

THEOSOPHY

Edited by

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WE propose to describe in this paper the modern movement known as Theosophical, not only because it challenges our attention owing to its wide and rapid diffusion, and by the number of adepts it ceaselessly draws from the older and established forms of religion, but because in it we can observe the permanence of some of the strangest, as well as the most general, of religious tendencies—such, especially, as manifested themselves when dying paganism made its supreme effort to kill, and itself to draw life from, nascent Christianity. Moreover, the founders of modern Theosophy have without exception connected their doctrines with, and modelled their formulæ upon, ancient and mysterious systems of religious thought, such especially as India has produced. They strive also to link with these the most modern concepts of philosophy or postulates of science—the results, in their religious aspect, of Darwinian evolution, Hegelian idealistic monism, or of Pragmatism, and much more, forming a singularly comprehensive totality of doctrine.

We intend, therefore, according to the plan generally followed in this series, to describe first the history, then the doctrines of modern Theosophy, noting always its historical or philosophical connections with kindred systems.¹

¹ Since, however, the scope of this series is not controversial, but expository, we are content to refer the reader for a discussion of the

I. THE FOUNDERS OF THEOSOPHY

Though both the word Theosophy, and, in a sense, the thing, are far older (as modern Theosophists are the first to assert, and as we shall see below) than the movement which officially began on 17th November 1875, what is popularly known as Theosophy can never be dissociated from the names of Mme. Blavatsky, of Mrs. Annie Besant, and, in a secondary measure, from that of Col. Henry Streete Olcott.

(i) Helen Petrovna Hahn (1831-1891) was a member of a noble family of South Russia, connected through her mother with the Princes Dolgorouki. She married General Nicephoros Blavatsky, second in command of the Caucasian province Erivan. Her extremely brief married life was stormy; she fled from her husband at the age of seventeen, renounced the life imposed by the ordinary conditions of society, and travelled for a considerable time, especially in the Far East. There we are told (by Mrs. Besant) she became the disciple of a great master of Oriental wisdom, and became fully possessed of that occult lore to the propagation of which her life was henceforward devoted. A first attempt to found a spiritistic society in Egypt failed. She crossed to America, where she met Col. Olcott, who had been an officer in the Northern army. He was an ex-medium and a journalist, and was examining the spiritistic phenomena connected with the brothers Eddy. He came entirely under her influence, though she seems to have had a poor enough opinion of

truth and value of Theosophy to the excellent brochure of E. R. Hull, S. J., editor of the *Bombay Examiner*, entitled *Theosophy and Christianity*, C.T.S., 6d. Cf. too L. de Grandmaison, *Le Lotus Bleu*, Paris, Bloud, series *Science et Religion*, 364; O. Zimmermann, "Die neue Theosophie," in *Stimmen aus Maria-Laach*, 1910, x., 387-400, 479-495; R. F. Clarke, "What is Theosophy?" *The Month*, Jan. 1892, p. 1; "The Marvels of Theosophy," *ib.*, Feb., p. 173; "The True Character of Theosophy," *ib.*, March, p. 321; G. Busnelli, *Manuale di Teosofia*, 1, Rome, 1910.

him.¹ He was made, however, first President of the Theosophical Society, founded in New York 17th November 1875, and certainly displayed extraordinary talents for organization and popular propaganda. The infant Society, however, was soon all but wrecked; for though it existed professedly to combat spiritualism equally with materialism, and to propagate belief in the existence of the Eastern lore and sages, it made use of not a few of the methods, and experienced certain of the phenomena, of Spiritualism. H. S. O. and H. P. B. (as it is the curious but convenient custom of Theosophists to designate their founders) went later on to India, where the revelations of 1884-1885 (*infra*, p. 23) were, as was quite frankly admitted, "a tremendous blow."² H. P. B. retired into temporary privacy, but retrieved her position and remained the "heart and soul of the Society" till her death, which took place in London, 8th May 1891. This date, known as the White Lotus Day, is observed by social and artistic celebrations.

This extraordinary woman, whose magnificent and scowling features have become famous in three continents, was possessed of startling talents, unlimited audacity, and above all (we surmise) of that personal magnetism so noticeable in all leaders of men. Her great books, *The Secret Doctrine* (3 vols.), *The Key to Philosophy*, *Isis Unveiled*,³ etc., and her many articles

¹ "Psychologized baby," she calls him, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, ix. ; London, 1885, p. 331.

² *Review of Reviews*, iii. 556. In *H. P. B. and the Masters of Wisdom: A Detailed Examination of the Coulomb Affair, and the S.P.R. Report*, Mrs. Besant attempts a "complete defence" of H. P. B., who had been detected, it was generally held, in wholesale "faking" of occult phenomena. Cf. too *Isis and the Mahâtmas*, W. Q. Judge, London, 1895 (his defence); and *Isis very much Unveiled*, F. E. Garrett, *ib.*, 1895 (this title is based on Mme. Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, first published in 1875, 2 vols., and lately reprinted). Cf. App. D.

³ Obtainable from the Theosophical Publishing Society (T.P.S.), 161 New Bond St., W. They are confessedly in great measure "a mosaic of unacknowledged quotations."

in accredited magazines, carried her influence even where her restless personal activity never reached. Her information was encyclopedic, but altogether confused, inaccurate, and at the mercy of her riotous imagination.

(ii) We draw the following outline of Mrs. Besant's life from her own *Autobiography* (Fisher Unwin, 1893); this shall be our excuse for the singularly intimate character of its details. Born in London on 1st October 1847, she united in herself Irish "other-worldliness" ("three-quarters of my blood and all my heart") with Devonshire common-sense. Her father, apparently once a Catholic, grew to "detest" all positive creed, and partly "rationalized" her mother's "dainty and well-bred piety." Annie Wood was "too religious," "stuff of which fanatics are made." She nearly became a Catholic (p. 24). Angels, fairies, "Roman judges and Dominican inquisitors," Jesus, her "ideal Prince," haunted a childhood narrated with singular affection and sympathy, softening its austere Evangelical setting. Trained to increasing independence, her girlhood yet became intensely ritualist: she studied Keble and the Fathers, fasted, scourged herself; grew mystically enamoured of the Crucifix, though, in the Holy Week of 1866, the "discrepancies" of the Gospel Passion-histories chilled her with a first doubt. In 1867 she "drifts" into marriage with the Rev. F. Besant, who asked a submissiveness she could not give. Personal suffering; quarrels; sickness of her children; the unromantic duties of a home,—all this initiated a "struggle of three years and two months" from which, after facing suicide, she will emerge an "atheist." Her religious doubts increase: she leaves her husband: legal separation will follow: she earns a miserable pittance as a cook, governess, and nurse. Voysey and Stanley replace the Puseyite directors. Now she studies at the British Museum, and writes heterodox pamphlets.

She has abandoned prayer, and "God fades out of the daily life of those who never pray." In 1874 she makes acquaintance with Charles Bradlaugh. The title "atheist" becomes for her the "Order of Merit of the world's heroes": the "Man of Sorrows" is rejected for the "Ideal Man," the "Hercules of Grecian art," the "free man who knows no law." Faith in evolution shows her the "sources of evil and the method of its extinction": strong in this "creed" and "ethical programme," she lives happily from 1874 to 1886, and, "with some misgivings," to 1899. Meanwhile she lectures and writes on social, political, and free-thought topics with that vivacity, force, and personal communication which everywhere won for her enthusiastic devotion, where it did not inflame slander, abuse, prosecution, and even personal attack. She warmly defended Malthusian principles, and was legally deprived of the custody of her daughter, as she had been of her little son's; she "almost went mad." Chapter X. is well entitled "At War All Round." After a stormy transit through socialist propaganda (which involved a tragic break with Bradlaugh, whose political position she now hampered, not helped), the dream of a brotherhood, or "New Church," dawns for her. "Since 1886 there had been slowly growing up a conviction that my philosophy was not sufficient." Psychology, hypnotic experiments, "fact after fact came hurtling in." "Into the darkness shot a ray of light—A. P. Sinnett's *Occult World*." She experiments with spiritualism: the phenomena are "found to be real." One evening, "a voice that was later to become the holiest sound on earth" bids her take courage, light is near. After a fortnight Mr. Stead offers her "two large volumes" to review: they are H. P. B.'s *Secret Doctrine*. A miracle takes place. She is introduced to Mme. Blavatsky: struggles against her fascination; yields; on 10th May 1889 is admitted as Fellow of

the Theosophical Society. She sees that "science" can answer the *Why?* of nothing, though the *How?* of much. Experience, intuition, alone suffice, and these are hers. Her secularist friends—Bradlaugh soberly, Foote bitterly—denounce her; but the new storms are soon over. Since then she has found "peace" in the absorbing interests of Theosophist propaganda or contemplation. Established at the ancient religious centre, Benares, she was visited, and her romantic seclusion described, by M. P. Loti, in his idealizing romance, *L'Inde sans les Anglais; vers Benarés*, c. vi., 1903. Her warm and frank, impulsive yet loyal character will charm and win many who are far from holding her doctrines; her enthusiasm, versatility, and organizing power will long assure her crowds of devoted followers.

