conditions of our existence, that pleasure and happiness come accidentally. The struggle for our existence involves some kind of suffering which we cannot avoid. If all our wishes be fulfilled the moment they arise in our minds, then how shall we spend our time? How shall we occupy our lives? There would be no struggle for existence, consequently no activity, no life. As the human frame will be rent into pieces if the weight of the atmospheric pressure which we are unconsciously carrying all the time be removed, so according to the pessimistic theory, the lives of men will fail of their purpose and end if they are relieved from the burden of need, hardship, adversity and evil. There is no way of avoiding this except by death. Life is not worth living according to these pessimists. They do not see any good in life. They must find evil everywhere. The best way of escaping evil is by committing suicide. They do not believe in the idea that a creator who is merciful, just and all-good, created this world of misery,

suffering, sorrow and evil. They do not say who created it. Thus the pessimistic explanation leads to another extreme, and does not satisfy any rationalistic mind.

A better explanation of the cause of good and evil is needed. But if the optimists are justified in seeing good in everything, and in saying that God created this world for our pleasure and happiness, the pessimists are equally justified in seeing evil in everything and in saying that God created this world for the suffering and misery of millions. The true explanation lies neither in optimism nor in pessimism. They are the two extremes. As long as the idea of the special creation of the world by an extra-cosmic personal God is preached, so long the true philosophy of good and evil will not be properly understood. In the West, people are beginning to wake up from the sleep of superstition and prejudice, and to see, through science and logic, that there can not be two separate creators of good and evil who are constantly fighting against each other, nor two forces of nature; but that all the phenomena of nature are but the expressions of one eternal Energy. The whole universe is the result of the evolution of that one Energy. Nature is one, and not two.

The theory of the creators of good and evil is supplanted by the doctrine of evolution. Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, with their many names, such as Jehovah, Satan, Devil and others, having played their parts for centuries on the stage of the universe, are now slowly withdrawing themselves into oblivion. The idea of a special creation at a definite time, has been followed by that of a gradual process of evolution extending through millions of years, in which extra-cosmic creators have neither part nor share. To a scientific mind the Garden of Eden has no attraction of any kind, it has become like a fool's paradise. The fall of man is no longer a reality, but a mythological story. Thoughtful men and women of Western Countries who believe in the doctrine of evolution are just beginning to unlearn the scriptural dogmas. The time has come when people are applying logic and reason in solving the problem of good and evil. The tendency of scientific researches and investigations is to discover the unity of nature, which underlies the apparent duality of the opposing forces, and to explain the variety of phenomena through that underlying unity. In India, this unity of nature was understood by the monistic thinkers and Vedanta philosophers many centuries before the birth of Christ. These monistic thinkers understood from the beginning that this world was not created at a special time by a special being, and aided by logic and reason they came to believe in the doctrine of evolution.

In the voluminous writings of the Hindu sages there is no word which means a creation out of nothing. The word they use literally means "projection," answering to the modern idea of evolution. Unlike the Western people of today, they had nothing to unlearn, as they had slowly and gradually discovered the true cause of good and evil, and afterwards explained their mutual relation as clearly as possible. They said that good and evil are relative terms, one of which cannot exist without the other. What we call "good" depends upon the existence of what we call "evil," and evil exists only in relation to good. Being interdependent terms they cannot be separated. In trying to separate them and to make each stand by itself as independent of the other, we not only destroy their relative and interdependent nature, but we destroy the terms themselves. The moment you try to separate good from evil you find this to be true. Evil cannot exist alone. If you try to make evil stand by itself as entirely separate from good, you can no longer recognize it as evil. Consequently, according to the Vedanta philosophers, the difference between good and evil is not one of kind, but of degree, like the difference between light and darkness. Again, the same thing can appear as good and as evil under different circumstances. That which appears as good in one case, may appear as evil if the conditions change and the results be different. The same fire may be called a giver of life and comfort, a bestower of happiness and a producer of good when it saves the life of a half-frozen man or when it gives us warmth in the coldest days of winter, or when it cooks our

food, or guides our feet; but it will be called the producer of evil and a curse of God when it destroys life, or inflicts injury on man, or on his property. Still, the nature of fire is to burn, and this nature does not change. The great London fire destroyed many lives, brought ruin and destruction to many families, but at the same time it destroyed the germs of a plague which would have done more evil. So it was both good and evil at the same time. The same force of gravitation is called good when it attracts the molecules of our bodies and keeps together the atoms of our clothes, gives shape to our houses, our bodies, and this earth where we are now living, but it is the producer of evil when it kills a man who falls from the roof of a house. Electricity is good when it gives light, moves a street car, cures a pain, or relieves a disease, but it is evil when it crushes a man under the shock of its tremendous currents. As electricity, it is neither good nor evil, neither positive nor negative, and the other forces of nature are neither good nor evil, but their expressions may be called good or evil according to the results they produce. The forces of nature are running in the universe with tremendous activity and mad rush, like the currents of a mighty river which brings what we call good and blessings on one shore, and evil and destruction on the other.

As, standing on one shore where good prevails, we say the river is very good, it is the producer of good, etc., so, standing on the other shore, we call the same river a producer of evil, a creator of destruction. Similarly, we say the forces of nature are good or evil according to our standard, our ideas and our interests. On the one hand, the river fertilizes the country by depositing rich soil and helping the growth of vegetation; on the other hand, the same river destroys villages and all that stands in its way.

Good and evil exist in our minds. That which fulfils our interests is called good, and that which brings to us misery or anything which we do not want, is called evil. When we look at the phenomena of nature by piecemeal, without recognizing their connection, we do not get the proper explanation of events. But if we look at the same phenomena as related to one another and to the whole universe, then we discover the true explanation, and we are no longer puzzled. Then the proper cause of good and evil is understood. It is limitation, the inability to recognize the relation of the part to the whole. According to the monistic philosophers of India, it is impossible to find anything absolutely good, or absolutely evil in this world of relativity. That which we call good is only one phase and the other is evil. When we ignore the one phase, we see the other phase as alone. The same event may produce evil in one country and good in another. The famine in India killed millions by starvation, but it made the American farmers richer than ever before. The famine has done evil in India, but good in America. This is true in every case. Our life, which is a great blessing to us, depends upon the life of others. The maintenance of our life causes thousands to die. Millions of lower animals are killed every day for our food. Each stomach has become a cemetery and each tooth a tombstone. When one man murders another, his motive is to do good to himself or to his family, or to society, or to fulfil some purpose which he considers good. The murderer may believe that he does some good to somebody, but, as he takes a wrong course of action, he is called a murderer and gets no sympathy from anybody, and is punished by society and the State. When a big murderer, however, comes from the battle-field after committing hundreds of murders to possess another's territory, we praise him and honor him and call him the greatest hero, and reward him. But if we analyse the nature of the work he has done, we find that he has committed many murders to serve his country. As the murderer of multitudes is supposed to do good to his country, so possibly the man who kills but one person may do some good somewhere, although we may not recognize it as such. Our intellect is short-sighted, therefore we cannot always see the true results of our actions. As we cannot draw a sharp line of demarcation between the good and evil results of the physical forces of nature and cannot say that this is good and good alone, so we cannot separate the good and evil

results of our moral acts. That which is morally good in one case may be evil in another. As, for instance, the commandment of God is supposed to be a moral good, and beneficial to all. Think of the command which God gave to Saul; "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass." (1 Samuel xv. 3.) We call it a good act because God did it, but if one man commands another to do such a horrible deed what will you call him? Such is our judgment. We say many things without knowing why we say them. Let us open our eyes and see how far good goes and how it is mixed with evil. Every act which we do must be backed by a motive, that motive again is for the good of some or for the evil of some. We may, or may not, understand it, but the results of our acts are always mixed with good and evil. Take, for instance, the nearest example. I am talking to you. Perhaps I am doing some good. At least, I intend to do so. But at the same time I am causing the death of millions of microbes. It may be good to me, or to you, but the poor animalculae would not call it good. When we see the results of this act from our standpoint we call it good, but if we were to look at it from the microbes' standpoint it would appear quite different, they would doubtless call it evil. If we judge everything from our standpoint, we can never know whether it is really good or evil, because our standard is limited and imperfect. Those who do not recognize the results of acts from different standpoints are liable to all kinds of error. If I judge the whole universe by my standard, my judgment will be very poor. But when I look at things from the various standpoints, I can understand how the same event can produce good and evil in relation to different conditions. Every mistake we make becomes a great teacher in the long run. Thus evil has its good, and good has its evil side. Therefore good and evil go hand in hand. But ordinarily, wherever we find a preponderance of good over evil we designate it good, and the opposite as evil. Again, that which is sinful to one may be virtuous to another. Consider the different standards of sin among the Mahomedans, the Mormons and the Christians. Compare the scriptures of the world and see how what is a virtue in the Old Testament is a vice to men who believe in other scriptures. If polygamy is a sin according to the Christians, it is a virtue with the Mahomedans and Mormons, and was such with the ancient Jews. That which is good for some persons, as inculcated by their religion, may be evil to others living under a different dispensation.

Thus, we cannot draw a sharp line between good and evil. Punishment and reward, according to the Vedanta philosophy, are but the reactions of our own actions. It says that every action must have a similar reaction. If the action be good, the reaction must be the same. Vedanta philosophy says "Every action, whether backed by good or bad motives is covered with its opposite, as fire is enveloped with smoke." If we examine our own lives we will notice that good often comes out of evil. If the greater number of personal misfortunes have their good side, hardly any good fortune ever befell any one which did not give, either to the same or to some other person, something to regret.

The Vedanta philosophers try to explain the so-called punishment and reward by referring to the law of cause and sequence, the law of action and reaction. Action and reaction are opposite and equal, says physical law. When we do certain acts we are sure to reap certain results. But, if the results come before we have forgotten the causes which brought them, we call them either rewards, or punishments. If a good act is done today, the result may come at once, or after many years. God never punishes the wicked, nor rewards the virtuous. He shines like the impartial sun equally upon the heads of sages and sinners. It is our own acts that bring the results, either in the form of reward or punishment. When we understand clearly the law of cause and sequence, and of action and reaction, then we cease to blame God or any other extra-cosmic creator of evil. Then we do not say that evil has been interpolated from without. If we know that all the forces of nature, both physical and mental,

are but so many expressions of one eternal Energy or Divine Will, which is far beyond the relative good and evil, then we do not see good and evil in the universe, but on the contrary, we find everywhere the expression of that Divine Will. The nature of an effect must be the same as that of the cause, because effect is nothing but the manifested state of the cause, and if the cause of the universe be one eternal, divine Energy, then the universe, as a whole, can be neither good nor evil.

When we can throw aside the narrow, limited glass of our relative standard, through which we are now looking at the events of life and put on our mental eye the glass of divine energy or universal will, then we shall no longer see good and evil, virtue and vice, or reward and punishment. But we shall see the expression of one law of causation everywhere. Then we shall not blame our parents, or Satan, or God or anybody, but shall understand that all our misery is but the result of our own acts which we did in this life or in a past incarnation. If we understand that as electricity is neither positive nor negative, but appears as positive or negative when manifested through a magnet, we can apprehend that the laws of nature only appear to us as good or evil when they express themselves through the gigantic magnet of the phenomenal universe. If we realize that the eternal Energy, or the Divine Will, appears as good or evil only as related to our minds and lives, then we can say, as the great Sages in India said, "God does not create good or evil, nor does He take the virtue or sin of anybody. He does not punish the wicked nor reward the virtuous. Our intelligence being covered, as it were, with the cloud of ignorance and relativity, deluded as we are, we imagine, on account of our imperfect understanding, that God creates good or evil, that His creation is good or evil, that He punishes or rewards." It is through our ignorance of Truth that we do not recognize the divinity which pervades the universe, standing high above the reach of our conception of good and evil.

Let us strive to see that divinity, by going behind the phenomenal appearances of good and evil. Let us go to the Eternal Source of all phenomena. Let us first reach the highest plane of spiritual oneness, and standing on that plane of Divine Will, let us understand that good and evil are two aspects of One which is neither good nor evil, but Absolute. Then, and then alone, we shall transcend good and evil and enjoy eternal bliss in this life.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AFTER THE LECTURE.

Is Vedanta optimistic or pessimistic?

Vedanta philosophy is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It enquires into the true nature of good and evil, describes their interdependent relation, and ultimately leads human minds to the realization of Divinity as the life and soul of all phenomenal objects.

Is not the Creator of evil separate from the Creator of good?

Vedanta teaches evolution and not special creation; consequently it has no need of the unscientific conception of two extra-cosmic creators, the one of good and the other of evil.

How do you explain good and evil by the theory of evolution?

In the process of evolution that which appears beneficial to us under certain conditions is called good; and that which is injurious to us in any way is called evil.

What does Vedanta say regarding the inheritance of original sin?

Vedanta does not recognize any such thing as original sin, which one is bound or destined to inherit.

What is the meaning and cause of sin?

Sin means selfishness. It is the result of ignorance of one's true nature, or Divine Self.

Does your philosophy teach Vicarious atonement?

No. But it teaches how to attain at-one-ment, or oneness with the Supreme Spirit through the realization of the Divinity within.

Can a sinner reach perfection?

Yes. When a sinner realizes spiritual oneness with his true Self which is pure, sinless and divine, that very moment he becomes free from all sins and imperfections; and he remains so for ever.

Are we responsible for our deeds, good or evil ?

Yes. We are responsible for every action, both mental and physical. Moreover we are bound to reap the results, the deed will surely return to the doer.

How do you differentiate good from evil actions ?

By the motives that prompt them. An evil action may result in benefit to others, but is not on that account a good action, nor can it bless the doer of it.

The Word And The Cross In Ancient India

Since the beginning of the Christian era the followers of Christ have popularised the two great sacred symbols of the ancient Aryans—the Word or the Son of God, and the Cross. Although these two symbols were unknown amongst the Semitic races, especially the ancient Hebrews, yet they were known to the pre-Christian Greek philosophers as well as to the Aryan philosophers and thinkers who lived in ancient India.

The conception that the Word was the only begotten Son of the Father, the first-born, or the Son of God, was rooted deep in the abstruse philosophical speculations of the Aryan minds who tried to bridge over the gulf that exists between the visible and the invisible, between the phenomenal and the noumenal, between the individual soul of man and God the Creator of all. The Aryan seekers after the ultimate cause of the universe and the true relation of soul to God advanced many theories to explain the apparent separation between the Creator and the created, between God and the soul of man; and made various attempts to discover the means by which the two can be brought together in closer union and by which the soul of man will return to its Creator.

In ancient Judaism, however, the conception of Jehovah was so objective, so far from the universe, so majestic and so high that the idea of union between the individual soul and Jehovah or even its approach to His throne was considered to be blasphemous, and insulting to Jehovah the Supreme Deity. The result of this conception was that the idea of the sonship of man, or of the Word, never took any hold upon the ancient Semitic minds. The superficial readers of the Old Testament may find some vague expressions of the idea of sonship of man in such passages as: “Ye are the children of the Lord your God”—Deut. xiv. i; or in the passage where Moses says: “Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful and hast forgotten God that formed thee”—Deut. xxxii. 18; or when he asks: “Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?”—Deut. xxxii. 6. In whatever manner the Christian theologians might interpret such passages they never meant the same idea of the fatherhood of God, or the sonship of man, or of the Word or of the Christ which pervades the Fourth Gospel. Moses meant nothing more than the fatherly goodness of the Creator. Through the paternal goodness of Elohim Yahveh, Abraham became the friend of God. A similar meaning lies behind the passage where Adam is described, once only in the New Testament, as the Son of God.

