

THE ANCIENT WISDOM

"An Outline of
Theosophical Teachings"

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BESANT

ILLUSTRATED &
PUBLISHED BY
E-KİTAP PROJESİ & CHEAPEST BOOKS



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By

e-Kitap Projesi

Istanbul

ISBN:

978-625-6310-28-5

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DEDICATED
WITH GRATITUDE, REVERENCE, AND LOVE
TO
H. P. BLAVATSKY,
WHO SHOWED ME THE LIGHT.

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P R E F A C E

THIS book is intended to place in the hands of the general reader an epitome of theosophical teachings, sufficiently plain to serve the elementary student, and sufficiently full to lay a sound foundation for further knowledge. It is hoped that it may serve as an introduction to the profounder works of H. P. Blavatsky, and be a convenient stepping-stone to their study.

Those who have learned a little of the Ancient Wisdom know the illumination, the peace, the joy, the strength, its lessons have brought into their lives. That this book may win some to con its teachings, and to prove for themselves their value, is the prayer with which it is sent forth into the world.

ANNIE BESANT.

August, 1897.

THE ANCIENT WISDOM

INTRODUCTION

THE UNITY UNDERLYING ALL RELIGIONS.

RIGHT thought is necessary to right conduct, right understanding to right living, and the Divine Wisdom—whether called by its ancient Sanskrit name of Brahma Vidyâ, or its modern Greek name of Theosophia, Theosophy—comes to the world as at once an adequate philosophy and an all-embracing religion and ethic. It was once said of the Christian Scriptures by a devotee that they contained shallows in which a child could wade and depths in which a giant must swim. A similar statement might be made of Theosophy, for some of its teachings are so simple and so practical that any person of average intelligence can understand and follow them, while others are so lofty, so profound, that the ablest strains his intellect to contain them and sinks exhausted in the effort.

In the present volume an attempt will be made to place Theosophy before the reader simply and clearly, in a way which shall convey its general principles and truths as forming a coherent conception of the

universe, and shall give such detail as is necessary for the understanding of their relations to each other. An elementary text-book cannot pretend to give the fulness of knowledge that may be obtained from abstruser works, but it should leave the student with clear fundamental ideas on his subject, with much indeed to add by future study but with little to unlearn. Into the outline given by such a book the student should be able to paint the details of further research.

It is admitted on all hands that a survey of the great religions of the world shows that they hold in common many religious, ethical, and philosophical ideas. But while the fact is universally granted, the explanation of the fact is a matter of dispute. Some allege that religions have grown up on the soil of human ignorance tilled by imagination, and have been gradually elaborated from crude forms of animism and fetichism; their likenesses are referred to universal natural phenomena imperfectly observed and fancifully explained, solar and star worship being the universal key for one school, phallic worship the equally universal key for another; fear, desire, ignorance, and wonder led the savage to personify the powers of nature, and priests played upon his terrors and his hopes, his misty fancies, and his bewildered questionings; myths became scriptures and symbols facts, and as their basis was universal the likeness of the products was inevitable. Thus speak the doctors of "Comparative Mythology," and plain

people are silenced but not convinced under the rain of proofs; they cannot deny the likenesses, but they dimly feel: Are all man's dearest hopes and loftiest imaginings really nothing more than the outcome of savage fancies and of groping ignorance? Have the great leaders of the race, the martyrs and heroes of humanity, lived, wrought, suffered, and died deluded, for the mere personifications of astronomical facts and for the draped obscenities of barbarians?

The second explanation of the common property in the religions of the world asserts the existence of an original teaching in the custody of a Brotherhood of great spiritual Teachers, who—Themselves the outcome of past cycles of evolution—acted as the instructors and guides of the child-humanity of our planet, imparting to its races and nations in turn the fundamental truths of religion in the form most adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the recipients. According to this view, the Founders of the great religions are members of the one Brotherhood, and were aided in Their mission by many other members, lower in degree than Themselves, Initiates and disciples of various grades, eminent in spiritual insight, in philosophic knowledge, or in purity of ethical wisdom. These guided the infant nations, gave them their polity, enacted their laws, ruled them as kings, taught them as philosophers, guided them as priests; all the nations of antiquity looked back to such mighty men, demigods and heroes, and they left

their traces in literature, in architecture, in legislation.