(iii) The "T.S."—The Theosophical Society was, as we have said, founded in New York on 17th November 1875. Its objects are:—

1. To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour.
2. To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions, and sciences.¹
3. To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers of man.

The head-quarters are at Adyar, a suburb of Madras. To become a member, all one need do is to give in one's name (the question of subscriptions appears to be variously answered according to time and place) with the intention of studying Oriental literature, though Mrs. Besant declares that the first object alone is obligatory. The Fellows or members may be "attached" (to national branches) or "unattached" (having their diploma from Adyar). They may be of any religion or philosophy they like. At

¹ So *Key*, Appendix, 308. But this curious formula elsewhere, and more reasonably, reads: "To encourage the study of comparative religions, of philosophy and of science."

first, a second group existed termed *esoteric*, definitely accepting the esoteric philosophy, believing in the existence of the "Masters" and in H. P. B. their messenger. In 1890 this "esoteric" group was christened *The Oriental School of Theosophy*; and above both groups exist the "Masters," in their mysterious seclusion in Thibet.

Its tremendous propaganda succeeds best in the East. Buddhists and Brahmins, Parsees more recently and even Islam, have been reached by it. Christian missionaries (*infra*, p. 21, n. 1) have felt its active enmity.¹ Reading clubs, study clubs, groups, centres, "lodges," are units of propaganda. The first International Congress was held in Amsterdam in 1904. *The Theosophist* (international in varying forms), *The Vâhan*, *The Lotus Journal* (for children), *T.P.S. Book Notes*, *Orpheus* (an Art quarterly), are the best-known English publications: we could make a long list (about 50) of foreign bulletins. In Germany (which has some 10 magazines), Dr. Rudolf Steiner is particularly zealous in organizing public conferences and discussions. Mrs. Besant's *Order of Service* (1908) connects the T.S. with social effort.²

The T.S. has its motto: *No Religion is Higher than Truth*; and its badge: a serpent with its tail in its mouth makes a circle, within which two intertwined triangles, white and black, enshrine the *crux ansata* (♀), the *ankh* or "life" hieroglyphic of Egypt. In a ring above is seen the Swastika cross †.

¹ *Bombay Examiner*, 1903, 222. *Katholische Missionen*, xxxiii., Freiburg, 1904-5, p. 41; P. Suau, *L'Inde Tamoule*, Paris, 1901, p. 113.

² We cannot pretend the sections of this immense organization work in perfect harmony. In Germany there are those who say, I am of Lehmann, I of Müller, and I of Schulze. One group wishes to see the movement rationalized; another, moralized; others are "independents." But this was inevitable.

II. THE DOCTRINES OF THEOSOPHY

The name *Theosophy* is no modern formation. Ammonius Sakkas, father of Neoplatonism (*cf.* App. B), claimed to have invented it, and since his time it has often been used to describe the doctrine of an *immediate intuition* of the Divine Nature and of all things only in their relation to it.¹ From his time Theosophy has always had its adepts, through the mediæval mystics, like Tauler and Eckhart, through the "illuminate" schools of contemplation, through J. Böhme to Swedenborg. And throughout it has attracted minds (we shall see) possessed by the more unwholesome fascination of magic and the occult: the degenerate Gnostics and Neoplatonists, the Kabbalists, renaissance figures like Cornelius Agrippa and "Paracelsus." Pico della Mirandola was a modernized Neoplatonist. The occultist passion of the Templars and the Masons descend to the Rosicrucians of the nineteenth-century revival, to the "unknown philosopher," L. C. de S. Martin, "Eliphaz Levi" (the ex-Abbé Constant), "Papus" (Dr Encausse), etc. etc.² But, through Philonic Alexandrianism and the Gnostics, through isolated figures like Apollonius of Tyana (p. 23, n. 2; App. C), through schools of thought like some sects of Buddhism, the ideal of "contempla-

¹ So Brucker, in his great *Critical History of Philosophy*, vol. iv., part i., p. 645, Leipzig, 1766: The Theosophists, "that strange brood of philosophers," "unite in boasting that they are possessed of a divine and superhuman wisdom." So for Kant (*Works*, iii., 470, Leipzig, 1838; Schelling, *Collected Works*, I. x., 184, Stuttgart, 1861) the essence of Theosophy is the immediate intuition of God and of all things in Him.

² The T.P.S. finds it worth while to advertise the works of St. John of the Cross, St. Peter of Alcantara, Juliana of Norwich, SS. Francis of Sales and of Assisi, Michael Molinos, Mme. Guyon, Tolstoy, Walter Hilton; the Imitation; of Anglican thinkers like Dr. Inge, Archdeacon Wilberforce; of liberal scholars like Wrede, A. Meyer; the famous Hibbert volume, *Jesus or Christ?* Its ideal of Christian "mysticism" is comprehensive. For tenth-century Jewish Theosophy, see the admirable article of Dr. C. D. Ginsburg, "Kabbalah," *Enc. Brit.*, 9th ed., xiii., 810a-814a.

tion" seeks back to the oldest philosophies of Hinduism and the Brahmins.¹

Of this continuous and comprehensive history modern Theosophy makes its peculiar boast.

For the whole notion of Theosophy is that it is a Divine Science, one and complete, existing from and to eternity, known in its entirety only by a mysterious Confraternity of Masters, handed down from generation to generation of these Masters, and revealed by them to successive centuries in such measure and beneath such symbols as shall seem best suited to the assimilative capacity of each. Thus Theosophy is that Wisdom which is the source of all religions, all philosophies, all science.

¹ Hence Theosophical libraries contain much work on Oriental religions and ethnology that is excellent, and good translations of Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Plato, Plotinus, and the like. This too is why that distinguished Indian scholar, P. Oltramare, can call his studies of ancient Indian thought *L'Histoire des idées théosophiques dans l'Inde*, I., *La théosophie brahmanique* (Paris, 1907). But he apologizes for the distrust his title cannot but excite, nowadays especially, when "that title [*Theosophy*] is affixed to the strangest wares: an amalgam of mysticism, charlatanism, and thaumaturgic pretensions which have been combined, in the most unlikely fashion, with an almost childish anxiety to apply the method and terminology of science to transcendent matters. India itself could not but be besmirched by the ridicule and disfavour so justly incurred by the curious doctrines of Mme. Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant" (pp. ii, iii). M. Paul Carty competently contrasts (*Études*, cxv., 1908, 774-787) M. Oltramare's work with Mrs. Besant's singularly unscientific study of Indian religions (*Four Great Religions: Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity; and The Religious Problem in India: Lectures on Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, and Theosophy*, combined in a French translation, *Les religions pratiquées actuellement dans l'Inde*, 1907). But, unfortunately, she can always appeal to the secret history, the occult tradition which she has received from its Oriental guardians, and, with regard to the origin, development, interrelation, meaning, and value of these cults, announce to her Eastern (and even Western) disciples conclusions at which, she frankly confesses, all normal science scoffs. In this series see especially on *Brahminism*, Lect. IV., 3-5; on *Hinduism*, Lect. V., pp. 6, 11, 27-30; on *Buddhism*, Lect. IV., 7-29, n. b. 11-18; on *Nirvana*, Lect. XXXIV., pp. 13-31, n. b. pp. 18, 21, 27-29; cf. IV., 26-28; Lect. III., 26, 27. On *Manicheism*, Lect. XX., 5, 6; on *Gnosticism* and *Neoplatonism*, pp. 28, 29 of this paper. On the peculiar tendencies of decadent paganism, Lect. XI., 28-30; XIV., 8, 18, 20-26, 29; XVI., 21.