The deep philosophical meaning which is connected with the first verse of the Fourth Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,” was never expressed before by any of the writers either of the New or of the Old Testaments. Some of the Christian theologians have tried to trace the origin of the meaning of the Divine Word as given in the Fourth Gospel to certain expressions of some Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament. For instance, they refer to the passage, “By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth”—Psalm xxxiii. 6. Some again refer to another passage: “He sent his word and healed them”—Psalm cvii. 20. In these and similar other passages “word” does not stand for any other meaning than simple commandment, as we find in the verse: “He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth; his word runneth very swiftly”—Psalm cxlvii. 15. Thus we can understand that in the Jewish Scriptures there is no historical antecedent of the idea of the Divine Word as the Son of God which is described by the writer of the Fourth Gospel in the first verse of the first chapter.

The Oriental scholars are unanimous in their opinion that the writer of the Fourth Gospel was a follower of Philo, the reformed Jewish philosopher, who was a contemporary of Jesus and who lived in Alexandria from 20 B.C. to 60 A.D., but never heard of Jesus. The writings of Philo Judeas abound in passages which show that he was a student of Greek philosophy and that he adopted the Greek conception of the Word, or the only begotten Son of God, as explained by the Stoic philosophers of the pre-Christian era. It was through Philo that the Greek conception of the Divine Word was introduced amongst the thoughtful class of the Jews then living in Alexandria, and was afterwards identified with Jesus the Christ by the writer of the Fourth Gospel, and was later accepted by Christians generally. Alexandria was in those days the principal centre of education and culture, where Jewish, Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist philosophers met and interchanged thoughts and religious ideas. The Greek philosophers called the Divine Word *Logos*. *Logos* is a Greek word which meant at first simply word, not as a mere sound, but as thought embodied in sound. The theory of the *Logos* first originated with Heraclitus, one of the earliest Greek philosophers who lived about 460 B.C. Although he believed that fire was the primitive element of the phenomenal universe, still he postulated some power, force, or law which controlled the material element fire. He called that power *Logos*, that is, reason or order. Though the theory of the *Logos*,—that reason, or order, was the primal cause of the Cosmos, originated in Greece with Heraclitus, yet it did not develop in meaning until the time of the Stoics. The Stoic philosophers believed that *Logos*, or Supreme Reason, or God, pervaded all matter. It was not only the Creator of all things but controller and ruler also. The Stoic philosophers held that the *Logos* was universal and eternal and that the human soul possessed a portion of the universal *Logos* and therefore man had a share of intelligence and reason. They believed that word, or speech, was the manifestation of Reason, or thought, which would remain as non-existent for us, without the power of speech. This *Logos* became the medium through which the transcendent Cause of the universe was related to the phenomenal world. It was like the bridge between God and the world. Philo's mind, which was seeking some explanation for the relation between Jehovah and the world, adopted the Stoic explanation and the theory of the *Logos*.

In Philo's hands the theory of the *Logos* gradually developed in its meaning. By *Logos* he wished to express not merely word, but the thought, or idea of which word or speech is but the manifestation. As the audible or perceptible sound of a word is the expression of an imperceptible thought or idea, so the visible universe is the expression of the ideal universe, or the universe in a thought form existing in the Divine mind. This ideal creation, or concept of the universe, or type of the universe in the Divine mind was the *Logos*, and it was called by Philo the only begotten Son, or unique Son. Philo always used the only begotten Son in its philosophical sense, that is, as the Thought of God, made visible in the world either by creation or projection, but there is nothing in his writings to show that he ever personified the *Logos*. These terms, more or less poetical with Philo, became afterwards most technical when the *Logos* was identified with Christ by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The author of this gospel did not identify the *Logos* with Jesus of Nazareth, who was son of Mary, but with Christ the incarnation of the ideal man, the perfect type of man which existed in the Divine mind from the beginning. As the *Logos* was the only begotten son of God according to Philo, who never heard of Jesus the Christ, so it was with his disciples. The author of the Fourth Gospel, believing in Jesus as the perfect type of man, gave him all the predicates of the *Logos* and described him as the Son of God.

Some scholars are of opinion that this meaning which was given to the *Logos* or word by Philo and the Neo Platonists of later date was the result of the influence of the Hindu philosophers who lived in Alexandria and Greece about the time of Alexander the Great, 333

B.C. This has been supported by the writings of Eusebius, who quotes a work on Platonic philosophy by Aristocles, who states therein on the authority of Aristoxenes, a pupil of Aristotle, that an Indian philosopher came to Athens and had a discussion with Socrates. When Socrates told him that his philosophy consisted in inquiries about the life of man, the Indian philosopher is said to have smiled, and to have replied that no one could understand things human who did not understand things divine.

In the most ancient writings of the Hindus, the Vedas, we find the idea of Logos most clearly expressed. There are many Sanskrit words used in the Vedas which signify that Divinity is the Lord of Speech, or word, the Lord of thought and reason, or Logos. For instance, *Brihaspati* is a Sanskrit compound word which we read often in the Vedas. *Brihas* comes from the Sanskrit root verb *Brih* or *Barh*, meaning to break forth or drive forth; from the same root Latin *Verbum* and English *Word* can be derived; and *Pati* means lord or father. Therefore *Brihaspati* means the Lord or Father of word. A synonym of *Brihaspati* is the Sanskrit *Vachaspati*—*Vachas* or *Vak* (the same as *Vox*) means word. So *Vachaspati* also means the Lord or Father of word, or speech. In *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* we read *Vak vai Brahma*, “The word was Brahman”, or the Absolute. Again, it is stated that “That, of which these things are born, by which when born they live, and into which they return and enter after death, or dissolution, is Brahman.” “He with his mind united himself with his word.” “In the beginning, Divine *Vak*, or Word eternal, without beginning or end, consisting of wisdom, was uttered by the Self-existent One from which all activities proceeded.” “In the beginning the Lord of the universe shaped from the words the names and forms of all beings, and the procedure of all activities.” In one of the ancient writings of the Hindus we read: “I know that great Self-effulgent Being who thought all forms and made their names.” “He desired let a second body be born of me and embraced word with his mind.” “All things that can be thought of had beginning in word, or the eternal concept in the Divine mind.” Again, in the *Mahabharata* we read: “He who exists by himself let first stream forth the Word, the eternal without beginning or end, the Divine Word which we read in the Veda, whence proceeded the evolution of the world.” The Hindus believe that the phenomena of the world exist because they are in the Veda. The word *Veda* does not stand for any book or writing but for Logos, or Sophia, or Wisdom, and comprehends all named concepts necessary for the creation of all created things. In the Veda it is said: “When the Lord projected the concept of the earth from His Divine mind, the earth was formed, etc. By Word the Vedic sages did not mean mere sound, but thought or concept in the Divine mind; therefore, the Divine mind was the Father, and Word or concept or ideal type was the Son, like the Greek Logos, as explained by Philo.

The later Hindu philosophers took up this idea, discussed it, and wrote volumes after volumes on the Logos theory. Whenever any man or woman reached perfection and manifested divinity, he or she was worshipped as the incarnation of the Word, the first-born, or the manifestation of the ideal man or woman as existing in the Divine mind. Krishna, Siva, Rama, Buddha, and others are worshipped in India as the ideal types of men, or incarnations of the Word.

As the doctrine of the Logos, the very life-blood of Christianity was purely of Aryan origin, most probably of Hindu origin, so the symbol of the Cross, which is the corner-stone of the structure of Christianity, originated not amongst the Hebrews but amongst the Aryans.

Well has it been said by St. Augustine: “What is now called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients and was not absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to be called ‘Christian’/ “Whatever importance the followers of Christ may attach to the worship of the

Cross by connecting it with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, it existed as a religious symbol for centuries before the birth of Christ, and was largely used as a sacred symbol by the Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Buddhists, Tibetans, Chinese, and other ancient nations of almost all parts of the world. The Cross is the oldest religious symbol that has ever been invented by human mind. Traces of the worship of the Cross as a religious symbol can be found amongst the most ancient pre-historic aboriginal tribes of the old and new worlds.

The ancient Egyptians used the Tau Cross, which is like the English letter **T**. In the Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Cross has been interpreted variously; for instance, a Cross with four equal arms has been assumed to have meant four elements. When the form of the Cross was composed of two or four sceptres with a circle at the point of interception it is said to indicate "divine potentiality". It stood sometimes for "protective power," sometimes "for life to come," etc. Some of the Egyptian deities, as *Ra*, *Ammon-Ra*, and *Ammon* had the sacred "Tau Cross" in their hands. The Cross was used by the Egyptians in tattooing the body, in the paintings on the walls and tombs at Thebes. A long Cross surmounting a heart, meaning good or goodness, was fixed upon the fronts of houses in Thebes and Memphis, intimating "This is the abode of the good." The Egyptian symbols of five planets had a Cross connected with each. The natives of Abyssinia used to observe certain religious rites by plunging a Cross in the river Gitché. In ancient India the Cross was used as a sign of prosperity, good luck, longevity and happiness, a protector from evil, and was used largely in connection with religious rites and ceremonies. The most ancient form of Cross which has been used in India from prehistoric times is called *Swastika*. It is like a Greek Cross, but its arms are bent at right angles. It literally means in Sanskrit *Su*, well, and *Asti*, being, that is, well being, welfare. Originally the form of *Swastika* was two lines crossing each other. The word *Swastika* had been in existence in the Sanskrit language long before Buddha was born. In the Rig Veda we read, "*Swasti me Indra*" "Do thou, O Indra, grant me welfare." *Swastika* Cross appears in the hands of Visnu, the Preserver of the world, and represents the world-sustaining power which Visnu possesses. It was found in the footprints of Buddha in Buddhistic temples. In the Buddhistic inscriptions and coins, the *Swastika* or Cross very often occurs. In the Ramayana we read, "Bharata selects a ship marked with the sign of the Cross or *Swastika*." The Buddhistic Stupas (tombs) were built in the form of a *Swastika* or Cross. When a woman covers her breast with crossed arms it is called *Swastika* posture, that is, the sign of good luck, prosperity and protection. It is supposed that a woman with *Swastika* posture is free from all dangers. When a person sits cross-legged, it is called *Swastika* posture, which is the best of all the sitting postures. In ancient times houses were built in the form of a *Swastika* Cross.

When the Cross became the religious symbol of the Buddhists, wherever Buddhism went the symbol of the Cross travelled with it. In Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, Burma, Ceylon, Java, and in other places the Cross as a religious symbol was introduced from India. In China, Japan, and in other countries the statues of Buddha were usually marked with a *Swastika* or Cross. In Tibet the Cross is to be found as the royal emblem of the Bonpa deities. The Lamas, or Buddhist priests, carry a Cross and use it at the time of benediction.

Sir Stamford Raffles, after living in Java for twenty years, writes: "Java received her civilization and art directly from India. Out of the six steps of the most ancient prehistoric temples in Java, three are in the form of a Cross."

In the most ancient paintings of the Hindus, Krisna has a Cross in his hand. Yama, the ruler of the departed ones, is painted as holding a Cross in one hand. Some of the Christian missionaries say that the Cross was introduced into India by the early Christians who visited the country. Such statements are not correct. Among the most interesting ancient relics that

have been recently excavated in the forests of Central India which were never visited by any Christian missionary, two rude stone Crosses have been discovered. The archeologists think that those Crosses must have existed in good shape at least three thousand years before the advent of Jesus the Christ. Moreover, the ancient rock-cut cave of Elepanta is nearly in the form of a Greek Cross; its dimensions being longitudinally 130 feet and transversely 123 feet, and height is about 17 feet. In this cave, which was cut before the Buddhistic period, there is a figure of Hindu Trinity holding a huge Cross in one hand. Tavernier, who visited Benares in the end of the seventeenth century, seeing the temple of Visnu, said that the body of this edifice was built in the form of an immense Cross. This temple was destroyed by Aurungzebe, the Mogul emperor, who built a huge mosque in its place.

The Cross is to be found in almost all the ancient temples of India. Amongst the Jains, the Swastika or Cross is the oldest religious symbol. In the Sanskrit grammar of Panini, written at least 400 B.C., Swastika or Cross is described as one of the ancient signs for marking cattle, and even to-day cattle and sheep are marked with a Cross by the illiterate classes of India. Swastika is mentioned in the Atharva Veda. Even to-day the Hindus paint a Swastika or Cross on the walls of the room which the newly married couple enter immediately after the wedding.

The “Y” shaped Cross is drawn on the foreheads of the Vaisnavas, the dualistic worshippers of Vis nu. The Cross was used in the Hindu coins of prehistoric period. It was also used as decoration on walls, furniture, earthenware, rugs, and on garments worn by the priests and priestesses.

This Swastika or peculiar form of the Cross is the oldest of all forms of this symbol that are found in the West. It originated in prehistoric times amongst the Aryans who inhabited India, and from there it travelled all over the world. The same sign was found in hundreds of places on the Christians’ tombs in the Catacombs at Rome.

There was a time when a great discussion arose amongst the early Christians as to the selection of the Cross which should be representative, and history tells us that the Swastika was one of those which were suggested. It is for this reason we find it on the tombs in the Catacombs at Rome. The latest use of Swastika mentioned in the literature on this subject is in the Archiepiscopal chair in the cathedral at Milan.

Prehistoric archeologists maintain that the Swastika or Cross travelled into Western countries from the East during the Bronze age. They claim that long before the tin mines of Spain, Britain or Germany were discovered, bronze came to Europe from the East—Burma, Siam, and other places where copper and tin were first made into bronze. When bronze was introduced into Western Asia, Egypt, and Europe, the sign of the Cross was also introduced in those countries, as the most ancient relic is found on bronze. Professor Wilson, in his celebrated essay on Swastika, which was read before the Smithsonian Institute, not only supports this theory of migration of the symbol of Cross from the East to the West, but believes that it migrated from Asia to America. Regarding the same symbol which has been discovered in North and South America, Professor Wilson says: “Adopting the theory of migration of the Swastika, we may therefore conclude that if the Swastika came from India or Eastern Asia (to America) it came earlier than the sixth century B.C.”

Thus we can understand how the Word, or the Son of God, was known in ancient India and that the Cross was the most ancient religious symbol of the Hindus. Not only this, but the earliest-record of the sacrifice of a divine man in space is to be found in the Rig Veda described in mythological language. John P. Lundy, in his “Monumental Christianity” says: “At any rate, the religion of India had its mythical crucified victim long anterior to

Christianity. . . . I am disposed to believe this to be the victim described in the Vedas themselves. We read in the Rig Veda: “The first-born being, before the beginning of the material phenomena, became a victim of sacrifice. The Devas, gods, and angels who came later took the first-born being for the animal of sacrifice, fastened him to a sacrificial post, sanctified him, and afterwards sacrificed him, stretching his limbs in the eternal space. From that sacrifice arose all that exists on earth and in the heavens.” Here you will notice the metaphor that the first-born being was the only begotten son of God, the absolute Being; that he was fastened to a post and was sacrificed by the Devas for the good of the universe. The students of the Vedic literature are well aware of the fact that the most ancient sacrificial post was in the form of a Cross. On such a post the first-born was fastened, like an animal of sacrifice.

John P. Lundy quotes from Colebrooke in his “Monumental Christianity”: “When that ancient sacrifice was completed, sages and men and our progenitors were by him formed. Viewing with an observant mind this oblation, which primeval Devas offered, I venerate.” Mr. Lundy says: “This looks like the lamb slain from the foundation of the world and whom all the angels of God worship.”