Of these Guardians of the Immemorial Doctrine, M. A. Arnould (President of the French branch of the T.S.) writes (in *Les Croyances Fondamentales du Bouddhisme*, Paris, 1895) that "their number is great" (p. 6), that they are "Beings more completely developed or evolved than antecedent or existing humanity. These more advanced Beings have traversed the entire human course, and help their less advanced brethren. All humanity shall one day reach this degree of wisdom and development, like that which Westerns assign to their anthropomorphic God," and then it will be their turn to help others (pp. 15, 16). For while "a few isolated individuals, borne on by a peculiar enthusiasm, a spiritual, moral, and physical hygiene (*infra*, p. 18, n. 2) and persevering toil," achieve the goal before their brothers (p. 46), and alone have evolved that sixth principle, or *Buddhi*, which is as superior to the intellect as the human soul is to the animal (p. 66), yet they can and do put off their entry into Nirvâna for the sake of teaching fragments of their lore to men, and may then be called *Buddhas of Compassion* (p. 49: *cf.* Lect. XXXIV., 27; IV., 26). Since the whole value of Theosophy as a system imposed by authority rests upon the character of these Mahâtmas (= "great spirits"), it were well to be sure at least of their existence. They live, we are told, in Thibet. H. P. B., A. B., and humbler apostles have been in communication with them, epistolary and otherwise. The "metaphysical necessity" of their existence is proved by "Héra" in the *Lotus Bleu* for September 1904, pp. 193-199. It is postulated by the Law of Cyclic Evolution. The divine germ in man comes from and returns to God, through an uninterrupted series of more or less divine Beings. There cannot, therefore, *but* be Mahâtmas. The Lamas of Thibet have, however, denied their existence (*Month*, lxxiv., 1892, p. 333); Mr. Hodgson (*P.S.P.R.*, ix., 1891, 312) will not admit it either. To those who do not grant its *a priori* necessity, the evidence of the few "eye-witnesses" seems, he argues, valueless: and so is the correspondence by which they, mistakenly enough, reveal their "miserably poor style" and ideas which are "absolute rubbish."¹

¹ *Month*, lxxiv., p. 180. H. P. B. (*Key to Theosophy*, 1889, pp. 288-303, 215) rationalizes the Mahâtmas not a little: the T.S., she says, despises the attacks of the S. P. R.—"a flock of stupid old British wethers, who had been led to butt at them by an over-frolicksome lambkin from Australia" (p. 297). The Masters, though they guide and protect, do not inspire the T.S. nor the writings of its leaders (p. 299). So too Mrs. Besant (*Introd. à la Théos.*, tr., Paris, 1903, p. 20): they work for humanity, use the T.S. as an instrument, bless it and help it at a crisis. "They have been called Initiates, Adepts, Magi, Hierophants, Mahâtmas, Elder Brothers, Masters" (*ib.*). But the name

We see then in what sense it can be both affirmed and denied that Theosophy is a religion.

Theosophy is not a religion.

But something of Theosophy can be found under all religious symbols, in all religious dogmas, for the good reason that it is the RELIGION-SCIENCE whence have issued *all* religions and all sciences (A. Arnould, *op. cit.*, p. 5).

To the question "Is Theosophy a religion?" "It is not," answers H. P. B. (*cf. Key to Theosophy*, p. 1). "It is Divine Knowledge or Science." Similarly, "it is the doctrinal exposition of the Truths *demonstrated* by OCCULT SCIENCE" (Arnould, p. 6: we carefully respect italics and capitals).

But a fuller definition will be available when we have examined its doctrine of God, the Universe and Man.

GOD.—"Do you believe in God—the God of the Christians, the Biblical God?" "In such a God we do not believe. We reject the notion of a personal, or an extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God. The God of theology is a bundle of contradictions. We will have nothing to do with him." "Then you are Atheists?" "Not that we know of. We believe in a Divine Universal Principle, the root of ALL, from which all proceeds, and within which all shall be absorbed at the end of the great cycle of Being. Our DEITY is everywhere, in, over, and around every invisible atom and divisible molecule; for IT is the mysterious power of evolution and involution, the omnipresent, omnipotent, and even omniscient creative potentiality. IT does not (think); because it is *Absolute Thought* itself. Nor does it exist, as it is *Be-ness*, not a Being. Our Deity is the eternal, incessantly evolving, not creating builder of the universe; that

matters little. Alas that among the initiates we are told to collect Pythagoras, Orpheus, Moses, Christ, St. Paul and St. John, Clement and Origen, Krishna and Buddha, all the high priests of so many different cults, including those of the Temple at Jerusalem, and Alexander the Great (Arnould, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19), though his was but an inferior grade, and H. P. B. calls him (*Key*, p. 289) a "drunken soldier." It must be remembered, whenever Theosophy contrasts its strictly "rational" system with the "blind faith" of the Christian (*e.g. Key*, 218), that the system still reposes on the testimony of those (for Europeans, almost exclusively H. P. B. and H. S. O.) who say they have been in communication with the Mahâtmas, and have received, understood, and divulged their doctrine.

universe *itself unfolding* out of its own essence. It is a sphere without circumference—ITSELF." (H. P. B., *Key*, 61-66).¹

THE UNIVERSE.—It is clear, however, that this All is not inert. But whether the universe *emanates* from God (as "ray from sun"), or is "immanent" in Him (as "drop in ocean"), or is Himself (as my dream is me), is nowhere definitely exposed. And no wonder, since metaphors confound the clearest thought. Still, it is to *idealistic* Pantheism, as we know it, that Theosophy inclines. There is no creation, but

"periodical and consecutive appearances of the universe from the subjective on to the objective plane of being." This is the "Cycle of Life," the "Days and Nights of Brahma," or the time of *Manvantara* and that of *Pralaya* (dissolution). (This process is) Eternal *reality* casting a periodical reflection of itself on the infinite spatial depths. This reflection "is a temporary illusion, and, as flitting personalities, so are we" (*Key*, pp. 83-85). "In Eternity," M. Arnould reminds us (p. 12), "there is but a single moment, ALWAYS. If, for a single moment, there had been nothing, there would always have been NOTHING. *Before* creation, as *after*, is Eternity! Where seize, where place, the moment of Creation? It exists not! It cannot exist! The periods (of activity and rest) can be compared to the double rhythmic beating of the heart. There is a great rhythmic throbbing in the Infinite, in the UNIQUE ALL, which causes transitory forms to emanate, wherethrough the UNIQUE SPIRIT circulates and develops and reabsorbs them."²

¹ There is here, at the outset, confusion of thought. H. P. B. has not grasped the notion of analogy; she thinks that because "theologians" say God's nature transcends the Cosmos, they exclude it from the Cosmos; that because they own their idea of Him is anthropomorphic, their definition of His nature is: that because they say He has all the perfections of a person, therefore He has all the limitations of personality as we experience it. On human knowledge of the Divine Essence, cf. Lect. XX. (St. Augustine), pp. 14, 26; and XXII. (Aquinas), 10-12, 21-27. Mrs. Besant, in a lecture given in London on 1st July 1904, exposed the theosophic mode of Pantheism, as is her wont, in terms far more reverent and sympathetic to English hearers. Yet the theology of Theosophy, she frankly declares, is "Pantheist. God is all, and all is God." (Cf. "Theosophy" in *Relig. Systems of the World*, p. 642, London, 1903; and *Why I became a Theosophist*, *ib.*, 1891, p. 18.)

² A *Manvantara*, we may add, comprises 360,000,000 years, and, together with a *Pralaya*, composes the 100 billions (and more) years of

Mrs. Besant develops this: The Universe is created by the emanation of the great breath of the Unity. The Logos or Word, leaping from the Silence, is a first Trinity in a triple aspect: the First is a Substance not to be conceived nor imagined; the Second, Spirit in matter, energy in form, etc., at the root of all that is on its way to existence, essence of spirit, essence of matter, still inconceivable by our intelligence. The Third aspect is intelligence, universal consciousness, existence within the limits of the manifested. One Logos pervades the whole, from the highest spirit to the tiniest grain of sand (*Intr.*, p. 21). And in the lecture above quoted she reminds the Bishop of London that Theosophists do indeed believe in the Trinity, inasmuch as Logos is the name they give to the nature of God *as manifest*, a triple Logos, appearing first as "Will, root of existence"; second, as "Divine Wisdom, knowledge inspired by love"; and thirdly, as "Creative Activity, Creator Spirit, immanent in all matter and form."¹

The world consists of seven interpenetrating planes, the physical, the astral, the mental, the Buddhi, Nirvāna,

a world period, or *Kalpāh*. During a *Pralaya* (putting the thing in its Indian form) only Brahmā (neuter) exists—*Sat*, the Unknowable and Absolute. A new *Manvantara* dawns: Brahmā (masc.) awakes. At once He sees, "Nothing exists." Forthwith we have the opposition of Being and Not Being, the Duality, *sat-avidya*. The vision of the "being" that once was recurs to Him—Brahma's own revelation, *Mahāt*, the third "logos." The Trinity, *Sat*, *Sat-avidya*, *Mahāt*, is complete. The out- and in-breathings of Brahma then make and reabsorb the Universe. Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, p. 391; cf. J. C. Chatterji, *Der Pfad der Vervollkommnung*, Leipzig, p. 14.

¹ Below this purer form of divine activity comes a hierarchy of lesser spirits, the "gods" of Hindu, Chaldean, and Egyptian religions; the Archangels of the Christians; the Lords, *Planetary Spirits*, of "esoteric philosophy"; for they preside over the evolution of worlds, construct universes, direct cosmic forces. Lesser gods, "angels," Elementals (of a lofty kind) steer the forces of Nature on a lower plane, till we reach those baser sprites that occult lore and magic can control. The Roman Church has forgotten less than the others of the stored science, on these points, of Christian Fathers and their contemporaries (*ib.*, p. 21 *sqq.*, etc.). Cf. Appendices, and p. 24, n. 2.