Thus the vital points of Christianity, in whatever manner they might have been explained by priests and theologians, were of Aryan origin. Whenever we worship the Cross, or the Son of God, we unconsciously worship the Aryan symbols of prehistoric times. Whenever we think of the sacrifice of Calvary, we unknowingly think of the mythological sacrifice of the first-born being which is described in the Vedas.

Although these and other similar religious symbols have certain value in helping human minds in the path of spiritual progress as objects of concentration and meditation, still they are of slight consequence if those abstract truths, for which all religious symbols stand, are forgotten or are not properly understood. Many symbols are used in India, each of which represents an abstract truth which ordinary minds cannot easily grasp. They are used largely by the dualistic and qualified non-dualistic worshippers of God. Most of them, however, like the orthodox Christians, do not understand the true meanings of the mythological symbols of the Word, Cross, etc., and are the easy victims of superstition and errors.

The object of Vedanta philosophy is to free human minds from ignorance, superstition, prejudice, and errors, as well as to lead them to the realization of those abstract truths which give foundation to the names and forms of all symbols. Therefore Vedanta insists that salvation cannot be obtained by the mere worship of the Cross, or the Son of God, or the Word in flesh and blood, and maintains that it can only be reached by going beyond all symbols, by realizing the sonship of the soul and its oneness with the Universal Spirit.

Vedanta declares that each individual soul is in reality the Word, the Christ or Son of God, which dwells eternally in the bosom of the Father,—nay, which is one with Him; that there is no gulf between the Father and His children, and that the realization of this Supreme Unity depends upon the sacrifice of the lower self upon the Cross made by the traversing of the Divine will by the human will. Such a sacrifice obliterates the Cross and leaves only the Word, which is the Father, the Absolute Brahman.

Religion Of The Hindus

The religion of the Hindus is as old as the first appearance of the Aryans on the fertile country of northwestern India. It is the unanimous opinion of all the Oriental scholars, that the forefathers of the Aryans who inhabited India were, in prehistoric times, the common ancestors of the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, and all of those who are now known as the descendants of the Aryan family. A modern orthodox Hindu, who lives on the bank of the Ganges, and dislikes to associate with a European calling him a "Mlechha," does not know that the so-called "Mlechha" has only a more distant blood-relationship to him than his own brother or sister, and that he differs from him only in manners, customs, and modes of living. The same Aryan blood flows to-day in the veins of a full-blooded German, Frenchman, Anglo-Saxon, or an American, who despises a Hindu because of his brown skin, or his religious beliefs, and calls him a "heathen," not knowing that the so-called "heathen" is of his own race and that he still upholds the unparalleled religious ideas of his ancient Aryan forefathers. An educated German, or a liberal-minded American of to-day, more closely resembles in his mode of thinking, in his intellectual pursuits, in freedom of thought and in spiritual ideals, an educated Hindu of the present time, than he does a Jew or any other descendant of the Semitic race. However different a Hindu may appear to an American externally, it should always be remembered that both are descendants of the common Aryan stock.

The word "Hindu" is of comparatively later origin in the history of the Aryan family. It was at first used by the Persian invaders of India, but it has never been adopted by the Indo-Aryans themselves. The proper name of the nation which inhabits India is "Aryan." Even to-day, the so-called *Hindus* call themselves "Aryans." Their religion is neither Hinduism nor Brahmanism; these names do not mean anything to them, being given by foreigners, not by natives of India. They call their religion "Arya Dharma," that is, Aryan Religion, or the religion of the ancient Aryans; or "Sanatana Dharma," the Eternal Religion. When the Persian invaders came to the northwest of India, they found the river Indus, in Sanskrit "Sindhu," and called that river "Hindu" instead, and those who inhabited the east side of that river, "Hindus." Afterwards their religion was called Hinduism by the Mohammedan and Christian invaders. The word Brahmanism is of a still later origin, being an invention of the Christian missionaries. It is the general belief in the West, that the ancient Hindus, or rather the Indo-Aryans, were uncivilized people, that they had no religion of any kind; but the students of the Rig Veda, which is now considered by scholars as the oldest revealed scripture of the world, are well aware of the fact that the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic period, at least 2000 B.C., were highly civilized and most advanced in the understanding of the spiritual, moral, and physical laws which governed the phenomenal world.

The ancient Vedic Rishis, or Seers of Truth, described their knowledge of those laws in a simple, poetical language which is inspiring to readers in all ages. They described what they understood, and those descriptions show how vast was their wisdom, how deep was their insight in spiritual perception, how sublime was their conception of God and how grand was their idea of human immortality.

Those impersonal descriptions of the laws which they discovered were handed down from generation to generation by memory, long before the art of writing was known to the world; they are therefore called in Sanskrit "Shruti," meaning that which is heard. Later, when they were collected together, they were also called "Veda," which means wisdom. By this word, Veda, was not meant any written book, but the collected wisdom of the ancient Seers of

Truth; and as their religion stands upon the Veda, or the collected wisdom of the past ages, it is called Vedic Religion, more properly “Vedanta Religion.”

These Vedic seers were great philosophers; they discovered and understood the law of evolution in this universe at a period when the Aryans of the West were dwelling in caves and painting their bodies in lieu of clothing. They discovered also the moral and spiritual laws which govern the higher life of the soul.

When the Hindus use the word “Seer of Truth,” they do not mean any seer of visions or dreamer of dreams; but they mean those great philosophers and saints who realized the higher truths by superconscious perception. The prophets, or seers of the Old Testament, were rarely philosophers, nor did they discover any higher law; they were ethical teachers in degenerate times, pointing out the errors of their countrymen and warning them to cease from evil ways, under penalty of punishment by Jehovah. They predicted events, and were regarded as prophets *if* the things came to pass. As Vedanta, or the religion of the Indo-Aryans, is based upon the spiritual laws discovered by the ancient “Seers of Truth,” it is absolutely impersonal. There was no founder of the religion of the Hindus; it has existed from time immemorial; but all other religions, like Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, had their founders and were built around the personality of those founders. The religion of the Hindus is not limited by any book nor by the existence or non-existence of any particular personage. If we study the words of the earliest known Rishi, or Vedic “Seer of Truth,” even there we find that he alludes to others as having seen similar truths before himself. It is for this reason that the religion of the Indo-Aryans never had any particular creed or dogma or theology as its guide. Everything that harmonized with the eternal laws described by the ancient Seers of Truth was recognized and accepted by them as true.

From the very beginning this religion has been as free as the air which we breathe. As air touches all flowers and carries their fragrance along with it, wherever it blows, so this religion takes in all that is true and beneficial to mankind. Like the sky overhead, it embraces the spiritual atmosphere around all nations and all countries. It is a well-known fact that the Vedanta religion of the Hindus surpasses Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, or Mohammedanism in its antiquity, grandeur, sublimity, in its philosophy, and, above all, in its conception of God. The God of the Hindus is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, all-merciful, and impersonally personal. He is not like the extra-cosmic creator as described in Genesis, but is imminent and resident in nature; He is more merciful, more impartial, more just, more compassionate than Elohim Jahveh, the tribal god of the sons of Israel. The God of the Aryan religion is more benevolent and more unlimited in power and majesty than the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians.

As early as 1500 years before the Christian era, when the sons of Israel were worshipping their tribal god Jahveh in the form of a bull, or calf, and were appeasing his wrath by bloody sacrifices, nay, by shedding human blood upon his altar, and were gradually outgrowing the sun-worship, Kewan or Saturn-worship, tree and serpent-worship, and were struggling for a monotheistic conception of one moral ruler of nature; at this early date the Aryans of India realized one all-pervading Supreme Spirit as the Creator, Preserver, and moral Ruler of all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. When Zoroaster in Persia was preaching the dualistic concept of two spirits, the creator of good and the creator of evil, as two separate beings, the Aryan sages in India were proclaiming before the world that there were not two creators, but One, Who was above both good and evil. “That which exists is One; wise men call It by various names.” (Rig Veda, I, 164, 46.)

In the fourteenth century B.C., when Moses was reforming the immoral, lawless, nomadic tribes of Israel by giving them the ten commandments in the name of Jahveh; at that ancient

time, the ethical teachings of the Vedic sages were already perfected, and almost all their followers were well established in the practice of the moral and spiritual principles of the Vedas. It was at this time that the sublime teachings of the immortal Bhagavad Gita, the “Song Celestial” as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it, were proclaimed by Krishna, the Christ of India.

At a period when thinkers among the Semitic tribes were trying to explain the origin of the human race, as well as that of the universe, and were collecting the fragments of the mythological stories of creation which were scattered among Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Babylonians, and Persians; at that time the minds of the Aryan philosophers of India were firmly established in the doctrine of the evolution of the universe out of one eternal Energy, called in Sanskrit “Prakriti,” and the evolution of man from lower animals was taught for the first time. Prof. Huxley admits this when he says: “To say nothing of Indian Sages, to whom Evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born.”

When the worshippers of Jahveh had no conception of any existence after death, nor of the existence of soul as separate from and independent of body, nor of immortality; in those days, the Aryan philosophers were fully established in their belief that the soul was separate from the body, and they were giving philosophical demonstrations and rational explanations of the nature of the human soul, preaching before the masses that the soul was beginningless and endless and that it was indestructible. The Vedas assert “That (the human soul) the fire cannot burn, nor water moisten; the air cannot dry, nor the sword pierce.”

During the Babylonian captivity, which took place between 536 and 333 B.C., when the sons of the house of Israel were borrowing from the Parsees their ideas of heaven and hell and were modifying their imperfect monotheistic conception of Jahveh from a tribal god into a god of the universe by giving him the attributes of Ahura Mazda; when they were adopting the Persian conception of angels, archangels, and a host of intermediate celestial beings; when they were beginning to accept the Persian idea of the resurrection after death; at that time the glory of the Aryan religion was established and shown to the world by the advent of Buddha, the greatest religious reformer that the world has ever known. He taught that heaven and hell existed only in our minds, that the worship of an extra-cosmic personal god was not the highest form of belief, and that the belief in angels and archangels was a kind of superstition.

About the time when the Pharisees among the Jews were beginning to believe in a heaven and to think that the highest ideal of life was to go there and enjoy the pleasures of life eternally, Buddha was preaching in India the doctrine of Reincarnation and the law of Karma, and was giving the most rational arguments against the desire for the enjoyment of pleasures in heaven, showing that these pleasures were non-eternal and that the goal of man was perfection, not enjoyment. Buddha taught the way of attaining perfection through the emancipation of the soul from the bonds of self-delusion. The ultimate ideals, according to the Vedanta religion, ought to be, not going to some particular place of enjoyment, or before the throne of a personal god, but the knowledge of our true spiritual nature, and freedom from the bondages of ignorance and selfishness and all other imperfections, through the attainment of god-consciousness in this life. Without fulfilling such ideals, our earthly existence is no better than that of animals—nay, it is not worth living.

There is one peculiarity in the religion of the Indo-Aryans, and that is that it has never been separate from logic, science, and philosophy; it stands like a huge banyan tree, whose branches, spreading out in all directions, cover a large area of space; it has room for all phases of religious thought and all systems of philosophy, from the highest flights of a Kant or a Hegel, from the idealism of Bishop Berkeley and of Spinoza, from the loftiest pinnacles

of the Platonic system, from the ultimate conclusions of modern agnosticism, down to the lowest form of ceremonial and ritualistic worship, worship of symbols, or hero-worship, or any other phases of religious thought which human minds have ever conceived* All these have place within the all-embracing fold of the religion of the Hindus, because they alone recognize the necessity for different planes of religious expression in a world that is in different stages of human evolution. Cousin said: "The history of Indian philosophy is the abridged history of the philosophy of the world."

It is for this reason that very few can correctly describe the religion of this mighty nation of philosophers, or indicate exactly what it teaches. Here you may ask: "If there be so much diversity of opinion, how *can there be any harmony?" But this was answered by the ancient Vedanta philosophers who taught that there was unity under the variety of religious thoughts, and in this unity lay the harmony between these apparently contradictory beliefs. The religion of the Indo-Aryans cannot be judged from outside. When a foreigner goes to India and looks about, he finds statues of some great sage, or he finds symbolic figures in temples that he does not understand, and he instantly jumps to a conclusion that the Hindus have no religion, and calls them idolators and worshippers of false gods. Imbued with the idea that the tribal god of the house of Israel was the only true God, and being brought up in a school where fanaticism and bigotry are the criteria of spiritual culture, unless they are unusually free from narrowness and prejudice, these foreigners are very apt to fall into entire misconception of Hindu life and ideals. Especially is this often true of Christian missionaries, who are frequently persons of strongly bigoted views, which unfit them to be fair and impartial observers. They can only look at things from one narrow standpoint, and so fail to see truly and correctly.

When missionaries first went to India, they tried to make converts by force. Those who read the history of India know how the Portuguese missionaries preached the Bible by holding swords and guns in their hands. We can only pity such fanatics, who in the name of religion sow the seeds of discord and quarrel wherever they go, and who in this age of enlightenment believe that those who do not worship Jahveh, the tribal god of the house of Israel and accept Christ as the only saviour of mankind, will all go to perdition. We are sorry for those who waste their wealth and energy by supporting institutions which breed fanaticism. What evidence is there that the worship of Elohim Jahveh should be the worship of the one true God, and why should the Supreme Being of the universe be called a false god when worshipped under any other name? The religion of the Hindus is not the worship of a false god. It is not idolatry. The Hindus never worshipped idols. Did you ever hear a Hindu explaining his own religion? You have heard what the missionaries have said, but why do you not ask the Hindu himself what kind of a god he worships? Why do you judge him *ex parte*, before hearing the Hindu's side of the question?

Truth is the standard of a Hindu, the worship of Truth is his religion, and the attainment of Truth is his ideal. Truth is that which is not confined by any name or any form. Here I wish to make clear whether or not the Hindus are idolators. There is no such thing as idol-worship among the Hindus. When you go to India and visit a temple, there you may see a priest sitting before a statue of Krishna, or Buddha, or Rama, or of some great Incarnation, Prophet or Teacher. The so-called idols are either such statues, or else are merely symbols. They are understood as such by every Hindu. Do you know what they represent? They are symbols of the Divine Energy, of the attributes of God, or of abstract ideas, hard to grasp without some outward form. The priest who sits before the statues of those who were living beings at one time, shows his reverence to these great spiritual Masters. If you go to this priest and ask his conception of God, you will hear him say: "God is omnipotent, infinite. His spirit pervades the whole universe. He is beyond all forms and names. He is the Soul of our souls; in Him we

live, through Him we exist, and without Him there cannot be anything.” Is this idolatry? What kind of idolatry is this? It is very easy for anybody to say that it is a worship of a false god, or of an idol, but if a person will look beneath the surface and enquire of the Hindus themselves, they can easily discover how ‘mistaken are such assertions. If the Hindus are idol-worshippers because they show respect to their spiritual Masters, like Krishna or Buddha, why should not the Christians be called idolators when they show respect to Christ, kneeling down before his statue or picture? If the Hindu is idolatrous because he concentrates his mind upon some religious symbol, like the cross, or triangle, or circle, why should not the same term be applied to the Christian when he thinks of the crucifix or keeps it on the altar? Did the Hindus get the cross or triangle from the Christians? History affirms that the cross existed in India as a religious symbol centuries before Christ was born; but a Hindu never denounces any other religion, nor finds fault with any other worship or conception of God, however childish or anthropomorphic it may be.

True religion, according to the Hindus, does not consist in the belief in a certain set of dogmas or creeds, but in the attainment of god-consciousness through spiritual unfoldment. It is being and becoming God. It is the subjugation of selfish love and desire for self-aggrandizement, and the expression of Divine love, truthfulness, and kindness to all. The object of such a religion is the freedom of the soul from the bondages of the world.

You have been told that the Hindus are immoral, that they are the most immoral nation on earth; and I am ashamed to say that some of my countrymen and women, having enlisted themselves as Christian converts, have told you in this hall, no longer ago than last Spring, that the Hindus were immoral, that they had no ethics, no religion. Being hypnotized, as it were, by their propagandist zeal, they have forgotten the facts. But, friends, if the religion of the Hindus has done nothing else, it has done this much: many of the worst vices that exist to-day among Christian nations do not exist in India. The crimes and vices with which the daily papers of America are filled are very rare in India. It has been said again and again that Christianity alone can make men and women moral; the Hindu asks: “Why has it not made the men and women of the Western countries more moral than they are to-day?” Think of the most diabolical crimes committed all over the United States by so-called Christians and daily chronicled by the press! Your prisons and asylums are filled to their utmost capacity with criminals and lunatics. Will you therefore call Christianity a failure? Will you dare to claim that it alone of all religions in the world can make men good? Buddhists, Hindus, Mohammedans, and even large sections of the Chinese abstain entirely from intoxicating liquors, and the low percentage of brutality, of crimes of violence, and of cruelty to animals arises from the fact that they do not inflame their passions by alcoholic stimulants. Everywhere in this world there is wickedness and human failure, but if all things be taken into consideration, it will be found that there is no preponderance of vice among the heathen, nor of virtue among the Christians. Human nature varies in its expression, but is much the same in itself all over the earth.

The annual increase of criminals and lunatics in a nation not even 200 years old is perfectly appalling.

In the whole of the United States 10,000 murders are committed every year. Hundreds of dead babies of illegitimate birth are found in vacant lots, in ash-barrels, in the rivers and on the roadsides. What has Christianity done to stop such crimes and vices? The words of Christ to those who see the mote in their brother’s eye, but cannot discern the beam in their own eyes, should be remembered to-day. It is wise to let reforms begin at home, and that Christian nations should amend themselves before criticising the faults and failings of heathen lands.

Dr. J. H. Barrows, who was the secretary of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, after visiting India for three months, returned to New York and gave a course of lectures. In one lecture I heard him say: "The Hindus have no ethics, no morality, no science, no philosophy, no religion; whatever they have got they have learned from Christian missionaries." On the contrary, any fair-minded student of the Hindu thought will notice at the outset that the philosophy and religion of the Hindus are based entirely upon the highest standard of ethics and morality. Prof. Max Muller says "we find ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle, and ethics in the end." No human being can become truly spiritual unless he or she reaches moral perfection. Moral perfection is the beginning of spiritual life or spiritual evolution; and spiritual perfection consists in the manifestation of divinity and the emancipation of the soul from the bondages of ignorance and selfishness, which are the causes of sin and wickedness. A truly spiritual man is master of himself and possesses perfect control over his animal nature. No man who is a slave to his passions, desires, and animal propensities, however highly ethical he may appear in society, can be called truly moral, not to mention spiritual.

Having these high ideals, the Hindu religion does not encourage any of the vices, and especially inculcates an avoidance of drunkenness, which prevents its victims from gaining self-control. Hindu religion has no need of any help from temperance unions or the societies for the prevention of cruelty to women and children, or of cruelty to animals. Such societies are unknown among Hindus. Their religion itself has made the Hindus kind toward animals and has taught them to revere every woman as a representative of the Divine Mother on earth. Some of the Christian converts, in their zeal for eradicating certain social evils which have crept into Hindu society, have falsely attributed the causes of these evils to the religious ideas of the Hindus. Many of you have been told that the Hindu religion teaches that women, have no souls. Such an absurd idea can only be accepted by those who do not study and investigate for themselves. No Hindu ever imagined anything so crude. We do not find any such idea in the Aryan religion; but we can perhaps trace its source to the Semitic conception of the creation of woman out of a man's rib, the lofty concept of the origin of woman that still stands in the Christian Bible! The Hindu knows that the soul is sexless and only manifests on the physical plane as either man or woman to fulfil a certain purpose in life.

Some of you perhaps have the wrong impression that, according to the Hindu faith, a woman cannot reach salvation, but if you read a little of the Bhagavad Gita you will find there: "All men and women, whether they believe in a God or not, are bound to reach perfection sooner or later."

As Christian civilization has been founded upon commercialism and has kept the ethical standard in the background, so Aryan civilization in India has been based upon ethical standards, and commercialism was set aside and almost ignored. As a result the Christian nations have commercial prosperity, while the Hindus as a nation have lived for centuries exemplary moral lives and have become the spiritual teachers of the world. Read the accounts of the Greek and Chinese travellers who visited India both before and after the Christian era. Read Prof. Max Muller's celebrated works, "India: What Can It Teach Us?" and "Life and Sayings of Rama Krisna," and learn the truth for yourselves.

Hindu religion still produces men like Christ and Buddha, and women like Sarada Devi even in this age of commercialism and selfishness. How can a religion which has no foundation upon the highest ideals of morality and ethics produce such men and women? The lives and characters of some of them have already within the last ten years become ideals for the masses. "A tree is known by its fruits," said Jesus, and he spoke truly. The characters of such men and women are the embodiments of ethics, the personifications of moral and spiritual perfection.

Therefore, when persons bring false charges against the religion of the Hindus, you should remember that they do it either through ignorance or through a feverish zeal for evangelizing India and converting it to Christian ideals. They feel it necessary to save the souls of the so-called heathen from eternal perdition.

The religion of Vedanta does not teach that we are “born in sin and conceived in iniquity,” nor does it say that we have inherited as a birth-right the sins of some fallen man who was tempted by an evil spirit called “Satan.” On the contrary, it tells us that all men and women, irrespective of their color, creed, or religious beliefs, are children of Immortal Bliss. It teaches that we are not the helpless victims of our parents’ sins, but that our present condition is the resultant of our past deeds, and that our future state will be the result of our present actions. Parents do not create the souls of their children, they are but the channels, the instruments through which the individual souls incarnate or manifest themselves on the physical plane. This idea is popularly known as the law of Karma and Reincarnation, which means the remanifestation on this earth of the individual soul, or the germ of life, according to its desires and tendencies, which will determine the conditions of its existence.

The religion of Vedanta may be called the “Science of the Soul.” As modern science does not deal with dogmas and does not insist upon belief in the authority of any person or book, but depends entirely upon correct observation and experience of the facts of nature to discover the laws which govern the phenomena of the universe, so Vedanta, or the Science of the Soul, does not deal with dogmas or creeds, but explains through logic and reason the spiritual nature of man, or the true nature of the soul. It describes the origin, growth, and process of its gradual evolution from the minutest germ of life up to the highest spiritual man, as Christ, or Buddha, or Rama Krishna, as well as points out the purpose and ultimate goal of such evolution. This Science of the Soul discusses such questions as: Whether or not the soul can exist independently of the body; whether or not it existed before the present birth; whether or not it was created by any being? Vedanta enquires if the soul exist after death? If it retain its individuality? If it be free or bound? If bound, can it ever become free? etc. In attempting to solve such questions of vital importance, the Vedanta philosophers did not speculate like the Greek or German philosophers, but explained through logic and scientific method the spiritual laws which they discovered in their superconscious state. Those spiritual laws gave a foundation to their religious system. The spiritual laws being eternal, the religion which was based upon them is called “Eternal religion.”

In India religion and philosophy are one. Religion is the practical side of philosophy and the latter is the rational side of religion. They are inseparably connected. Therefore when we speak of Vedanta philosophy, we mean both religion and philosophy at the same time. Although there have been many other philosophies in India, still Vedanta includes the fundamental principles of all of them.

The ancient thinkers in India, after studying the phenomena of the universe, started many theories to explain the origin of the phenomenal world of which the Atomic theory of Kanada and the Evolution theory of Kapila still remain unsurpassed by similar scientific theories of the nineteenth century. Nearly four thousand years ago the Hindu philosophers came to understand that the world was not created out of nothing, but was the result of the evolution of one eternal Energy, which is called in Sanskrit *Prakriti*, in Latin, *Procreatrix*. In one of the Upanishads we read of a sage who was explaining the mystery of Creation to his son. He said: “My dear child, some people say that this world has come out of nothing, but how can something come out of nothing?” It has often been said that the doctrine of Evolution is the marvel of modern times, and that it was unknown in the past ages; but those who have studied more closely are aware that it was well known to the Hindus and that there are clear

evidences of it among the Greeks. Well has it been said by Sir Monier Williams that “The Hindus were Spinozites more than 2000 years before the existence of Spinoza; Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like evolution existed in any language of the world.”—(“Hinduism and Brahmin-ism.”) Standing upon the firm rock of the evolution theory, the Hindus explained the mysteries of the universe, solved the problems of life, and arrived at a conclusion which has not yet been reached by the scientists of to-day. The evolutionists of ancient India did not arrive at the fatalistic conclusions of many of the modern evolutionists of the West. On the contrary, they maintained that the individual soul is not brought into evolution by any cosmic force or extra-cosmic being, but that it creates its own destiny and moulds its own fate, by its own desires, tendencies, and actions. It is free to desire and to act in accordance with its desire. Each individual soul is a storehouse of infinite powers and possesses unlimited possibilities. Souls were not created out of nothing nor by the will of any being, but are eternal, beginningless and endless. At present they appear, however, as subject to the law of causation. The Hindus applied the law of causation to the moral and spiritual nature of individuals. In Sanskrit it is called “Law of Karma.” By this law they explained why one man is born with good tendencies and another with evil ones.

The Hindus do not believe that God creates one man to enjoy and another to suffer, nor do they believe that He punishes the wicked or rewards the virtuous. Punishment and reward are but the re-actions of our own actions. Each individual soul reaps the fruits of its own acts, either here or in some other existence.

The religion of Vedanta does not teach the worship of many gods, but of one God, who is called by many names and who is free to appear in any form in accordance with the desires of the worshippers. The God of the Hindus has no particular name nor any particular form. Thousands of names are given to that Supreme Being who is nameless and formless. He is not extra-cosmic but intra-cosmic, and immanent as well as transcendent. He appears as with form to a dualist and without form to a non-dualist. He is one, yet His aspects are many. He is personal, impersonal, and beyond both. He appears as personal to a dualistic or monotheistic worshipper, and as impersonal to a qualified non-dualistic believer or one who believes in the immanency and transcendency of God; while to a pure non-dualist, the same God is the one Infinite Ocean of absolute existence, intelligence, bliss, and love.

The religion of the Hindus recognizes the spiritual growth of the soul and describes the different stages of spiritual development. In the first stage God appears as extra-cosmic, as the Creator or the Father of the universe, Who dwells outside of ourselves and of the world. This is the dualistic conception of God.

Some people say that the Hindus got the idea of the Fatherhood of God from Christian sources. But those who have read the Vedic literature, or even the Bhagavad Gita have found therein many passages where God is addressed as the Father of the universe. “O Lord, Thou art the Father of the universe both animate and inanimate. Thou art worshipped by all. None is equal to Thee in the triple world. Who then can excel Thee, O Thou of power incomparable?” (Bhagavad Gita, ch. xi., v. 43.)

In the second stage, God appears as immanent in the universe; as the one stupendous Whole of which we are but parts. Then He is the Mother of the universe as well as the Father; or, in other words, He is then the material as well as the efficient cause of all phenomena. The idea of the Fatherhood of God is not considered by the Hindus to be the highest, because it makes Him extra-cosmic or outside of the world and as efficient cause only. In this concept nature coexists with God as the material cause of the universe. But when we comprehend that nature

is nothing but the divine energy and inseparable from the Supreme Being, then He becomes the Mother of the universe as well as Father. This is called qualified non-dualistic conception.

Thirdly, there is a still higher conception than this: the concept of the unity of the essential nature of man with the Universal Spirit or Reality of the universe. From this point of view Christ said: "I and my Father are one." The Hindu says: "I am He, I am that one eternal Being." This union on the spiritual plane is the highest ideal of all religions.

The Hindus say that the dualistic belief in a personal God with a human form and human attributes is the expression of the spiritual childhood of the soul. From dualism the soul rises through qualified non-dualism to monism. Each of these stages of spiritual development is true in itself, and necessary, as are childhood, youth, and maturity in the physical body. It is good to be born and brought up within the limits of a church creed as a dualist, but it is not good to remain there all through life, and he who does so has failed to outgrow the stage of spiritual childhood. Growth is life and stagnation is death. Therefore Vedanta recognizes the importance of spiritual growth in religion.

What we believe to-day may not be necessary for us to-morrow; let us be ever ready to face the necessity of growth. But we must not go backward; we must move onward until the ideal is realized. "Arise, awake, seek the company of the wise, and stop not until the goal is reached;" until you see God everywhere and become one with God. This has been the cry of the spiritual teachers of India.

There is no other religion in the world which emphasizes the attainment of God-consciousness in this life so much as the Vedanta religion of the Hindus.

The paths which lead to this goal of all religions should vary according to the tendency, capacity, and spiritual development of the individual. Therefore Vedanta prescribes no set path, but offers many paths to suit different minds: such as the path of right knowledge and right discrimination (Jnana Yoga); of concentration and meditation (Raja Yoga); of work for work's sake (Karma Yoga); and lastly, of devotion and worship (Bhakti Yoga). Each of these paths has various branches. As one coat does not fit all bodies, so one path does not suit all minds.

The religion of the Hindus has made them peace-loving and humane, and it is because of their religious ideas that the Hindus have never invaded any other country. They are not afflicted with the insatiable greed for power, wealth, and territorial possession, which is so strong among Christian nations.

The Hindus practice non-resistance of evil, which was taught by the Vedanta, by Buddha, and afterwards by Christ, but which is not yet understood nor practiced by many of the followers of Christianity. Vedanta has made the Hindus realize that all the various religious sects and creeds of the world are but the partial expressions of one underlying Religion, which is nameless and universal. The knower of that underlying Religion does not need any creed, or denominational name, or particular Church. The worship of Truth is his creed and denomination, and the human body is the holy temple wherein dwells the Eternal Spirit. The result of this grand idea is that there has been very little religious persecution in the whole religious history of India.

It matters not to what sect, creed, or denomination we may belong. Our first duty should be to see how far we have advanced in spiritual life, how near we have approached God-consciousness, and how much of the mastery over our animal nature we have acquired. Knowing these to be the essentials of true religion, a follower of the teachings of Vedanta never fights for a doctrine or a belief; never denounces the religious ideas of others; never says "my religion is true and yours is false"; never preaches "my God is the only true one, all

others are false”; never persecutes another for differing from himself; but always lends a helping hand to the followers of all sects and creeds who seek his spiritual help, sends good thoughts and blessings towards all, prays for all, and recognizes the unity of purpose in all the variety of sects and creeds.

“O Lord! As rivers rising from different mountains run, crooked or straight, towards one ocean, so all these different religions, sects, and creeds, rising from different points of view, flow crooked or straight toward Thee, the Infinite Ocean of existence, intelligence, bliss, and love.”

NOTES.

Regarding the worship of Jahveh in the form of a bull, Dr. A. Kuenen, the professor of theology at the University of Leyden, says: “Side by side with the worship of false gods, there existed in Ephraim a Jahveh-worship, which is strongly condemned by Amos and Hosea, nay, is placed by the latter entirely upon a level with the service of false gods. It is the worship of Jahveh under the form of a bull.” (Religion of Israel, Vol. I, p. 73.)