Parinirvâna and Mahâparinirvâna planes (those, that is, of Enlightenment, of Nirvâna, of full, of great-full Nirvâna. Each has its special dimension, time, consciousness, inhabitants. To the first belong minerals and plants; to the astral, animals and most men, who are in time, however, to achieve the seventh. "Spirit" is for the Theosophist, however, only the purer manifestation of That of which "matter" is the grosser.¹

¹ Into the fantastic history of this evolving and involving world we really cannot go. It rises in a septuple spiral, mankind passing through seven cycles corresponding to the planets. Earth-men are on the 4th; from Venus 18 million years ago ants and bees, etc., reached us. Each cycle contains seven races, destined to evolve into man. In the lost continent of Lemuria lived our third race, where reason first dawned. In Atlantis, now sunk beneath the ocean, lived the fourth race, some 70,000 years after the collapse of Lemuria; it had a high culture and knew about aviation. The Atlanteans, who perished some 850,000 years ago, were giants, also dwarfs; its members were brown, red, yellow, white, or black. It is from them that we Aryans have inherited their precious knowledge of the hidden virtues of gems, etc., of chemistry, or rather of "alchemy, mineralogy, geology, physics, and astronomy" (H. P. B., *Secret Doctrine*). H. P. B. pitilessly scoffs at palæontologists who deny these things; and H. S. O., in *Theosophy, Religion, and Occult Science*, 72, at the "abysmal ignorance" of Western science, formed in the school of "Mill, Darwin, Tyndall, Schlegel, and Burnouf." Yet Mrs. Besant (*Introd.*, p. 16) finds the true successors of the Sages (whom Plato and Pythagoras drew from) in Giordano Bruno, the "second Pythagoras"; in Fichte, Kant, and Schopenhauer; Emerson, Berkeley; Böhme, Fludd, and Swedenborg. However, the development of the 5th Aryan race, of which we are, began 1,000,000 years ago, and in Europe is, from a religious, philosophic, philanthropic point of view, in a *cul-de-sac*. Better things, indeed, may be hoped in America. The 6th root-race of our cycle, as Leadbeater has "established," is due about 700 years hence. See C. W. Leadbeater, *The Astral Plane: Its Scenery, Inhabitants, and Phenomena. The Devachanic Plane or Heaven-World. An Outline of Theosophy*; A. P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism. The Occult World*; J. Donnelly, *Atlantis, the Antediluvian World*. The Canaries and Azores are the highest peaks of Atlantis; Lemuria stretched from Mozambique to Australia. Leadbeater knows the very diet of the 6th root-race—it will largely consist of a sort of *blanc-mange* (surely a depressing prospect, though its colour and taste will vary). Food is partaken of in gardens; there are no chairs, but marble depressions in the soil; the plates too are marble, and the whole is flooded after each repast (*cf.* Zimmermann, *l.c.*, p. 393, n. 1). See too W. Scott Elliot, *The Lost Lemuria* (with maps); *The Story of Atlantis* (four maps). M. Saunier, *Légende d. symboles philosophiques, religieux et maçonniques*, Paris, 1911.

MAN.—Man, the Microcosm, is himself septuple, four parts composing the physical, three the spiritual, man. The following is H. P. B.'s chart (*Key*, p. 91):—

(a) <i>Rupa</i> , or <i>Sthula Sharira</i> .	(a) Physical body.
(b) <i>Prana</i> .	(b) Life, or Vital Principle.
(c) <i>Linga Sharira</i> .	(c) Astral body.
(d) <i>Kama rupa</i> .	(d) The seat of animal desires and passions.
2. <i>Manas</i> —a dual principle in its functions.	2. Mind, intelligence, the higher human mind, whose light or radiation links the MONAD, for the lifetime, to the mortal man.
(f) <i>Buddhi</i> .	(f) The Spiritual Soul.
(g) <i>Atma</i> .	(g) Spirit.

The first four "principles" compose a man's Personality, the last three his Individuality. The *Atma*, H. P. B. says, is "one with the Absolute"; Sinnett, that it is matter like the rest, only very subtle. Arnould (who describes all this pp. 63-67) prudently exclaims, "*Quant au septième principe, Atmâ, n'en parlons pas.*" At death, the first four principles, or rather "states of consciousness," evanesce: the one *real* man, immortal in essence, if not in form, *Manas*, embodied consciousness (*Key*, p. 100), "God fallen into matter" (A. B., *Introd.*, p. 27), alone will subsist.

All human evolution is the effort of "this God" to reascend to its proper plane, taking with it (for by purification this is possible) as much of its personality as it can redeem. But since this ascent is impossible in the space of one "life," reincarnations are necessary, the *Manas* plunging into matter, God being manifest in flesh, only to return to the *Devachan* or heaven-plane where, during a disincarnate existence of (on an average) 1500 years,¹ it assimilates experiences

¹ On this cf. *Key*, section ix., 143-171; but also 88-97, 123-137. R. Steiner, quoted by Zimmermann, p. 395, n. 1, says incarnation usually takes place twice in 2100 years, once in male, once in female form.

achieved, concludes thought-processes begun, gathers up into its *simple* self the results of its *double* selfhood when incarnate. The *Devachan* plane is happy, rich, and conscious, but is still the domain of illusion, and even this is not reached at once.

KARMA.—The nature of this *Devachan* is rigorously determined for each by the law of *Karma*. This means, in brief, the absolutely determinist succession of cause and effect throughout the entire world-process and the whole history of man's soul. "The guilty must suffer," said Æschylus. And "as a man soweth, so shall he reap."

It is the universal law of retributive justice; it represents Ultimate Deity, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects; the *Ultimate Law* of the Universe. All great social evils, distinction of classes; and of the sexes; the unequal distribution of capital and of labour,—all are due to Karma. Hence a *national* or *social* Karma grows out of the aggregate of individual Karmas (*Key*, 198-215).

In consequence, there is no room for regret, hope, repentance, atonement, prayer.

It can neither be propitiated, nor turned aside by prayer. We do not believe in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god. What we believe in, is strict and impartial justice. [This is the sense in which Karma is "Relative and Distributive," a law of readjustment giving back Harmony (which is synonymous with Good) to the world.] There is no repentance (here we resume H. P. B.'s quotations from standard works): no "casting our sins at the foot of the Cross." "There is no destiny but what we ourselves determine; no salvation or condemnation except what we ourselves bring about." Weak natures may accept the "easy truth of vicarious atonement, intercession, forgiveness" (*Key, ib.*).

"Do you ever pray?" "We do not, we *act*." "Pray!" (Buddhists would exclaim) "to whom, or to what?" (yet they are confessedly far more virtuous than Christians (*Key*, 66-74).¹

¹ Yet H. P. B. believes in "will-prayer," an "internal command" to "Our Father in heaven" in its esoteric meaning, *i.e.* in man himself, for man is "God," and not *a* God. The inner man is the only God we can have cognizance of . . . a deific essence. It does not listen to, nor is

It must be confessed that this doctrine has to be singularly modified in view of the irreducible human conviction that man has free-will; can modify, by deliberate acts, the cause and effect series of his life: that is, that he can lift himself above, or let himself sink below, the downward or upward tendency which (in mechanical logic) can alone result from that sum-total of his bad, or good, actions in the past, which is *Karma*. Mrs. Besant, in the lecture quoted above, actually finds room for the Christian dogma of Redemption, at least in the "Broad Church" sense, which is not the "juridical concept" of Anselm (*cf.* Lect. XX., 29) (in which Christ is substituted for the sinner), still less the (falsely so-called) Early Christian notion (Christ is a ransom for man to Satan, *ib.*, 30), but an "at-one-ment" made between man and God in the revelation of Love shown in the person of Jesus. Frederick Denison Maurice, F. W. Robertson of Brighton, are here her patrons; Mr. R. J. Campbell would have been, had she spoken in the days of the New Theology. Christ has Divinity within Himself: so have we, but weakened, dormant. By contact with Him, it awakes, unites itself with Him; our spirit

distinct from, either finite man or the infinite essence—for all are one. (Thus this *will-power* is a sheer force bringing about physical results. All "petition prayer" kills self-reliance; *ib.*) It will be remembered that this doctrine is romantically put in Sir E. Arnold's *Light of Asia*, and more morosely in the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam. Mrs. Besant characteristically softens this doctrine for English ears, though confessing that the advancing Theosophist passes naturally from petition to contemplation; angels or inferior powers may grant our baser requests: every heart-beat in man has its necessary repercussion in God; but the more perfectly spiritual the human effort, the deeper into the divine All does it reach, the more immediately (in human or Christian language) into God's heart. The league of the *Golden Chain* for children of seven years and upwards, exhorts children on rising to recite, and take as motto for the day, the formula, "I am a link in the Golden Chain of Love, which extends over the whole world. (I will try to think, speak, and do, thoughts, words, and actions, clean and fair.) May every link in the Golden Chain be bright and strong." Children have for them *First Steps in Theosophy* (by E. M. Mallet): *A Golden Afternoon: The Golden Stairs, and Other Songs*, etc. *Cf. infra*, p. 18, n. 2.

becomes His—Him—that is, God. Thus His own prayer is accomplished, and we and He and the Father are one.¹

But in general this question is linked up with the whole of Theosophic Ethic and Asceticism.