As regards human sacrifices the Doctor says: “We cannot help assuming that those who worshipped Jahveh in this shape also slaughtered men in his honour.” (p. 75.)

“Jahveh was conceived by those who worshipped him to be a severe being, inaccessible to mankind, whom it was necessary to propitiate with sacrifices and offerings, and even with human sacrifices.” (p. 249.)

As regards sun-worship Dr. Kuenen says: “Originally Jahveh was a god of light or of the sun, and the heat of the sun and consuming fire were considered to proceed from him and to be ruled by him.” (p. 249.)

Kewan, or Chiun, or Saturn-worship is described in Amos, v. 26, 27. Dr. Kuenen says: “Amos, in accordance with his contemporaries, ascribed the worship of Saturn to the Israelites in the desert.” According to him there was a connection between the Saturn-worship and the dedication of the seventh day, and this custom was afterwards adopted and modified by the worshippers of Jahveh. (See Religion of Israel, Vol. I, p. 264.)

Tree-worship is mentioned in Deuteronomy, ch. xvi. 21. Grove (or Asherah) stands for a tree or stem driven into the ground close to the altar of Jahveh.

“He (Hezekiah) removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he brake in pieces the brasen *serpent* that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called it Nehustan.” (II. Kings xviii. 4, revised version.)

According to the best authorities of the present day, Moses lived about the fourteenth century before Christ. Dr. Kuenen says: “The exodus is accordingly placed by one in B.C. 1321, by another in B.C. 1320, and by a third in 1314 B.C. Of course perfect accuracy on this point is unattainable. With this reservation I accept the year 1320 B.C. as the most probable.” (R. of Is., Vol. I, p. 121.)

It is a well-known fact that the book of Genesis was not written by Moses, but by some priest during the period of Jewish exile in Babylonia. Professor Kuenen says: “It is true, he (the author of the book of Origins) is a *priest*, and as such is deeply attached to the Jahveh-worship, the ceremonies, and the privileges of the priesthood. . . . The author of the book of Origins was not the first in Israel to narrate history, from the creation of the world to the settlement of the people in Canaan. The course which he had to follow, therefore, had been

pointed out to him by his predecessors and especially by the author of the second Creation narrative and the accounts connected with it.” (Vol. II, pp. 157-159.)

Regarding the influence of Parseeism upon Judaism, Dr. Kuenen says: “We discover the traces of the influence of the Persians in the *doctrine of angels*” Of the idea of Satan he says: “It would be hazardous to see the Persian notion of Auro-Mainyus in this small modification, were it not that the Jewish Satan subsequently acquired the traits of this spirit of darkness more and more. . . . The older Israelitish prophets and prophetic historians had not hesitated to derive even evil, moral evil not excepted, from Jahveh. This shows that the conception of the moral world had undergone an important change.” (Vol. III, pp. 37-40.)

On the subject of immortality Dr. Kuenen says: “The Israelite’s ideas of the human body and soul and their mutual relation hardly admitted any other notion of man’s existence-after death than that of resuscitation, i.e., of the miraculous restoration of the body into which the spirit returned. As soon as Jahveh takes back the breath of life, man and beast die. But that spirit does not live on, at all events not independently or individually. . . . Let it be taken into consideration, however, that the hope of a resurrection from the dead also existed among the Persians. . . . Does it not become extremely probable, therefore, that Parseeism was not entirely foreign to the rise and the first growth of the Jewish dogma? Must we not also assume here that the germs which lay hidden in Judaism were fertilized by contact with a religion in which they had arrived at maturity?” (Rel. of Is., Vol. III, p. 43.)

According to Hindu chronology, Krishna flourished in India about 1400 B.C.

Why A Hindu Is A Vegetarian

Eminent physicians and dietetic reformers of the present day are deeply interested in solving the great problem of wholesome food for human beings, and in introducing food reform in Western countries. Through their efforts thoughtful Americans are beginning to know something of the healthful effects of vegetarian diet, and to question whether they shall become vegetarians. This question has never been discussed in the West with so much earnestness as now. Among the ancient Greek philosophers we find strong advocates of vegetarianism in Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, Seneca, Plutarch, Tertullian, Porphyry and others; but the vast majority of Western people regard vegetarians with contempt and ridicule. In India this problem was solved by the Hindu philosophers long before Pythagoras was born, and in their writings we find logical and scientific arguments against the killing of animals and the eating of animal flesh. Many historians and Oriental scholars are of opinion that Pythagoras owed his ideas regarding a vegetable diet to the Hindu philosophers, who from prehistoric times had advocated and practised a strictly vegetarian diet.

India is the only country in the world where vegetarianism has prevailed for centuries among the vast majority of people. The Hindus were the first nation in the world who understood the fundamental principles of the vegetarian theory. It was from the Hindus that other nations, such as the Chinese, Japanese, Thibetans, Siamese, Burmese, Ceylonese and Persians became impressed with the idea that the slaughter of animals for food is cruel, inhuman and wicked. The greatest thinkers and sages of ancient India gave arguments in support of vegetarianism from different standpoints, such as physical health; the physiological structure of our organs; the chemical analysis of food; and the moral and spiritual ideals of life. Native doctors and physicians in India do not approve of animal food and agree generally with many Western doctors that animal flesh is one of the main causes of such diseases as dyspepsia, gout, consumption and nervous disorders. Hindu physicians argue that animals fattened for slaughter are more or less diseased on account of their unnatural mode of living and the unnatural food which they are forced to eat; that the germs of various diseases are introduced into the human system and that parasites come into the human body through the medium of animal flesh. They further assert that all flesh, being a product of nutrition, contains some refuse matter and impurity, because their elimination is suddenly arrested by the slaughter of the animal. Some of these refuse materials are intensely poisonous, especially *creatin*. Animal flesh enriches the blood with unnecessary *fibrin*, and this produces unnatural heat in the system and in turn is the cause of unusual activity and restlessness, ultimately leading to the nervous debility which afflicts many meat eaters. Constant use of meat increases the action of the heart and brings premature loss of vital forces. Physiologists and comparative anatomists like Sir Everard Home have shown from the structure of the teeth, stomach, alimentary canal, the microscopic human blood-corpuscles and the digestive processes that man is by nature more related to frugivorous animals than to the carnivora.

From the chemical analysis of different vegetables, cereals, fruits, nuts, etc., and the flesh of different animals, and from the comparison of the constituent properties of vegetables with those of animal flesh, it can be shown that everything necessary for the growth of the muscles, for the strength of the nerves, and for the nourishment of the whole body can easily be obtained from the vegetable kingdom. As from animal food are obtained the proteids, fats and mineral matter, which are the principal factors in the nourishment and healthy growth of the body, so from the vegetable world these elements are supplied in rich abundance, and in addition to these the *carbohydrates* (starch and sugar), which cannot be found in animal food.

This being the fact the question arises, why do we eat animal flesh? Is it for nourishment? No. The same nourishment can be obtained from vegetables, cereals, and pulses. Is it for health that we eat meat? No; because vegetarians as a class are healthier than the majority of meat eaters. Why, then, is meat eaten? Because of the habit transmitted from generation to generation, and because of superstition, prejudice and ignorance.

In ancient times when agriculture was unknown, people lived upon fruits, nuts and other vegetable products which they found in abundance. But when the struggle for existence, which is so strongly manifested in the animal kingdom, became more difficult on account of the scarcity of fruits and nuts, they lived upon whatever they found around them. In that struggle the question of existence must precede the question of food. The savage tribes who do not know anything about agriculture and have not proper fruits and nuts, live chiefly upon wild animals, birds, reptiles and insects. Thus began the eating of flesh by man. Some people argue that flesh is the natural food of man, but this is not so. The meat-eating habit was formed through the force of necessity, and was handed down from father to son. Most people in civilized countries learn to live on animal flesh from their infancy, their parents teaching them by their example. They thus grow to think that they can hardly live without a diet of animal flesh. Some savage tribes became cannibals when they could not procure enough meat of wild animals. Shall the habits of cannibals signify that human flesh is the natural food of man? In Australia the aborigines live on loathsome worms and reptiles. In India there is a class of aboriginal hill-tribes who eat poisonous snakes with great relish. Shall we say that these are the natural food for man? A man can eat anything with the help of cookery. But shall it be considered that man is naturally as omnivorous as a pig? The cows at Cape Cod eat the refuse of fish; horses can be taught to eat beef; bears can be trained to smoke tobacco; monkeys easily learn to drink tea, coffee and wine. Will such artificially acquired habits supply the arguments for man's eating flesh? Certainly not. The natural food of man is not animal flesh, but vegetables, fruits, nuts, cereals, etc., which grow spontaneously on this earth.

When Hindu boys and girls go to school and read their first lessons they learn the highest humanitarian principles, and as they grow older they are kind toward all living creatures. They are taught: "Be kind to lower animals. Do not kill them for your food, because the natural food of man is not an animal." I learned in the first book of Sanskrit: "When enough of nourishment can easily be obtained from that which grows spontaneously on the earth, who will commit such a great sin as to kill animals for filling his stomach and deriving a little pleasure of taste?" "Compare the eater with the animal that is eaten. The one has pleasure which lasts for a few seconds, and the other is deprived of all the pleasures of life." Seneca expressed a similar idea when he said: "Vegetables are sufficient food for the stomach into which we now stuff valuable lives."

It is extremely difficult for people in the West to realize why it is sinful to kill animals for food or for pleasure. Their religion stands like a great stumbling-block in the way of their understanding. It teaches that the lower animals have no soul, no mind, no feelings; that they have been created for the food of human beings, and the duty of man is to eat what the merciful Lord has created for his sustenance and thank Him in return. This is the reason that so many animals are killed for Thanksgiving and Christmas days in Christian countries, as though the merciful Lord would not accept prayers unless some of His creatures are killed and eaten: A minister of a high church in London was present when I was talking about vegetarianism, and said to my friend: "Do not listen to these ideas; our Scriptures say they are the doctrine of devils," referring to the passage in the New Testament, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; . . . commanding to abstain from meats, which God

hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I. Timothy, iv, I, 3, 4, 5). How is it possible for people who believe in such sayings as the word of God to think that the killing of animals for food is sinful? As it is impossible for a Christian believer in this teaching to think that the slaughter of animals for food is sinful, so it is impossible for a Hindu to believe that the lower animals are created for this use by a merciful Lord. The idea that animals were created for food for man is entirely Semitic in its origin. Such a doctrine is horrible to the Hindus, because their religion does not teach that this world was created out of nothing by an extra-cosmic personal God sitting on a throne somewhere in the heavens and commanding men to eat animals whom He created for this purpose.

The Hindu religion with all its various phases, such as the religion of the Vedas (which is erroneously called Brahminism), Buddhism and Jainism, is based upon the one fundamental principle,—the evolution of man from lower animals. It teaches that one life principle is manifesting in various forms of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms; that all are linked together by a mighty chain of evolution; and that from the minutest protoplasm to the highest man, each stage of life differs from another not in kind, but in degree. The religion of the Hindus denies entirely that the lower animals are without mind, soul and feeling; and teaches that life and mind are manifested simultaneously. Wherever there is life there is the manifestation of the cosmic mind, the difference being in the degree of manifestation. The least expression is in the mineral, it is a little higher in the vegetable, and still higher in the animal kingdom. Even a unicellular amoeba has mind. It feels pain and tries to avoid that sensation. Advanced scientists of modern times do not deny this. Prof. Le Conte expresses this idea most forcibly in some of his lectures. As we rise in the animal kingdom we find the expression of the same life and mind in and through highly developed animal bodies; and ultimately, through the most individualized and complex organism of the human body. Each one of these animals possesses a soul, has individuality and the sense of “I,” can feel pleasure and pain, has fear of death and struggles to live. The germ of life in each one of these will gradually pass through the various stages of evolution and ultimately appear in a human form. Therefore, the religion, philosophy and Scriptures of the Hindus teach that as life is dear to us, so is it dear to the lower animals; as we do not wish to be killed, so they too shrink from death. Do not kill any animal for pleasure, see harmony in nature and lend a helping hand to all living creatures,” say the Hindu Scriptures. The earliest writings of the Hindus, I mean the Vedas, teach: “*Ma himsyat sarva bhutani*,” that is, “Do not kill any living creature either for food or for pleasure.”

The great epic of the Hindus, the Ramayana, or the exploits of Rama, teaches that we should treat lower animals as our brothers, and describes their value in the economy of nature in the most poetic and dramatic way. It is said that Rama, the great Incarnation of God in flesh and blood on earth, fought with the king of demons in order to rescue Sita, his devoted wife, who was captured by the demoniac King of Ceylon. His huge army consisted of all kinds of animals. The ape, Hanuman, the greatest of organized life beneath man in the scale of evolution, was the commander-in-chief. The bear is described as the prime minister, and other animals as soldiers. The whole story is written in such a masterly manner that whoever reads it can never be unkind or cruel to any animal, not to speak of killing it for food.

Western people have the mistaken impression that Buddha was the reformer who introduced vegetarianism amongst the Hindus. This is an error. Buddha merely popularized the doctrine of non-killing taught by the Vedas, which was practised at that time by only a limited class of Hindu sages; he also protested against animal sacrifices performed by the priests. The priests sacrificed animals not for the purpose of eating flesh, but for propitiating the Devas or bright

spirits, through whose mercy they thought they would gain higher powers and conquer their enemies.

Some people say that in the economy of nature the struggle for existence demands that one animal shall live upon another,, as birds of prey live upon other birds, as carnivora live upon other animals; and that we are therefore perfectly justified to live upon animal flesh. It is true that in nature we find the expression of such a law. It is a law that governs the lower animal nature. We may call it a brutal law. But there are other laws which govern our better nature. These are moral and spiritual laws which do not express themselves in lower animals but in human beings alone. If we do not recognize these higher laws we shall never rise above the animal plane. Man stands at the head of the animal kingdom not because he possesses in a highly developed form the same qualities that the lower animals have, but because he is capable of subduing the animal nature by the moral and spiritual. A man lacking this moral and spiritual nature is in no way better than the lowest order of brutes. Human beings have the power of degrading themselves to the lowest animal plane as well as of raising themselves to the highest plane of spiritual enlightenment. They can manifest perfectly their divine nature. In short, they can live on earth as embodiments of all good. The same human being may carry destruction, havoc, disharmony, and inhuman cruelty wherever he goes, or he may bring help, good-will, peace, love and blessings. The same energy when guided by animal nature creates havoc and becomes diabolical; when directed by higher nature and love it brings happiness to all.