MORALITY.—This, naturally, may be *self-regarding* or *social*, and the latter aspect is emphasized in Theosophy, where in a physical sense one life circulates through the whole universe; nay, our universal brotherhood is not still to be achieved, nor perfected, still less is a metaphor, but is a substantial fact. Directly the fleeting elements of the lower man are recognized as such, and when he sees that the body is but a “sheath” to the “inner, truer man,” the true Theosophist will not macerate, cut, or burn the body, but “de-animalize” it by abstinence as far as possible from food, at any rate from meat. But there are no “hard-and-fast obligations”: even wine and spirits—“only less destructive than the habitual use of hashish, opium, and other drugs”—are not absolutely forbidden. Similarly marriage will, by those who aim at the highest goal, be abandoned, for the plain reason that “no man can serve two masters”; it is impossible for him to “divide his attention between the pursuit of occultism and a wife” (*Key*, 258, 263).

Needless to say, this is but “exoteric” reasoning. The Enlightened see that but one Soul exists in the evolving All, and will not dream of sacrificing the life of the meanest of their brethren, beast or fowl or fish.²

¹ This version is a frank concession to English prejudice. Cf. *infra*, pp. 21, n. 1; 24, and *supra*, pp. 12, n. 1; 13.

² Anna Kingsford writes *The Perfect Way in Diet*; Mrs. Besant, *Against Vivisection*; *The Influence of Alcohol*; H. Reinheimer, *Nutrition and Evolution*; nor is Mr. Eustace Miles's name absent. The *Yoga* discipline (the lower *nathayoga*, and the royal *rājayoga*) educates a man to that full detachment which takes him quicker out of the wheel of re-births. Special attitudes of neck and back, that the vital currents may circulate properly, are advised; concentration of the thought upon the solar plexus, or on a pleasing and simple form such as a lotus or

But the essence of Theosophic Ethic is Altruism, though in a sense this is a misnomer, since ultimately we all are One. The only evil is Individualism; the supreme good, all that makes for Unity. Really, "I am you, and you I" (Arnould, p. 39); we are distinguished only as drops in the ocean, as a ray broken in a prism. Hence, tolerance, sympathy, forgiveness, social effort are essentials to the Theosophic life; hence the supreme sacrifice of those made perfect, who put off their reward for the sake of suffering, backward humanity (see *Key*, 263-271); freedom and unselfishness are the ideal of education.

It is in this way alone that we ultimately achieve Nirvâna. As the Theosophist treatment of this notion adds nothing to that of the Buddhists, and detracts in no way from its inherent difficulties, we are content to refer the reader to the passages already indicated, in Lect. IV. We must in loyalty remind ourselves that any interpretation of Nirvâna which makes of it *annihilation* is repudiated by Theosophists. Paradise and Hell, or future rewards and punishments (in the "orthodox" sense, and especially their "eternity") "we reject absolutely." "Nothing that is finite can remain stationary": and that which begins—e.g. our after-life—is *finite*; therefore it changes: Spirit can never be reduced to nonentity,

tulip; regular in- and out-breathings (E. A. Fletcher writes *The Law of the Rhythmic Breath*); the solemn pronunciation of the mystic syllable ÔM,—all this makes for progressive spiritualization, till a man becomes a disciple (*chela*), fit for the special attention of a Master (*gurû*). See A. Besant: *The Self and its Sheath: The Path of Discipleship: In the Outer Court*. I translate the following prayer inserted in the October number of the (German) *Theosophie*, Leipzig, 1910, at p. 290. (At each inspiration the *first* verse is meditated; at the expiration, the second):

"I breathe the breath of Life: I send love to all mankind. I breathe the life-dispensing ether: I send forth thoughts of life for all mankind. I breathe the eternal movement of the divine life: I send wishes for health for all mankind. I breathe the universal Life Spirit, full of strength: And deny all weakness of Life and of the soul." And so on, ending, for *Amen*, "So breathes every man that is born of God."

though the "personality" may perish, "disintegrated into its particles." The *soul* relapses: the Spirit—in man and in all else—*is* "Be-ness," one, eternal (*Key*, 109–116). We do not remember our previous incarnations, for the Ego is furnished in each with a *new* body, brain, and memory—a "clean shirt" on which it were idle to look for blood-spots, though the murderer may wear it. "The spiritual Ego can act only where the personal Ego is paralysed"; only "in trance" can servant girls and farm hands "speak Hebrew and play the violin" (*ib.*, 127–142). No; after death, the "astral *eidolons*" of the lower Quaternity "await their *second death*" in *Kama-loka*. The *Kama-rupa* phantom, thus bereft of the divine and thinking principles, unconscious, thoughtless, can be magnetized towards a "medium," can actually take form within his Aura (outside which it must dissolve and vanish, like jelly-fish outside water), can "live a kind of vicarious life, through the medium's brain." Hence not even the miscalled "spirits" that return, prove "memory" in the Departed. Though in the *Devachan* plane (*supra*, p. 15) the Ego has "*unalloyed* happiness, surrounded by everything it had aspired to in vain, and in the companionship of everyone it loved on earth," this is but the supreme illusion, *Maya*, the "ideal efflorescence of all the abstract, therefore undying and eternal qualities—love and mercy, the love of the good, the true, the beautiful," that it had absorbed by experience before death. The Devachanic Ego is but the "ideal reflection" of its old best self. But in Nirvâna there is not even this (*ib.*, 143–171).

III. THEOSOPHY AND OTHER RELIGIONS

We have already seen (p. 11) that Theosophy offers itself, not as a new religion, but as that supremely ancient, profound, and universal Knowledge which is

at the root of all religions. Its "colour" is, however, so strongly Oriental, that it has constantly been confused with *Buddhism*. Against this it protests. "Buddhism," says Arnould (p. 5), "is but one of many 'symbol religions' which divide the world between them." Theosophists are no more *Buddhists* "than all musicians are followers of Wagner" (*Key*, p. 12). But Theosophists may be called *Budhists*—Wisdomists—since Buddha, like Christ, taught an esoteric doctrine, which they hold. Even the "dead letter" of Southern Buddhism is, however, far grander and more noble, philosophical and scientific, than that of every other Church or religion (*ib.*, 12-15).¹

Still less is Theosophy sheer spiritism, though

¹ But, with that adaptability which has marked the T.S. since the advent of Mrs. Besant, in Ceylon, for instance, Theosophy is profoundly Buddhized. Cf. her *Buddhist Popular Lectures*, delivered there in 1907. In Ceylon Buddhist propaganda has been remarkable. In 1845 Buddhism had not a single school there. But Col. Olcott (who, by the way, in a previous incarnation was King Asoka, cf. Lect. IV., p. 24), preached temperance there, decrying Catholic schools, persuading the natives to give money they saved on drink to Buddhist schools. Of these in 1910 there were 445, of which 206 were Theosophical. There were 436 Catholic schools, and 891 Protestant, apportioned between 8 sects. Col. Olcott's campaign is criticised in C. F. Gordon Cumming's *Two Happy Years in Ceylon*, ii. 413-419. In India, however, the "colour" is Brahmanic. With Mrs. Besant's help the Central Hindu College at Benares was founded (cf. the lectures given there, *Hindu Ideals*). It imparts a complete modern and English education (intellectual and physical), often under English certificated masters and mistresses. But the religion and philosophy is pure Brahminism. Powerfully supported, widely imitated, its resistance to Christianity is not only negative. Mrs. Besant, alarmed at Brahmin conversions at St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly, was making a tour in the south. "She was received at Madras like a goddess; the prime minister of the Rajah of Mysore had prostrated himself before her as before the incarnation of the goddess Sarasvati, the goddess of science, wife of Brahma. At Trichinopoly a crowd of Hindu devotees awaited her at the station. She was escorted to the National High School, opposite the enemy's citadel, St. Joseph's College. She delivered lecture upon lecture. On her return home, she continued her pamphlet-campaign. She explained conversions by the basest motives, called Jesus Christ an incarnation of Vishnu, and in general fought explicitly and with energy the growing influence of the missionaries." (A. Brou, *Bulletin des Missions: Études*, cxxiv., 1910, 261-265.)

"spiritualist phenomena, being indubitable and scientifically verified (when not just simulated by charlatans), must be reduced to one of the inferior sections of Occult Science" (Arnould, *ib.*). Occult sciences, H. P. B. insists, do exist, and are most dangerous (*Key*, p. 26); the reason being, that persons possessed of a *certain amount* of control over higher forces use these awry, because for selfish ends. Spiritist phenomena, but not the spiritist explanations, can be accepted: their theories are "crude," their "bigotry is blind" (*ib.*, 25-32); in fact, H. P. B. violently attacks the "hatred" of the Spiritualists, and the "famous and infamous attack on the T.S. by the S.P.R." (p. 273). "Every kind of slander, uncharitable personal remarks, and absurd misrepresentations," express their "violent hatred," in America, then England, then France (274-275).¹

Here we should perhaps insert a brief note on the marvels of Theosophy. The facts are disputed, and we do not pretend to decide on the character, or even the reality, of the phenomena. Fr. Clarke² concedes to them a considerable measure of objectivity. Mrs. Besant, indeed, became a Theosophist largely on their occasion.³ H. S. O. broke with the mediums because he saw their phenomena equalled and surpassed, at will, and in broad daylight, by H. P. B. and Eastern adepts. Roses fall from

¹ Yet it is deplorable how linked Theosophy seems inevitably to be with the lowest follies of Occultism. Cf. *Occult Chemistry*, by A. B. and C. W. Leadbeater; *Thought Forms* (with coloured pictures of forms clairvoyantly seen and "vibratory" figures), by the same; J. Bertrand, *Occultisme Ancien et Moderne*, Bloud, 1900, and the extremely rich documentation of *L'Occultisme Contemporain*, C. Godard, *ib.* "Alan Leo" writes *Astrology for All, How to Judge a Nativity, The Horoscope in Detail*, etc., etc., and offers a "carefully delineated horoscope for 5s." The Kabbalah is an inexhaustible topic for Theosophist writers, and it is melancholy to judge of the confusion of thought implied by the trash that figures, in their bulletins and advertisements, alongside of works under distinguished names—Edwin Arnold, A. Lang, F. W. H. Myers, William James. W. E. Waite is one of the most prolific writers in this department.

² *Month*, 1892, Feb., pp. 173, 391.

³ *Why I became a Theosophist*, 20-21, etc.

heaven; letters from distant countries appear in cushions, flutter from the ceiling; writings appear on slates, or the wall; paintings emerge, without intervention of hand or brush; music resounds without musician; persons disappear or are materialized; a jet-black hair is cut from among blonde tresses.¹ We cannot disguise from ourselves the fact that the "marvels" have been ever less emphasized: that they are not the *essentials* of Theosophy has always been conceded. The writings of H. P. B. are, in Mrs. Besant's eyes, the most marvellous of the "phenomena"; or the conversion of A. P. Sinnett. To others, it is Mrs. Besant's own conversion that is the miracle *par excellence*. But we must be allowed to refer to the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (vol. iii., parts viii., ix.; 1885, pp. 201-400) for the famous dispute upon the alleged deceits, forgeries, and trickeries of Mme. Blavatsky, which, it seems clear, undoubtedly descend to a very low level of imposture. Cf. App. D.

Mme. Blavatsky, we saw, speaks roughly of Christianity. Col. Olcott speaks of it as morally corrupt and spiritually paralysed. M. Arnould considers it to have narrowed and materialized Buddhism (p. 20).² Any favour shown to Christianity is based on its *esoteric doctrine*, of which creed and cult are mere

¹ Cf. *op. cit.*, 46-48, 122-125, especially 251; and his very interesting *Old Diary Leaves*, especially third series; and A. P. Sinnett's *Occult World*.

² To make up, H. P. B. in her Glossary proves the reality of the miracles of Apollonius of Tyana by a passage from St. Justin. But not only is the passage *falsely attributed* to Justin (Otto, *Opera Iustini*, iii. 2), but even in its setting it is an *objection*, which the supposed Justin refutes! Mrs. Besant reproduces it as decisive in *Theosophy and its Evidences*, p. 16. Since A. of T. (cf. Lect. XIV. 21) is so often mentioned by modern Theosophists as a Master, on a par with Christ, we may mention that he died very old, c. 95 A.D., but the first written life we have of him is by Philostratus, not before 200 A.D. It is based on hearsay or untrustworthy documents, is highly rhetorical, and wholly unscientific. Little can be deduced with certainty from it. It is Mr. G. R. S. Mead who is most prolific upon the early semi-Christian movements, some of which we mention in Appendices. Cf. his *Apollonius of Tyana; Plotinus; Thrice-Greatest Hermes* (Hellenistic Gnosis); *Échoes from the Gnosis; The World Mystery*. Philostratus (whom Kayser calls a "Parisian feuilletoniste") causes to J. Réville (*Relig. à Rome s. l. Sévères*, 1886, ii. 225) a "genuine exasperation" as he reads those pages "d'une nullité et d'une platitude désolantes." Not that A. is wholly despicable by any means. But to offer him as a choice specimen of any system is suicidal.

symbols.¹ We have seen Mrs. Besant trace the Trinity and Redemption in Theosophy (pp. 13, 17). Christ too she will honour, because "in all the religions of the world" the Second Person of that Trinity incarnates Himself and reveals Himself as man.

If by "Christ" you mean a Divine Man, then He is not unique [alas, are we not all Christs, more or less?]; if you mean the Second Logos, ah, then, adore Him with all your soul, but remember, your worship reaches Him whom the Hindu names, and rightly, *Vishnu*. And thus Theosophy "widens our horizons," and offers us other Great Masters than the One believed in, and we see written an *Imitation of Buddha*, and of *Krishna*. Only the name varies, Mithra, Krishna, Bacchus, Osiris, Christ; the divine story is the same in all religions. Confess, above all, communicate, Mrs. Besant tells the Catholic "disciple." "Hear Mass," says A. L. B. Hardcastle (*Rev. Théos.*, Sept. 1904, 199-205), and explains the "real"—yet quite un-Catholic—meaning of its ritual.²

But, travelling deeper, we find out that the Roman Church considers Christ (as do the Gnostics) as the chief of the Æons (H. P. B.), and that in any case Christ is triple—the *mystic* Christ (symbol of the developed esoteric initiate), the *mythical* (the sun-god under all his names), and the *historical*.³ The historical Christ, born 105 "B.C.," was taught Hebrew by his parents, became an Essene monk at 12, entered at 19 the monastery of Mount Serbal, where he found a superb library of occultist books, many

¹ Cf. Appendix A.

² Only we wish he could get it right. The altar-candles are not lighted after the priest has read, on his knees, a secret confession. We do not, by blessing salt and water and incense, attribute to them "a sort of conscious life": the "solid marble or wrought metal of the altar-rails" is not a "diamond barrier" between exoterist and esoterist. Christ does not leave His "Nirvanic consciousness" for the prison of the ciborium; nor will we listen to Mr. Currie (*Theos. Rev.*, Aug. 1904) explaining the esoteric *Pater Noster*. See especially W. Kingsland, *The Esoteric Basis of Christianity*; C. W. Leadbeater, the *Christian Creed*; A. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity, or the Lesser Mysteries*, London, 1901; R. Steiner, *Le mystère chrétien et les mystères antiques*, tr. Schuré, Paris, 1908.

³ Mrs. Besant, *Esoteric Christianity*, 1901.

of them from Trans-Himalayan India. He retires to Egypt, enters the esoteric "lodge" which gives to all great religions their founder. At 29 he is fit to receive, and become instrument of, a powerful Son of God, a Buddha of Compassion. In the form of the man Jesus, this Being moves about, preaches, cures, is rejected. The human body suffers the penalty for its services rendered to its superhuman occupant. For more than 50 years, in his astral body he visits his disciples, and instructs them in esoteric lore. About 35 B.C. they sally forth to preach. Myth crystallizes round the historic nucleus. Jesus is virgin born; crucified; ascends.—In this way it is hoped that the historical reality of Jesus will be saved from the confusions of the Gospels, and his spiritual grandeur made only the more evident.¹ But many a Magdalen, we fear, will find her Lord to have been "taken away," and in his place only the deplorable puppet of Gnostic and Buddhist apocrypha.