Think of the moral degeneration of the slaughterhouse butchers. The continuous contact with slaughter blunts their higher feelings and at last makes them brutal. They do not hesitate to drive the same knives with which they kill helpless beasts into the hearts of their fellow-men. Chicago has the largest slaughter-houses in the world. Many thousands of animals are killed there every month by trained butchers. Most of the murderers in Chicago come from the butcher class. Who is responsible for their moral degeneration and for the crimes committed by them? Do the meat eaters ever think of this phase of flesh eating? They neither like to hear such facts nor to think of them, because it shocks their sensitive feelings. They want to close their eyes and ears to such sights and sounds. But the truth is that meat eaters are responsible. They are indirectly the causes of all the wicked deeds done by those butchers; they are the causes of their moral degeneration. If there be no meat eater, there will be no butcher. A refined woman would shudder at seeing a red-handed butcher, but she should remember that she must share the responsibility of brutalizing and degrading him. If she killed the animals by her own hands, for her own food, it would be better, for this would save another from becoming an inhuman slayer for her. In every country butchers are considered as heartless and feelingless. In India they are debarred from the society of gentlemen, and the Hindus think that there is no stronger curse than to call a man a butcher. In the United States in some commonwealths no man connected with this trade is allowed to sit in a jury for trying a murder case, because it is recognized that the mind, feelings and whole moral nature become blunted by association with the slaughter of animals. If the process of furnishing flesh from the slaughter-house to the kitchen were remembered when sitting at table with a savory piece of steak before them, I dare say two-thirds of the meat eaters who have any feeling at all would give up meat eating without delay. A young American of my acquaintance who visited the slaughter-houses in Chicago was so deeply impressed by the brutality, cruelty and inhuman atmosphere of the place that he never touched any meat from that day. No individual who eats animal flesh can avoid moral responsibility. He must necessarily take a share in the cause of the moral degeneration of his brethren.

Various objections have been raised by meat eaters against vegetarianism. Some say if animals are not used for food they will overrun the earth. The same argument applies to

animals which are not eaten, such as horses, donkeys, dogs, cats and rats, as to sheep, cattle, pigs and poultry. In India the Hindus do not kill cows, but they are not overrun by them. The Hindus did not have any slaughter-houses until the British Government established them. In the states that are still governed by the Hindu Rajas the wild animals and birds are protected by strict laws. But these states are not overrun by wild animals, nor are the inhabitants driven out by them.

An American who recently made a short visit to India, Dr. J. H. Barrows, formerly of Chicago, said in a lecture in New York that he saw in the streets of Benares some oxen lean and poor as compared with those which are fattened for the Chicago slaughterhouses. His heart melted with kindness and pity at the sight, and he said it is much more kind to kill cattle for food than to allow them to live half-fed or ill-fed. What a curious notion of kindness is this! Dr. Barrows also said that if we do not eat fish the seas and oceans will soon become a solid mass of fish. Any efforts of man to keep down the number of fishes would be vain without the operation of nature's laws, which regulate production and preserve a proper ratio. But this sort of statement and argument is not uncommon from friends of the flesh-eating habit. Others hold that unless they eat animal flesh they will be weak and useless for work and will lack bravery and courage. This is a great mistake. You have heard of the Hindu Sikh soldiers in India, who are the bravest and strongest fighters in the British army. They never turn their back to an enemy in the battle-field. One Sikh soldier can stand against three beef-eaters in hand-to-hand fight. But these soldiers never touch meat, nor fish, never drink wine, nor smoke tobacco. They are strict vegetarians. Millions of Scotchmen have become healthy, strong, hardy and intellectual while living on oatmeal. In a running race of seven athletes in Germany, amongst whom there was one vegetarian, it was shown that a vegetarian can win over meat eaters even in athletic sports. A vegetarian diet gives great endurance and makes one even-tempered. People generally mistake a ferocious, restless and rash temper for courage and strength. These say that a tiger or a wolf is stronger than a horse, a buffalo or an elephant. They make ferocious nature the standard of strength. It is true that a tiger can kill a horse, but has he the muscular strength which enables a horse to draw a heavy load a long distance? A tiger can kill an elephant, but can he lift a cannon weighing hundreds of pounds? Ferocity is one thing and muscular strength is another; we ought to distinguish the one from the other. The source of strength lies in the vegetable kingdom and not in flesh and blood. If flesh eating be the condition of physical strength, why do meat eaters prefer the flesh of herbivorous animals and not that of the carnivora? Some meat eaters say that animal flesh has a large quantity of vegetable energy concentrated in a small compass. If that be their reason for the meat-eating habit, they ought to live on the flesh of carnivorous animals and birds, such as tigers, wolves, vultures and hawks.

As in the animal kingdom the carnivora are more restless than the herbivora, so amongst men we find that meat eaters are more restless and less self-controlled than vegetarians. As a peaceful, well-poised and self-controlled nature is the first sign of spiritual progress, it is plain that animal food is not the most helpful diet for spiritual development. It is for this reason that meat eaters find it so difficult to concentrate their minds on one particular object. It is impossible for them to meditate on their spiritual and divine nature. Therefore the Hindus, who understand the secret of spirituality, object to meat eating. The Hindus who devote their whole life and mental energy to the attainment of spiritual perfection are called Yogis. According to them the non-killing of animals is one of the conditions of spiritual progress, and killing any animal, either for food or pleasure, is a great stumbling-block in the path of spirituality. Again, they classify the killing or injuring of animals in three divisions,—“committed,” “caused,” and “approved of.” For instance, I may kill an animal myself; this will be, according to the Yogis, “committed.” Secondly, I may cause another to kill; and

thirdly, I may approve of the killing committed by another person, as by buying the flesh from a butcher. According to a Yogi, he who wishes to practise non-killing must not kill; must not cause another to kill; and must not approve of the killing done by another. When this non-killing or non-injuring is perfectly established in a Yogi, he receives injury from none, not even from tigers nor from snakes. Tigers and snakes injure us because we have the feeling of injuring them. In fact the Yogis in India have carried the golden rule to its extreme and applied it to lower animals even, thus succeeding in making it a universal law. In the presence of Yogis ferocious animals become peaceful and render them great service. Such a state is idealized in the images and pictures of the greatest men and women Yogis in ancient India. The great Yogi Siva has most venomous snakes as ornaments on his neck, head and body. The great woman Yogi Durga stands on the back of ferocious tigers and lions. Truly speaking such Yogis have no enemies in the world.

Another reason why a spiritually advanced Hindu does not like meat, is that eating flesh and drinking wine go hand in hand. It is a well-known fact that many people acquire the habit of drunkenness in trying to digest animal food with the help of liquors; and as drinking leads to all sorts of other vices, a Hindu believes that one can most easily be free from those vices by being a vegetarian. The Hindus are strongly opposed to drinking wines or liquors. If a high-caste Hindu gentleman should go to a saloon or should drink publicly, he would lose caste. Hindu women do not touch wine. In Hindu society no one can find a drunken woman, as one finds in the streets of cities in Western countries. The Hindus allowed no saloon in large cities; but now, under the demoralizing influence of the liquor trade of the British Government, one finds hundreds of saloons in some cities. Hindus cannot understand how a civilized nation can approve of liquor trade and opium trade; can seek to demoralize sober people by opening saloons in villages, and inducing the poor laboring classes to acquire habits of drunkenness by offering them strong liquors at no cost. Many people have asked me again and again whether the Hindus have become more moral under the British rule. They would not ask such questions if they knew the demoralizing effects of liquor trade and opium trade in India, and also if they remembered that wherever a Christian missionary goes, a bottle of brandy or whiskey soon follows him. The vegetarian Hindus do not touch wine, even in the form of a medicine.

Lastly, a Hindu is a vegetarian from the standpoint of love. Love means the expression of oneness. The Hindus love lower animals because of oneness. Their ideal is to realize that one spiritual Being is manifesting through all living creatures. The divine Spirit which is dwelling within us and illuminating our inner nature with the light of intelligence and consciousness is also dwelling in lower animals. Their ideal is not a vague, indefinite and meaningless word, such as "brotherhood." They wish to realize that we are one in Spirit with the lower animals, one with every living creature. Their religion teaches: "Love every living creature as thy Self," because the same Self or Spirit is in all. "Realize the Self or Spirit within you; then you shall be able to see the same Spirit everywhere.

He who realizes the one universal Spirit everywhere, cannot kill Spirit by Spirit." He becomes truly unselfish. He is ever ready to help all. Whenever we kill any animal for our food or pleasure we are selfish. It is on account of extreme selfishness that we do not recognize the rights of other animals and amuse ourselves, by killing innocent creatures or by injuring them, or by depriving them of their rights. This kind of selfishness is the mother of all evil thoughts and wicked deeds. That which makes us selfish and helps us to cling to our lower self is degrading and wicked; that which leads us towards unselfishness is elevating and virtuous. That which prevents us from realizing the oneness of Spirit is wrong; that which opens our spiritual eyes and helps us to see that Divinity is expressing itself through the

forms of lower animals, and makes us love them as we love our own Self, is godly and divine.

Every kind of food which we take into our bodies produces changes in our system, both physical and mental. Those who have carefully examined the changes that are produced in their minds by meat diet and who have struggled for self-control, will find it extremely difficult to govern animal passions, violent nature and restless condition of mind without giving up animal food. Thus, looking at the food question from various standpoints, a Hindu is a vegetarian and cannot advocate the eating of animal flesh.

Divine Communion

“He whose heart is unattached to the objects of senses, and whose soul is fixed in Divine Communion with Brahman, attaineth to bliss everlasting.”— Bhagavad Gita, Ch, V, 21.

Divine communion, according to the Christian belief, is most intimately related to that ritual which is known by various names, the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, Sacrament or Mass. The general belief is that during the celebration of this ritual the souls of those who partake in this holy service commune with each other as well as with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Matthew we read: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and brake it and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Chap. xxvi, 26-28.

These words have given foundation to that memorial service called “Holy Communion,” which was instituted by Jesus the Christ, and which has been practised by all the Christian nations for nearly 1900 years; but if we read the religious history of other nations we find that the eating of bread, or the body of God, and the drinking of wine, or the blood of God, existed among pagan peoples many centuries before Christ was born, and was practised by the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians and the Hindus of the Vedic period.

Readers of the comparative history of religions know that the Eucharist is one of the oldest rites of antiquity. The Greeks called it the Eleusinian mystery. Rev. Robert Taylor said: “The Eleusinian mysteries were the most august of all the pagan ceremonies celebrated, more especially by the Athenians, every fifth year in honor of Ceres, the goddess of corn, who, in allegorical language, had given us her flesh to eat just as Bacchus, the god of wine, in like sense, had given us his blood to drink.”

“Prodicus, a Greek sophist of the fifth century B.C., says that the ancients worshipped bread as Demeter (Ceres) and wine as Dionysus (Bacchus) therefore when they ate the bread and drank the wine, after it had been consecrated, they were eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their deity. “The Eleusinian mysteries were accompanied by many religious rites and ceremonies expressive of the purity and self-denial of the worshipper, and were therefore considered to be an expiation of past sins.” Throughout the whole ceremony the name of the Lord was repeated many times.

The ancient Egyptians annually celebrated the resurrection of Osiris, their Saviour and Lord, and commemorated his death by eating the bread and wine consecrated by the priest through many rites and ceremonies. The worshippers who partook of this holy sacrament believed that the bread and wine became the veritable flesh and blood of their god Osiris.

In Persia, many centuries before the birth of Christ, the worshippers of Mithra, who, according to the Par-sees, was the Mediator, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, took the sacrament of bread and wine with the same belief that the Christians do to-day. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Renan and other scholars believe that the Christian Eucharist was an imitation of the Persian ceremony which was practised by the worshippers of Mithra from most ancient times. In India, among the ancient Vedic sacrifices, we find one of special importance for remission of sins. It was a sacrifice of cake and wine. Cake was called Purodasha and wine was called Soma; this cake was made especially for this purpose, was round in shape, its top resembling the back of a tortoise. It was considered to be the symbol of the body of Prajapati, the firstborn Lord of all creatures, who sacrificed himself before creation for the good of all,

and out of whose body the whole universe arose, The wine of the Soma plant is described in the Vedas as the liquor of immortality, the giver of life and strength, the water of life; it was called the nectar which purified the body and soul of all those who drank, and which conferred immortality upon them. The sacrificer in ancient times consecrated this cake, then cut it into pieces, and, chanting the name of the Lord, threw each of those pieces into the sacrificial fire; at the same time he poured consecrated wine into the fire. The remaining portions of the cake and wine were reverently eaten by the assembled family. The sins of the past fortnight were confessed, repentance was expressed, forgiveness was asked, and when they drank the divine beverage they thought that they were in communion with the Heavenly King in spirit—that they were one with the Heavenly King and Father of the Universe. Every householder used to make this sacrifice at the end of each fortnight; husband and wife performed it together and ate the cake and drank the wine with the rest of the family. The rich and powerful employed the ordained priests to perform the sacrifice for them.

Thus we can see that this holy communion service was performed by the ancient nations for the expiation of their sins even centuries before Christ instituted it among his disciples; that ritual which is observed today by millions of Christians all over the world was performed long before the time of Christ by many nations who had never heard of Him. But the Hindus did not continue this practice; they gave it up when the Vedic seers began to grasp more abstract truths. Their truth-seeking minds could not rest contented with the sacrifices and ceremonials which were described in the Vedas; they gradually came to see that those sacrifices stood for something greater, and they tried to understand the spiritual significance; they searched for deeper knowledge of the mysteries of the universe; they struggled for the realization of the true nature of the soul and its relation to God, who was the objective Lord and Father of the universe. At that time they began to question whether or not God was objective and extra-cosmic; whether or not the soul was created by God. Those seekers after Truth were gradually led beyond that old conception of an objective, personal God, who dwelt in heaven outside of nature. As they progressed higher and higher in spiritual researches and arrived at the Vedantic conception of God and the world, their meaning of the Divine communion became higher and more spiritual.

Here we should remember that as long as God is extra-cosmic, outside of nature, as long as He is far from us, so long there remains a vast gulf of separation between God and man. The more distant God is from us, the less chance there is for us to approach Him and come into direct communion with Him. Such being the conditions, the problem of Divine communion does not arise in the minds of the followers of a religion which makes God unapproachable, as we find to be the case in two of the great religions of the world, Judaism and Mahammedanism. These two religions believe in an extra-cosmic, objective, personal God, who is the all-powerful Creator of the world and of human souls.

In Judaism the conception of Jehovah is so transcendent, so objective, so strongly marked and so majestic, that there arose a vast sea of separation between Jehovah and the individual souls. The communion or approach of any individual to Him was considered to be almost an insult to the Deity. This difficulty which such a conception produced was understood and felt for the first time by the Alexandrian Jews, like Philo and his followers, who were influenced by the Greek philosophy; they tried to bridge over that sea of separation between God and man by accepting the Logos theory of the Greek philosophers.

The Logos is described in the writings of Philo as the only begotten son of God, the Father; it was considered to be the Mediator or bridge between God and the world, between the Creator and His creatures; the same Logos was afterwards identified with Jesus the Christ; and since that time the followers of Christ have believed that no one could come into close communion

with God except through that especial Logos, or Word, or Mediator, or through Jesus the Christ. The orthodox Christians think that it is impossible for a human being to commune with the Divinity except through the only begotten Son, the Christ. They say that it is blasphemous even to think of the possibility of an individual soul approaching God without coming through Jesus; they have forgotten, however, that the expression of “*only begotten Son*” was first used for the Logos, which was universal, and not for any particular personality.

Do you know why the Christians say that it is impossible for any individual to approach God without coming through Christ? Because their conception of God is the same objective, majestic, transcendent and extra-cosmic being as Jehovah of the Jews, under the name of Father in Heaven. As long as this conception of the Father in Heaven remains extra-cosmic, so long such an idea will continue to prevail.

In Mahammedanism the conception of God is the same as that in Judaism. The Allah is the all-powerful, transcendent and personal God who dwells in heaven, outside of the universe. Like Jehovah, Allah is to be feared rather than to be united with or approached or communed with. According to Mahammed, true religion lies in the complete submission to Allah’s will, and nothing more. There is no possibility of a beatific communion with Allah in the religion of Mahammed. The modern Babists, who are but reformed Mahammedans, still maintain a similar conception of God; they believe in the same Allah, who is extra-cosmic, majestic and outside of the universe. The God of Mahammed lived in a heaven, and from that celestial abode commanded the universe; but the more philosophical class among Mahammedans went beyond this conception; they were known as the Sufis, and were almost like the Christian mystics of the middle ages. They were the mystics among the Mahammedans. They believed in a communion with God, and that that communion could be established through love in the state of ecstasy.

Although these Sufis believed that a human being could approach God, yet they did not accept the idea that a human soul could be one with Him. They were dualists; they believed that the individual soul could be god-like and a temporary union between the soul and God could be accomplished only through love. They did not believe in any other mediator; they even rejected Mahammed as the only prophet of God. The writings of the Sufis are full of Oriental metaphors which seem horrible to many of the practical, matter-of-fact Western minds. Even the mind of a great philosopher like Emerson could not understand the metaphorical language of the God-intoxicated Sufi poet and philosopher, Hafiz. Those who have read the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam will understand how difficult it is to grasp the true meaning which underlies the metaphorical expressions of the Persian Sufis.

Sufism, which arose about 820 after Christ, was the result of the influence of the Vedanta Philosophy of India upon the dry Mahammedan conception of the objective, personal God or Allah. The peculiarity of Vedanta, on the contrary, lies in a conception of God which is not only objective, but both subjective and objective. He is not merely transcendent but immanent. God, according to the Vedanta is not only outside of nature but dwells in every particle and atom in nature; He is not only the soul of the universe, He is the soul of our souls. Although Vedanta does not object to the worship of an extra-cosmic, personal God, still it does not stop there as other religious systems have done. On the contrary, it says that a man may fear and worship God as the extra-cosmic being for some time, but when his spiritual eye is opened, and when he understands the true nature of the soul and its true relation to God, he begins to realize that God is both objective and subjective.

The soul, according to Vedanta, is not created by God out of any material which is outside of Himself, but it emanates from the spiritual essence of Divinity; consequently it is of the same

substance and the same nature as God Himself. It is immaterial, immortal and unchangeable. God is not separate from the universe; there is no gulf of separation between God who is infinite and all-pervading, and the human soul or the world; but He is like the Eternal background of the variegated colors and scenes of the panorama of the phenomenal world. He is like the spiritual canvas upon which are painted the pictures of human souls by the invisible hands of the Almighty Artist. He is the infinite source of all powers and forces which are manifested in the material and physical planes of the universe; He dwells within our souls.

Every individual soul is a part of the spiritual body of the God of Vedanta; He is nearer to our souls than are our bodies, nearer than our senses, our minds, our intellects; He is the essence of our existence and life. In Him we live and through Him we exist, consequently there is no need of any bridge, any mediator, between Him and us. The relation of the individual soul to God being naturally so close and so intimate, the Divine communion in Vedanta has a more spiritual meaning and a deeper significance than that of merely eating the flesh and drinking the blood of God. God has neither flesh nor blood. True communion with Divinity, according to Vedanta, does not come through any external relation to place, time or personality, but it comes to the soul when the innermost door of the soul is open to receive that blissful current of the Divine Spirit which rushes in with tremendous force. It comes when the depths of our hearts are flooded with the one sheet of the water of immortality, and when all the weeds of selfishness, hatred, jealousy, sectarianism and bigotry are washed away by the tremendous outrush of the current of that all-loving omniscient Spirit; then rises on the horizon of the soul that self-effulgent sun of wisdom; the soft and benign rays of that eternal sun dispel the darkness of ignorance that had reigned there for ages, and illumine the heart with Divine light.

Divine communion comes at first like the reunion of two kindred spirits united by the everlasting bond of love, but who are apparently separated by the delusive power of forgetfulness. As a child who loves its mother, and knows nothing but that beloved mother, may forget her for the time being when its whole soul is fascinated with the toys of Christmas time; or as a young woman, charmed by jewels and beautiful garments, may forget her lover whom she adores, and considers the embodiment of all happiness; even so, the individual soul, bewitched by the objects of sense, may forget the true source of happiness, which is more intimately related to it than the mother is to the child or the lover to the beloved one. But, as the joy of the child when it is reunited to the beloved mother—as the joy which comes to the soul of that woman when she again remembers her lover—cannot be described by words, so that happiness which comes through the reunion of the soul with God is beyond the power of utterance. That happiness is not temporary; it is unbounded and everlasting. This reunion leads to a still higher realization of the spiritual oneness with God. At that time the soul regains its true nature, breaks through all barriers and walls of limitation and attains to perfect freedom and omniscience; from that time divine qualities begin to flow through the soul. In that state all questions are solved, all doubts cease, all results of past actions are annulled and all the knots of desire that arise in the self-loving and self-seeking ignorant heart are torn asunder. After this realization there is no more struggle for the expiation of sins, no more crying for forgiveness, no more fear of punishment. The human soul is transfigured with Divine Spirit. This transfiguration, or perfect atonement, or at-one-ment with God, is the aim of divine communion.

Divine communion brings the attainment of God-consciousness*; all other phases of consciousness which are manifested on the lower planes in daily life, merge into this supreme consciousness *of* the divine nature of the soul; it is called in Sanskrit, Samhadhi; it is the state of God-consciousness; if any man or woman can reach this state for an instant even, then he

or she destroys all effects of the sins which he or she may have committed during perhaps hundreds of previous incarnations.

No individual soul, whether virtuous or sinful, rich or poor, can ever become truly sinless and happy without coming into that state of God-consciousness. You may cry for help and pray for forgiveness day after day and night after night, may ask redemption from sins, but rest assured that he who will forgive sins is your own Self. Your own Divine nature alone can make you free from sins. You may call that Divine nature, God or Buddha or Christ, it is all the same; no one other than the Divine Self possesses the power of forgiving the sins of the individual ego. Remember that all help that you have received has not come to you from the outside, but it has come from the very bottom of your own soul; you might have thought, through ignorance, that the forgiveness and help came from outside, but the time is sure to come when you will have to realize that all the help you have received in your life, or will receive in the future, is from within; that it is your own Divine Self that will help and forgive you, who, through ignorance and self-delusion, have committed many mistakes, and have played the part of a sinner.

The highest ideal of divine communion—that is, the attainment of God-consciousness—does not come through ceremony or ritual, nor by muttering passages from the Scriptures, nor by counting beads, nor by confessing sins to a priest, nor by worshipping the departed spirit of any holy man; these may be helpful to those whose souls have not awakened to spiritual truths, but God-consciousness comes through the realization of our true nature, which is eternally one with the pure, blissful and all-knowing Spirit Divine.

There are many paths that lead to such realization; each of these paths is described in Vedanta as Yoga, or the method of attaining this consciousness. Those who practise Yoga sincerely, keeping the attainment of divine communion and God-consciousness as the highest ideal, should not stop until it is acquired. Life is not worth living if we cannot become conscious of our Divine nature in this life. What good can be gained by living like slaves to passions and desires; what shall we gain for our souls by attiring our bodies in rich raiment, or by living in beautiful mansions, or by filling high positions in the state or country? These may be of great value to those whose aim is not higher than the attainment of earthly comforts and pleasures of the body. How long will this body stay? Not more than five or six scores of years; but remember that the soul life is not confined to the life of the body; it is from eternity to eternity. What are you going to do for your souls?

Have you gained anything for the soul? The treasures of the earth do not enrich the soul and comforts of the body cannot long satisfy that soul which is overburdened with cares, anxieties, suffering and worries, and which is obeying the commands of hundreds of masters internal and external. The pleasures of the senses do not satisfy the soul which has realized the transitoriness and the ephemeral character of worldly objects. No family ties, no earthly relations, can ever quench the thirst of that soul which longs to drink the water that comes through divine communion alone; no earthly thing can stand in the way of that soul which eagerly seeks the path to return home and rest there peacefully after the tiresome journey along the by-ways in the maze of the phenomenal world. Vain are the hopes of those who try to be happy by acquiring wealth, or the pleasures of the senses and comforts of the body. Since the beginning of the history of humanity no human soul has ever become truly happy, or peaceful, or blissful in this life by pursuing the pleasures of the senses and comforts of the body. Therefore Vedanta says: “If a man becomes master of the whole world, still he is not happy; he wants something else.” And Jesus says: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Neither happiness nor immortality can be bought by the almighty dollar. One may be the father of many children, but he must be a fool who expects

to be happy on account of many children. True happiness comes to a soul when it renounces the foolish idea of becoming happy through sense pleasures and earthly enjoyments, and seeks God-consciousness by entering into the gate of divine communion. He who has entered that gate by the sincere and earnest practice of Yoga, and has succeeded in regaining his true nature, sees Divinity everywhere. To his eyes the beauty of a human face, or of a landscape, appears infinitely more beautiful because behind that beauty he sees the Infinite Source of all beauty; he knows that this external beauty is but a partial expression of that Divine beauty. He feels Divine presence in music, as well as in every sound that enters into his ears. Such a soul perceives Divinity in every object of the senses.

Then the mysteries of life and death are solved. The whole life, which seems to us meaningless, unfolds higher purpose, nobler and more spiritual meaning to one who has reached God-consciousness through Divine communion. He whose soul communes with the Divine Spirit within does not care for any celestial felicity; he does not want anything of this world; he is serene, peaceful, restful, happy and always contented, free from worry, anxieties, misery, sorrow, suffering and fear of death. He knows that he is divine. If the whole world persecutes him, tortures him and cuts his body into pieces, even then he resists not, but blesses his persecutors and gently utters: "I am Spirit Divine; swords cannot pierce me, fire cannot burn me, the pains of the body cannot affect me; I am immortal. I am in the sun, in the moon, in the stars; nay, I am the soul of the persecutor's soul. I am He, I am He. If the whole world go, I do not lose anything by it." He says: "I bow down to my Divine Spirit, which does not possess anything, yet which is the Master of all that exists in the universe, or will exist in the future."

Does The Soul Exist After Death?

One of the most poetical of the Upanishads, I mean the Katha Upanishad, which has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title of "The Secret of Death," begins with this inquiry: "There is this doubt; when a man dies, some say that he is gone forever, that he does not exist, while others hold that he still lives; which of these is true?" Various answers have been given to this question; metaphysics, philosophy, science and religion have tried to solve this problem. At the same time, attempts have also been made to suppress this question and to prevent inquiry as to whether or not man exists after death. Hundreds of thinkers have brought forward all sorts of arguments to do away with questions bearing upon this momentous subject.

From ancient times there have been atheistic and agnostic thinkers in India who denied the existence of the soul after the death of the body. They are known as Charvakas. They believe that the body is the soul, and that the soul does not exist outside of the body, and that when the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. They believe in nothing that cannot be perceived by the senses. Their motto is: "As long as you live, do not fail to enjoy. Live comfortably and enjoy the pleasures of life. Do not think of the future. Get all that you need and wish; if you have not got money, then beg or borrow it, for when the body is burned into ashes no one will have to be accountable for your deeds."

Such Charvakas we find in almost every country. For instance, in the Old Testament we read, Solomon says: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart.....Live joyfully with the wife - whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Eccl. ix. 7, 9, 10. The followers of such thinkers are spreading very rapidly and their number is increasing every day. They are now known as atheists, agnostics, materialists, etc. According to this class of thinkers, those who believe in the existence of the soul as separate from the body, or in a life after death are ignorant and superstitious fools, while those who follow their ideas are clever and intelligent beings. Most of them hold that there is no such thing as soul. No argument can convince them or change their views, because they will not admit the existence of anything which lies beyond the reach of their senses, or which cannot be perceived by the limited powers of the senses. They have written volumes after volumes against the existence of the soul, and have tried to stop such useless questions of the mind; but in spite of their efforts, have they succeeded in stopping that innate question, "What remains after death?"—which rises spontaneously in almost every human heart? No. The same question rises to-day as it arose thousands of years ago. No one can stop it, because it is inseparably connected with our nature.

The same question was asked by saints and sinners, by prophets and priests, by kings and beggars amongst all nations, in all climes. We are discussing the same question to-day; and it will be discussed in the future. We may forget it for the time being in the turmoil and struggles of our lives; we may not ask it when we are deeply absorbed in comforts, luxuries and sense enjoyments; we may delude ourselves by various false argumentations; but the moment we encounter the sudden appearance of death, the moment we see that some one of our nearest and dearest is breathing his last, we stop for a while and ask within ourselves: What is this? Where has he gone? Does he still exist? What has become of him? That dormant question reappears in a new form and disturbs our peace of mind. Then we begin to inquire; but at the very threshold of our inquiry we find an adamant wall which it is almost impossible to break through. Weak intellects stop there; their feeble attempts to cross that

wall produce no result. That wall is nothing but the belief that the body is the producer of the soul, that the soul is the result of the physical form we call the “body.” Those who can overcome this strong barrier can understand whether or not the soul exists after death. The old, crude way of inferring the existence of soul after death and a future life for all men, women and children from the tradition of a single miraculous resurrection of a certain person, no longer appeals to our reason. The days of believing blindly in the authority of any one’s sayings are gone by. We are no longer children; we want maturer reason; we want to discuss that question more deeply. Those who believe in that miraculous resurrection will perhaps say that those who do not believe in it have no hope. But we no longer accept their statements. The time has come when we want to discuss the question scientifically, psychologically, philosophically, metaphysically, and in all other possible ways.

Now let us see whether the explanation that body is the cause of the soul is satisfactory or not. Taking it for granted that the soul, or the mass of thought, or whatever you may call it, is the outcome of the combinations of matter which make up the body, we ask, What is the cause of that body? What force combines the matter into the form of the body? What force is there which forms your body in one way and my body in another? What is the cause of those distinctions? The materialistic Charvakas will answer that this body was caused by another body of the parents. As the parents produce this body so the body of the parents is the cause of this body.. But that is not the true answer, for instead of explaining the cause of this body and this combination of matter they show us another combination of matter, and the question remains the same. What is the cause of that combination of matter,—the parents’ body? They answer, another combination of matter,—and so on. Instead of answering the question and explaining the cause of the combination of matter they say that this combination is the result of another combination, which ultimately leads to the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum*. The method of explaining the soul by the body is like the process of explaining the cause by the effect, which is putting the cart before the horse.

Modern physiologists, anatomists, pathologists, and a host of other materialistic and agnostic thinkers, however, hold that body, or the combination of matter, produces thought, intelligence, consciousness, mind or soul. In medical schools and college laboratories students are taught that thought, or intelligence, or consciousness, is nothing but a function of the brain. Moreover, they learn that every special form of thought is a result of the activity of a special portion of the brain. When we see things, or think of seen objects, the optical convolutions of our brain are active. A certain portion of the temporal lobes are active when we hear, and so on.

Those of the modern scientists who advocate the production of thought by brain say that “mind is conterminous with brain functions.” If the brain functions stop, the mind, intelligence, consciousness, and all the mental phenomena will instantly stop. The phenomena of consciousness correspond, element for element, to the operations of special parts of the brain. There is no such thing as soul; consequently there can be no question regarding its existence after death. They deny the existence of the soul altogether. The sensations decay when the organic conditions change and stop when the machinery stops. The brain brings into existence the material of consciousness of which our minds consist. Some explain the process by which thought is produced by the brain, by saying that the peculiar structure of the brain is destined to produce thought and consciousness just as the stomach is destined to perform the function of digestion and the liver to secrete bile. As food materials, after falling into the stomach, change and assume new qualities, so the impressions of the brain through the nerves are metamorphosed into ideas, thought, emotion, will, expressions of the face, speech, disposition, etc. Thus thought or soul is the secretion of the brain; when the brain is gone, soul cannot exist. Here impressions are compared to food as if

the impressions were gross forms of matter or as if they could exist apart from a perceiving mind. Buchner, one of the most famous materialists, says: "Thinking must be regarded as a special mode of general natural motion." J. Luys says: "As one sees a metallic rod, placed in a glowing furnace, gradually heat itself and pass successively from the shades of bright red to dark red, to white and develop, as its temperature rises, heat and light,—so the living sensitive cells, in presence of the incitations that solicit them, exalt themselves progressively as to their most interior sensibility."