CONCLUSION.—Briefly to sum up. Theosophy witnesses to some of the profoundest instincts, and the highest aspirations of Godward-bound humanity, and stresses some of the most far-reaching truths revealed in or governing it. The omnipresence of the divine; the lofty destiny of the soul; the essential brotherhood of man; the character-forming potency of thought; the constant perception of spiritual reality; the resolute effort to penetrate below surface and the letter,—all that is noble and should prove ennobling. Also the determination to detect God's spirit acting everywhere; to hear the divine call in the stammered words of the humblest of the prophets; to admire the beauties even of the least fair of the world's religions,—that too seeks our sympathy. Yet we cannot but observe—even as recorders of historically known phenomena, constantly and ubiquitously recurrent—that these high and precious forms are kept stretched on the rack of an impossible philosophy, are muffled beneath the most grotesque display of pseudo-erudition, are in danger of complete dissolution in an air of treacherous sentimentalism. We are, of course, open to the taunt of being Westerns: our

¹ Cf. G. R. S. Mead, *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?*

minds are gross: we lack the vital intuition: we reject the supreme Authority of the Masters. Well, to a Western consciousness there cannot but here reveal itself an impossible metaphysic; a psychology unverified; a fairy-tale cosmology; an unstable ethic, with its sanctions nullified, its categories ill-defined. We see a law of Karma in manifold wise self-contradictory, stultifying effort; a theology that "depersonalizes" God without rendering Him the more sublime; which drags Him down to matter without making Him more lovable; that exalts man to the divine in despite of all his conscience tells him of his low estate. We see the effort to retain, yet rationalize, the notion of that Divine Union which Christianity promises, asserting it a mystery. Finally, we see a chaotic mass of "evidence," unsifted, unevaluated, unorganized by a too slipshod thought and an uneducated judgement, rendering history unintelligible, and in it the figure of Jesus of Nazareth as tragic as absurd. In the leaders of this movement we see splendid energies, outstanding talents, warmth of sympathy passionate in its tenderness as in its indignations, and at times a genuine touch of mystical thought and expression. Yet we must say of them too what Réville says of those third-century reformers with whom they are so glad to be linked: "Why must it be that at the very moment they seem about to carry us to the sublimities of the ideal religion—they fail us?" Like their "Master," Orpheus, *victus animi*, they look back, and the vision fades and the voice stammers; perforce we turn—to whom else should we go?—to Him who has the words of eternal life.

APPENDIX A.—There has never been an *esoteric Christianity*. The simplest Christian has always had the right to Christ's full doctrine. "I have spoken openly to the world: I always taught in the synagogue where all the Jews come together, and in secret I spoke nothing" (John xviii. 20, the interview with Nicodemus,

and John xvi. 12, 25, are not against this). Pagan mysteries (cf. Lect. XI. 21-24; XIV. 11; XVI. 16-19; also art. "Paganism" in *Cath. Encycl.*) exacted an oath of secrecy from Initiates; but even they imparted, not special *doctrines*, but magical *formulæ* and an emotional *impression* that the adept was elect, blessed for this life and the next. Pliny, c. 112 A.D., tortured Christians to find out their religion. There were many apostates, but none had secrets to reveal (Pliny, *Ep.*, x. 97). Converts from paganism reveal their secrets readily. Clement and Tertullian, who relate them, ridicule and loathe them. Clement adopts the phraseology of the mysteries (so even Paul, Rom. xi. 25, 1 Cor. ii. 7, etc.), but puts the Christian's initiation in heaven. Tertullian notes that Paul celebrates the Eucharist among pagans on board ship! Justin relates the whole Christian cult and creed, addressing "the Emperor, his sons, the senate, the whole people." Irenæus shows that had the Apostles preached a secret lore—as heretics (*e.g.* the Gnostics), to defend their own practice, said they had—the Bishops (depositaries of the "tradition") would have known it: but they wholly ignore it. When the Church developed and conversions became frequent, profitable, or fashionable, careful and gradual instruction was of course insisted on: the catechumenate became more organized. In *public preaching*, especially before *mixed audiences*, reverence suggested reticence: and this (curiously) becomes quite common from c. 350 onwards, a sentiment, almost an affectation (*never a law*), leading preachers not to mention what everyone quite well knew, *e.g.* (Chrysostom) the Lord's Prayer; (Sozomen) the Nicene Creed! Basil is (probably) the only Father who suggests that this practice (with that which at this time is liturgically regular—the exclusion of catechumens and unbelievers from the canon of the Mass) was a tradition imposed by Christ or the Apostles. Not till March 19, 416, does a papal letter of Innocent I. display a pompous mystery in speaking of liturgical details which every sacramentary was about to publish to anyone still ignorant of them. The so-called *disciplina arcani* (a term invented in 1750 by the Protestant Dailly), a secret code of doctrine and rite, supposed to include the "forms" of consecration, the number of the Sacraments, the dogma of the Trinity, etc., was really invented for purposes of controversy by theologians who thought they found gaps in the early traditions, and had no notion of any "development" in the Church's thought and language. Details, it was argued, were kept secret—an esoteric lore, in fact. As unscientific was the theory of early Protestants (*e.g.* Casaubon) that the Pagan mysteries evolved the sacramental system in the Church. In brief, genuine Christianity knows no opposition of exoteric *v.* esoteric creed or cult; only the travesties of ancient heresy or modern pseudo-history have imagined it. Cf. Mgr.

Batiffol, "Arcane," in *Dict. Théol. Cath.*, and Leclercq, *Dict. Arch. Chrét.*; Huyskens, *Zur Frage über sog. Arkandisziplin*, 1891.

APPENDIX B.—Paganism, dying, tried to fuse its religions and philosophies, to allegorize its myths, to find in one richly symbolized Pantheism consolation for its religious cravings, and salvation from the superstition or scepticism threatening it. Into this current even the Jews were swept, where (as at Alexandria) they were Hellenized. Philo (c. 40 A.D.) saw in Greek philosophy (especially Stoicism) only a loan from Moses; while the O.T., especially the Pentateuch, he allegorized to find in it all the treasures of Greek speculation. God, Philo held, was too transcendent to reveal Himself to intellect or sense, or even to create. Intermediate Powers, accordingly, create our low world; and the "second god"—God "manifest"—the *Logos* or Reason or "Word," expressed in the Universe, is our way of knowing God. Yet asceticism can so free the soul from matter that it can soar by ecstasy to contemplating the Divine Nature in itself (*cf.* Lect. XII. 11; XVIII. 20, n. 3; XX. 8 *sqq.*). On its side Paganism welcomed the mysterious Hebrew religion, thus reinterpreted in its favour. The mystic cults of Orpheus, of Pythagoras (with its Eastern theories of abstinence and transmigration), Persian dualism and Egyptian Osiric or Greek Hermetic myth, the highly Platonized Stoicism of the age, poured into the field prepared by the Alexandrians. Hence emerged the "New Platonism," taking its stand no more upon reasoning or sense-experience, but on ancient Authority and immediate Intuition. Plutarch, Cleanthes, Epictetus, even Apollonius, are among its heralds; the great Gnostics also. But its true founder was Ammonius Sakkas, d. about 245 A.D. Origen, Longinus, Plotinus will be his disciples; Plotinus the most famous. In his system, God the Invisible first generates Mind (*nous*); Mind, the soul; the Soul, this world of phenomena (here is almost our modern subjective idealism). Evil is not yet; only progressive diminution of *reality*. But, once plunged in matter, the soul is in conflict and disintegrates. Practice of virtues, asceticism, lift the life to *Mind*; ecstasy, to God. Porphyry says that Plotinus, in the six years he knew him, had four ecstasies. Porphyry was rigidly virtuous and ascetic, and violently anti-Christian. The Greek, especially Orphic statements of religion (Lect. XII. 3) must, he insisted, be maintained. With Iamblichus (d. 330 A.D.) the "theologizing" of Neoplatonism was complete. His *de Mysteriis* reaches an incredible altitude of ascetic, altruistic, and spiritual conception; yet (tragic, but customary, paradox!) precisely from this time Neoplatonism descends to the most grotesque of magical charlatanism, and the most futile of pseudo-mathematical fantasies. The fifth-century university of Athens strove to purify, but merely rationalized, desiccated

it. Its best passed over to "Dionysius," to Augustine, and Boetius (*cf.* Aug., *Conf.*, vii. 9-21). In Christian mysticism alone has the psychic balance been maintained. In the *nihilist* systems, where sense and intellect are held valueless, where abstinence is the supreme method, equilibrium was swiftly lost; licence and madness wait upon pagan asceticism and ecstasy. *Cf.* especially Zeller, *D. Philosophie d. Griechen*, 1881, iii., 414-865.