Mr. Percival Lowell says: "When we have, as we say, an idea, what happens inside of us is probably like this: the neural current of molecular change passes up the nerves, and through the ganglia reaches at last the cortical cells... When it reaches the cortical cells it finds a set of molecules which are not so accustomed to this special change. The current encounters resistance, and in overcoming this resistance it causes the cells to glow. This white-heating of the cells we call consciousness. Consciousness, in short, is probably nerve-grow." Thus the western materialists who believe that the physical forces are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts and sensations describe the process by which this change takes place. Mr. Herbert Spencer, being an agnostic, advocates the metamorphosis of the physical forces into states of consciousness but he does not describe the process. He leaves it as a mystery which it is impossible to fathom. That is, he does not know how this metamorphosis takes place, but he is sure it does take place. Mr. Spencer, however, identifies the soul with the brain and compares it to the piano. He says: "Ideas are like the successive chords and cadences brought out, which successively die as the other ones are sounded, and it would be as proper to say that these passing chords and cadences thereafter exist in the piano as it is proper to say that passing ideas thereafter exist in the brain" (soul). ... *Principles of Psychology*, VII., p. 485. But here Mr. Spencer forgets that the piano needs a performer to produce musical sounds. Music is never brought out by the piano itself if it does not exist in the mind of the performer. So his analogy is imperfect and incomplete. It would have been complete if he supposed that the individual soul or mind is detached from the brain and plays upon its nervous centres and brain cells as a performer plays upon the keys of a piano.

Another materialistic thinker, Professor W. K. Clifford, who believes in the combination theory, says: "Consciousness is a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of feelings. The action of the brain is also a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of nerve messages. For every feeling in consciousness there is at the same time a nerve message of the brain. Consciousness is not a simple thing, but complex; it is the combination of feelings into a stream. Inexorable facts connect our consciousness with this body that we know; and that not merely as a whole, but the parts of it are connected severally with parts of our brain action. If there is any similar connection with a spiritual body it only follows that the spiritual body must die at the same time with the natural one." Thus the materialistic thinkers, who do not believe in a soul as separate from the brain, or independent of the physical body, try to deduce mind and intelligence from matter, or from the combinations of matter, either by applying the theory of production, or the theory of combination.

In India similar theories were advanced by the Charvakas and the Buddhists, who did not believe in the existence of a soul as separate from the gross body. The Buddhists maintained that the body is the cause of mind and intelligence, that consciousness is the result of the combination of insentient matter and unintelligent forces of physical nature. They used the illustration of a lamp and the light. This body is just like a lamp, and the intelligence, or consciousness, is like the light produced by the burning of the candle.

But Vedanta philosophers refuted both these materialistic theories by pointing out the fallacy of their principal arguments. Vedanta says that matter or object is only one half of the

universe, and the other half is mind, or subject, or soul. It is impossible to deduce the one from the other. In the first place if we analyze our knowledge of matter and force, we find that we cannot know matter by itself and we cannot know⁷ force by itself; that what we know is nothing but a mental change. Knowledge of matter is nothing but the knowledge of that change of mind of which we are conscious. When we say that matter exists we are conscious of a peculiar mental change beyond which we cannot know. The mind cannot go beyond itself. Even our knowledge that the soul or mind is a function of the brain presupposes the existence of another mind or knower. Whenever we say that consciousness or soul is the result of the combination of matter, that statement also requires another mind to be conscious of that idea.

John Stuart Mill was right in saying that after dissecting a human brain, when one does not find there any trace of the soul or mind, and denies its existence, or asserts that mind or soul is the function of the brain, he forgets that such knowledge necessarily implies the existence of his mind or soul. As the knowledge of matter, or brain, or any other kind of knowledge depends upon the self-consciousness, it will be absurd to deny the priority of that which is the basis of consciousness, of intelligence, and of all knowledge, and with the help of which one can know the existence of matter, or its combinations. G. J. Romanes says: "We cannot think any of the facts of external nature without presupposing the existence of a mind which thinks them, and therefore, so far at least as we are concerned, mind is necessarily prior to everything else. It is for us the only mode of existence which is real in its own right, and to it, as to a standard, all other modes of existence which may be inferred must be referred. Therefore, if we say that mind is a function of motion, we are only saying, in somewhat confused terminology, that mind is a function of itself. Such, then, I take to be a general refutation of materialism." If it be a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion, as it has been established by modern science, how can we maintain that the molecular motion of the brain cells produces consciousness, or intelligence, which is not the same as motion, but is a knower of motion? Therefore, Vedanta philosophy teaches that the source of consciousness cannot be found in matter, but stands independent of it. What we call matter is only the medium through which consciousness manifests itself.

Dr. Schiller, an eminent thinker of the West, holding similar opinions, says: "Matter is not that which produces consciousness, but that which limits it, and confines its intensity within certain limits; material organization does not construct consciousness out of arrangements of atoms, but contracts its manifestation within the sphere which it permits." There are other agnostic thinkers who say: "The conception of a soul as a substantive thing is a mere figment of imagination." Kant said: "There is no means whatever by which we can learn anything respecting the constitution of the soul so far as regards the possibility of its separate existence."

David Hume, like some of the Buddhistic philosophers in India, believed that the human soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions and ideas. Hume said: "When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself and may be truly said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated; nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity." So, according to Hume, our souls die every night when we sleep soundly. I think very few of us here present will be ready to accept such an explanation of the nature of the human soul.

Those who depend on sense perceptions only, try to see the soul by dissecting the brain, but when the senses do not reveal it, they deny its existence. They may just as well try to find the soul in the heart or stomach, as the ancient seekers of the soul did. If we examine properly, we shall be able to see logical fallacies and inconsistencies in all the materialistic and agnostic arguments which support the theory that soul is the result of body or of the combination of matter, or else that the soul does not exist at all. From ancient times such materialistic conclusions have been repeatedly arrived at by thinkers of different countries. But do our minds remain satisfied with such ideas, and do we stop from asking again and again—is there any life after death? If we hear millions of times “there is no soul,” still we cannot be entirely convinced that we shall cease to exist after death; we cannot think of our annihilation; we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost forever. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason; they do not satisfy our minds, nor do they bring any consolation to our souls. These statements are but the expressions of ignorance of truth. Truth is that which exists eternally. If existence be a truth to-day, it must be true eternally.

If we deny the existence of a soul as independent of the body, we cannot explain many facts which often occur during our lifetime, nor the genuine phenomena described in the reports of the Psychical Research Society of Europe and America. We cannot ignore the facts recorded in the lives of many cultivated sceptics and agnostics who have seen their doubles outside of themselves when alone in their rooms reposing on a couch or an easy chair. There are instances of such doubles talking, walking or doing various other things. How are these facts to be explained? There are many descriptions of the manifestation of the doubles of the Yogis in India. Various attempts have been made to explain such events by asserting that they are either optical delusions or hallucinations of the brain. But we cannot say they are optical delusions or hallucinations if they can stand the test of verification. There are many properly verified instances of the appearance of the double. Suppose at night before retiring one is sitting alone in his room, after locking the door from inside. Suppose his mind is greatly disturbed with some important business question or a mathematical problem. He suddenly sees another exactly like himself sitting at his desk with a pen in his hand, writing something on a piece of paper; and, after examination, he finds that it is an answer to his question or the correct solution of the problem which has puzzled him for many days, what explanation will you offer? What kind of hallucination is this? What verification stronger and more satisfactory than this do you want to have? Such an occurrence cannot be explained by clairvoyance or telepathy. Some may say it is a false story, but mere assertion does not disprove the facts. The denial of a fact does not change the nature of the fact. Facts are facts whether we admit or deny them, whether our current theory can explain them or not. Clairvoyance, telepathy, and thought transference have failed to explain these cases. Such facts can only be explained by the theory of the existence of the soul as separable from the body. According to science, that theory is true which can explain most facts, and we should accept it until a better theory or a better explanation comes. Those who believe in the theory of production, or that of combination, will shut their eyes to such facts. But those who believe in the transmission theory, or, in other words, those who hold that brain or human body is the instrument through which the soul manifests its powers, will find no difficulty in explaining all the genuine phenomena connected with the double.

Prof. William James, of Harvard, says: “The transmission theory also puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences that are with difficulty explained by the production theory.”

Again there are authentic instances of persons appearing to friends immediately after death. There are many such instances in India, in Europe, and in every country. Such instances may occur where the persons appearing to friends ask to have their children taken care of, or bring some message. One need not go to spiritualistic seances to experience these things. Many

such experiences have come to persons in private life and in their own homes; and they have been well verified.

In spiritualistic seances, ninety-nine cases out of one hundred of spirit manifestations are mixed with fraud, and many professional mediums have been most pitifully exposed both here and abroad. The motive power in professional mediums is to make money, or to earn a living.

In India the Hindus do not trust a professional medium. On the contrary, they say it is wicked to hold public seances for money. It is more wicked to earn a living at the expense of the poor spirits. Why try to earn your living by making the poor spirits appear to you? Those persons who do this are considered ordinary *fakirs*. Although many mediums have been exposed, and many spirit manifestations have been proved to be like magic or jugglery, still those fraudulent cases cannot be the reason for denying the existence of the soul as apart from the body or in a life after death. Now, the question may arise: If the soul exists after death, does it retain its individuality? The Vedanta philosophy says, yes, it does. The souls of earthbound spirits retain their personality, too. Some of the western writers, who have known very little of Hindu philosophy, say that the highest ideal of the Hindu religion is the annihilation of the soul. These childish statements prove their ignorance and prejudice. We hear such things from writers who consider themselves great scholars after reading the description of Hindu religion given by the Christian missionaries, who do not see good in any religion except their own, or who write simply to serve their own purposes. In the voluminous writings of the Hindus, however, you will never find a single sentence which teaches that the soul will be destroyed after death. On the contrary, you will read that the soul is eternal, immortal, deathless and birthless. In the Bhagavad Gita it is said: "The soul of man is indestructible; it cannot be pierced by the sword; fire cannot burn it; air cannot dry it; water cannot moisten it."

"If the slayer think that he has slain, or if the slain think that he is slain, both of them know not that the soul can neither slay nor be slain."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, after reading the Bhagavad Gita, rendered this passage in verse in his poem entitled "Brahma":

"If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again."

As regards the retaining of the individuality, Vedanta says that each soul after death takes with it all the experiences, impressions, and ideas which it gained on earth; it takes its mind, its intelligence, its intellect and powers of the senses and enjoys, or reaps, the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds.

If you read the funeral service of the Hindus you will find that after the death of a person the relatives do good deeds in the name of the departed, believing that good thoughts, prayers and good works, done in their names, will help the departed spirits. The Hindus also believe that, if we think of them constantly and invoke them, asking them to remain with us for our own gratification without thought of their good, we force them to remain confined to that particular personality which was connected with their earthly bodies they left behind them. Personality is always connected with the body.

At every birth of the body we have a certain personality according to the environments, and if we keep one soul confined in one personality or one set of environments, then there will be

no progress of the soul on higher planes. Therefore, it is better not to drag our departed friends to our plane of existence; but to help them by sending good thoughts to them.

The most ancient writers of the Vedic ages show that they believed in the spirit world of the *Pitars*, or fathers, where the departed souls go after death. The king, or ruler, of this place is called *Yama*. He was the first of the mortals to enter that world and he became the ruler of those who came later.

The Hindus believe in a heaven, but not in any hell. The Hindu heaven is different from that of the Christian or of the Mohammedan. The Hindus believe that heaven is a realm where the departed souls go to reap the pleasant effects of their good and virtuous actions, that they remain there for some time—that is, until the results of their good works are completely reaped; then after that period, they will return to this world again. The Christians, Mohammedans, and Zoroastrians believe in a heaven of all kinds of sense enjoyments, where pleasures will come incessantly without troubles or any sort of pain. This, according to the Hindus, is not a desirable state. They say that all these celestial enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory. Supposing a spirit remains in heaven and enjoys for a million years or for one cycle; still, compared to eternity, this is a very short time. So they say, that after enjoying the results of good works in those realms, one is bound to be born again, either here or in some other planet, according to one's tendencies and capacities. Therefore, in the Bhagavad Gita it is said: "All the different worlds of spirits, beginning with the highest heavens, are states from where one must return, because they are within the realm of phenomena and are changeable. But he who attains to the realization of Truth transcends all phenomena and the laws which govern them."

The Persians believed that the soul would rise three days after death and would go either to heaven or to hell, according to its thoughts, speech and works. This Persian idea of heaven was afterwards adopted by the Jews and the Christians. The ancient Hebrews did not trouble themselves about the life after death. They believed that God breathed life into man's nostrils and that the breath, which came from Jehovah, would go back to Him; that the life breath of all creatures would return to the source from whence it came. "That which happens to man also happens to lower animals." This life breath was sometimes called "Nephesh," "Ruach," or "Neshama."

The Egyptians believed in a double which was like a shadow of the body, and which remained as long as the body remained. This gave rise to the idea of mummifying the bodies of the dead. If the body was injured in any part, the double, or soul, was likewise injured; so to keep the soul intact they preserved the bodies.

The Chaldeans believed in a double which would be annihilated if the body were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse. Many of the Christians have a similar belief. This idea gave rise to the custom of embalming and burying the dead. Some of the Christians still believe that the body will rise after death. Others do not believe in the resurrection of the body. They believe that the soul will remain and exist through all eternity, although it had a beginning. The Christian idea regarding the beginning of the soul is that at the time of birth, each soul is newly created by the Almighty God. But the Hindus say that that which has a beginning cannot live through all eternity; it must have an end. The Hindus do not believe that the soul is created by God or by any other being. It is eternal by its nature. It is birthless and it cannot die. The Hindus do not mean destruction or annihilation by death; they mean by it a change of body or form. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Phenomenal life is impossible without death or change of forms. We are dying every day. Every seventh year the entire body has changed every particle and renewed every atom.

Prof. Huxley says: “Physiology writes over the portals of life, *Debemur morti nos nostraque*, with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet ascribed to the melancholy line. And in whatever guise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died.” Although every particle of the body changes, we still continue to exist; our continuity is not broken. From babyhood to old age we retain the same sense of “I” and of personal identity. This continuity of the conscious agent, or “I,” cannot be explained by any physical or chemical law. According to Vedanta philosophy, thought, or feeling, or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. “Motion produces motion and nothing else,” says modern science. As such, how can the motion of the atoms of the body produce consciousness? That must be due to some higher power, or force. This force is ordinarily called “soul.” The soul is not subject to the atomic or molecular changes in the body; it is rather the cause of them. It is beyond all change, and consequently, beyond death. It is the basis of the continuity of the conscious state and of the sense of identity in the individual. As we survive and retain our individuality after each seven years of change and renewal, so we shall live as individual souls after the final dissolution of the form of our bodies. In the Bhagavad Gita it is said: “As during our lifetime we survive the death of the baby body, the young body, and the mature body, successively, and retain our individuality, so after the death of the old body we shall survive, live, retain our individuality and continue to exist through eternity.”

THE END

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