APPENDIX C.—The Hebrew religion, though so exclusive, modified surrounding cults (*e.g.* of Sabazius, Lect. XIV. 13) and was here and there modified by them (*e.g.* at Samaria: the Essenes). Christianity, itself remaining pure, created, outside itself, extraordinary new forms, especially in Judeo-pagan areas. Even within the Church, the Judaizers provoked unhealthy speculation as to the office and hierarchy of the angels, the nature of God, His relation to the law, the Messiah. Speculation runs riot: a special *gnôsis* or esoteric knowledge claims to sound the "deep things" (*of Satan*, cries the Apocalypse ii. 6, 14); tends to thrust God aloof; to subordinate the Christ; to "genealogize" intermediate spiritual beings; to preach a perverse asceticism (1, 2 Thess.; 1 Cor. iii. 11-16; 1, 2 Tim.; the "circular letter" called Ephesians; especially Col. i. 15-10, ii.; Jude; 2 Peter. It is from Paul the Gnostics will take the words *plêrôma*, *æon*; as from John, the *Word*, *Life*: not *vice versa*). Contemporary with John, Cerinthus declares God so aloof that He cannot "touch" matter. Thus *on* the man Jesus, born of Joseph and Mary, the Christ, or Spirit, descends only at the Baptism; the *creator-god*, Yahweh, cannot be God, but is an angel. Quiet follows for a space. But under Pope Callixtus (217-222), a Syrian, Alcibiades, appears at Rome, with a mystic book given, in 100 A.D., to a holy man named Elkasai by an angel 30 leagues tall, called the *Son of God*, coupled with a like female figure, the *Spirit of God*. They preach penance and repeated baptisms, in which the initiates invoke seven witnesses, Heaven, Earth, holy Spirits, Angels of Prayer, Oil, Salt, Earth. Syrian formulæ occur, to be recited backwards. East of the Jordan and Dead Sea, even about 400 A.D., sects of these (Osseans, Sampseans, etc.) remained. They observe Jewish rites, retain fragmentary gospels, reject Paul, practise asceticism, and usually say that onto Jesus, son of Joseph, an *Æon*, or Spirit, or Angel (earlier incarnate in Adam, etc.) descended at the Baptism. But genuine Gnosticism had truer forerunners in the Syrian systems which may be connected with Simon Magus.¹ His

¹ See Acts viii. 5, 14. Justin, *Apol.*, i. 26, 56. Eus., *H.E.*, ii. 13, 14. Irenæus, *a. Hær.*, i. 16.

system centred in Samaria, a tainted centre of Jewish reverie. Simon taught a Supreme Power, which was himself, and its First Conception, Wisdom (revealed in his companion Helen). Through her, he conceives and thereby creates, the Angels. They, jealous of her, prevent her return to his mind, whence she had leapt. He therefore descends to redeem her (appearing, in suitable form, in each of the Angelic Worlds as he passes through it) into this angel-created world. In Samaria he appears (in Simon) as Father, in Judea as the Son (in whom he seems to die), in the Gentiles as the Spirit. He liberates the Divinity half lost in humanity, and mankind (by the knowledge of himself) he emancipates, *e.g.* from the Mosaic Law. In this "pre-Christian Gnosticism" Phœnician, Hellenistic, and Judaic notions fused. A mushroom growth of heresies followed. Saturninus of Antioch (under Trajan, 98-119) is the first outstanding figure. For him too God is infinitely remote. Seven angels make the world and men, in some of whom is a spark, issued from God, and to return to Him at death. Yahweh is such an angel, in revolt against God. Jesus, an emanation from God, has no human birth or body, but comes to defeat Yahweh and save such men as have the spark. Marriage and procreation are works of Satan. Yet Saturninus is no "Christ," nor are "couples" (Simon-Helen) indicated. In similar sects (which do not persist: Origen, c. 240, says but thirty "Simonians" survive in the whole world!) we always find an Ineffable God, coupled with a Supreme Thought; hence Æons in groups of seven and eight emanate. Always too some Æon suffers misfortune, whence sparks of fire fall into the lower world. Often a Demiurge believes himself God, and inspires the Old Testament. The Æon "Christ," one of the highest in the Plêrôma (scl. the totality of the Æons), joins himself to the man Jesus and they begin redemption. But under Hadrian (117-138) the great Gnostics appear, gravitating (inevitably) to Rome, but hailing (Valentinus, Basilides, Carpocrates) from Alexandria. Common features reveal themselves. The true God is unreachable, incommunicable. Yahweh, Creator and Lawgiver, is therefore no true God: but, like the world, is but one in a series of divinely originated but degenerating beings, often involved in some mysterious catastrophe. Jesus comes to reveal God, and to deliver such elements in world or man as are capable of redemption. But since God cannot really unite with man, the Incarnation is illusory and transitory. The Passion and Resurrection are unreal; *our* body will not rise. Hence either the flesh, to free the soul, must be annihilated (whence savage asceticism); or the soul, artificially linked to flesh, is irresponsible for the body's vagaries (whence licence). Hence invariable rejection of Old Testament, and prolific creation of "esoteric" gospels—of Thomas, Philip, Jude; the

Greater and Lesser Questions of Mary ; the Gospel of Perfection : hence "apocrypha" placed in the mouths of ancient sages—Enoch, Seth, Elias ; hence new inspired prophets (Bar-kabbas, Bar-koph) ; and mythical "interpreters" of the Apostles ("Glaucias," of Peter for the Basilidians : "Theodas," of Paul for the Valentinians). Much external ceremonial and magic formula were used.¹ It is impossible to detail this grotesque system. Men are material (who cannot be saved), psychic (who may be), spiritual (who must be : these are the Valentinians—they simply have to let themselves live ; their spirit is independent of their body). Basilides' system was "celibate," and nearer Saturninus' than Simon's. The Unbegotten begot Mind, whence the Word, whence Knowledge, whence Wisdom and Might, whence Virtues Powers, and Angels. Our heaven (the 365th) is populated by angels, chief of whom is Yahweh. He tries to tyrannize ; strife breaks out ; Gods sends Mind (as Jesus) to make peace. The Cyrenean dies in his place, whence no honour is due to the Crucified. The Old Testament is rejected, but ordinary morality is retained. Passions are "appendices," and cannot hurt the soul in the long run, though forcing it to expiate sins in future lives (by metempsychosis). Magic, especially the word *Abraxas*, conquers bad angels. Carpocrates was far more Hellenized and need not be detailed. He was a Platonist tinged with Gnostic Christianity. In these systems the progressive degeneration of Light into darkness, the irreducible opposition of Good to Bad, shows as certain a modification of Syrian thought by Persian dualism, as of Alexandrian by Platonic Pantheism. Alexandria can thus be more tolerant than Syria, and connect Christ with the Creator, with whom Syria can but contrast Him. In the symbolism of the Gnostics the serpent played a prominent part. For all this cf. especially Mgr. Duchesne, *History of the Early Church*, i. c. 11 ; Mansel, *Gnostic Heresies*, 1875 ; C. W. King, *Gnostics and their Remains*, 1887 ; Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, 1894.

APPENDIX D.—We permit ourselves to quote the following letters of Mme. Blavatsky from the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. iii. (parts viii., ix.), 1885, 201-400, which contains two plates of H. P. B.'s handwriting and a plan of the miraculous shrine. (H. P. B. boldly showed this report to A. B. before her conversion.)

¹ Valentinus' system is "nuptial" : the (male) Abyss marries Silence ; hence Mind and Truth, who also marry (these are the first Tetrad of Higher Æons) ; hence Word and Life, whence Man and Church, whence many further pairs of intermarrying Æons, forming the Plêrôma.

H. P. B. to Mme. Coulomb, Oct. 1883, (p. 211):—

Now, dear, let us change the programme. Whether *something* succeeds or not, I must try. Jacob Sassoon, the happy proprietor of a crore of rupees, is anxious to become a Theosophist. He is ready to give 10,000 rupees to buy and repair the head-quarters; he said to Colonel (Ezekiel, his cousin, arranged all this), if only he saw a little phenomenon, got the assurance that the *Mahatmas* could hear what was said, or give him some *other sign of their existence* (? !). Well, this letter will reach you the 26th, Friday; will you go up to the Shrine and ask K. H. [Koot Hoomi; the name of H. P. B.'s "Master"] to send me a telegram that would reach me about 4 or 5 in the afternoon same day, worded thus:—

"Your conversation with Mr. Jacob Sassoon reached Master just now. Were the latter even to satisfy him, still the doubter would hardly find the moral courage to connect himself with the Society.—RAMALINGA DEB."

If this reaches me on the 26th, even in the evening, it will still produce a tremendous impression. Address, care of N. Khandallavalla, Judge, Poona. *Je ferai le reste.* Cela coutera quatre ou cinq roupies. *Cela ne fait rien.*—Yours truly, (Signed) H. P. B.

Page 212 :—

Le général part pour affaires à Madras . . . et veut voir le *shrine* . . . il est qu'il s'attend à un phénomène car il me l'a dit . . . suppliez K.H. . . . de soutenir l'honneur de famille . . . Damn les autres. Celui-là vaut son pesant d'or. Per l'amor del Dio ou de qui vous voudrez *ne manquez pas cette occasion* car elle ne se répétera plus . . . à vous de cœur.—LUNA MELANCOLICA.

Page 214 :—

Ma chère Amie,—Je n'ai pas une minute pour répondre. Je vous supplie faites parvenir cette lettre (here inclosed) à Damodar *in a miraculous way*. It is very, *very* important. Oh, ma chère que je suis donc malheureuse ! De tous côtés des désagréments et des horreurs. Toute à vous.—H. P. B.

H. P. B. said these letters were forged by Mme. Coulomb, whom she had expelled from the T.S. We respect English, French, punctuation, etc.—ED.

On the general question of mysticism, much material of singular interest and an amazing bibliography will be found in Miss Evelyn Underhill's *Mysticism*, Methuen, 1911.