That such men lived it seems difficult to deny in the face of universal tradition, of still existing Scriptures, and of prehistoric remains for the most part now in ruins, to say nothing of other testimony which the ignorant would reject. The sacred books of the East are the best evidence for the greatness of their authors, for who in later days or in modern times can even approach the spiritual sublimity of their religious thought, the intellectual splendor of their philosophy, the breadth and purity of their ethic? And when we find that these books contain teachings about God, man, and the universe identical in substance under much variety of outer appearance, it does not seem unreasonable to refer them to a central primary body of doctrine. To that body we give the name of the Divine Wisdom, in its Greek form: THEOSOPHY.

As the origin and basis of all religions, it cannot be the antagonist of any; it is indeed their purifier, revealing the valuable inner meaning of much that has become mischievous in its external presentation by the perverseness of ignorance and the accretions of superstition; but it recognizes and defends itself in each, and seeks in each to unveil its hidden wisdom. No man in becoming a Theosophist need cease to be a Christian, a Buddhist, a Hindu; he will but acquire a deeper insight into his own faith, a firmer hold on its spiritual truths, a broader un-

derstanding of its sacred teachings. As Theosophy of old gave birth to religions, so in modern times does it justify and defend them. It is the rock whence all of them were hewn, the hole of the pit whence all were digged. It justifies at the bar of intellectual criticism the deepest longings and emotions of the human heart; it verifies our hopes for man; it gives us back ennobled our faith in God.

The truth of this statement becomes more and more apparent as we study the various world-Scriptures, and but a few selections from the wealth of material available will be sufficient to establish the fact, and to guide the student in his search for further verification. The main spiritual verities of religion may be summarized thus:

- i. One eternal infinite incognizable real Existence.
- ii. From THAT the manifested God, unfolding from unity to duality, from duality to trinity.
- iii. From the manifested Trinity many spiritual Intelligences, guiding the kosmic order.
- iv. Man a reflection of the manifested God and therefore a trinity fundamentally, his inner and real Self being eternal, one with the Self of the universe.
- v. His evolution by repeated incarnations, into which he is drawn by desire, and from which he is set free by knowledge and sacrifice, becoming divine in potency as he had ever been divine in latency.

China, with its now fossilized civilization, was peopled in old days by the Turanians, the fourth subdivision of the great Fourth Race, the race which

inhabited the lost continent of Atlantis, and spread its offshoots over the world. The Mongolians, the last subdivision of that same race, later reinforced its population, so that in China we have traditions from ancient days, preceding the settlement of the Fifth, or Aryan race in India. In the *Ching Chang Ching*, or *Classic of Purity*, we have a fragment of an ancient Scripture of singular beauty, breathing out the spirit of restfulness and peace so characteristic of the "original teaching." Mr. Legge says in the introductory note to his translation* that the treatise—

Is attributed to Ko Yüan (or Hsüan), a Tâoist of the Wu dynasty (A.D. 222-227), who is fabled to have attained to the state of an Immortal, and is generally so denominated. He is represented as a worker of miracles; as addicted to intemperance, and very eccentric in his ways. When shipwrecked on one occasion, he emerged from beneath the water with his clothes unwet, and walked freely on its surface. Finally he ascended to the sky in bright day. All these accounts may safely be put down as the figments of a later time.

Such stories are repeatedly told of Initiates of various degrees, and are by no means necessarily "figments," but we are more interested in Ko Yuan's own account of the book:

When I obtained the true Tâo, I had recited this Ching [book] ten thousand times. It is what the Spirits of Heaven practise and had not been communicated to scholars of this lower world. I got it from the Divine Ruler of the Eastern Hwa; he received it from the Divine Ruler of the Golden Gate; he received it from the Royal-mother of the West.

Now the "Divine Ruler of the Golden Gate" was

* *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xl.

the title held by the Initiate who ruled the Toltec empire in Atlantis, and its use suggests that the *Classic of Purity* was brought thence to China when the Turanians separated off from the Toltecs. The idea is strengthened by the contents of the brief treatise, which deals with Tào—literally “the Way”—the name by which the One Reality is indicated in the ancient Turanian and Mongolian religion. We read:

The Great Tào has no bodily form, but It produced and nourishes heaven and earth. The Great Tào has no passions, but It causes the sun and moon to revolve as they do. The Great Tào has no name, but It effects the growth and maintenance of all things (i. 1).

This is the manifested God as unity, but duality supervenes.

Now the Tào (shows itself in two forms), the Pure and the Turbid, and has (the two conditions of) Motion and Rest. Heaven is pure and earth is turbid; heaven moves and the earth is at rest. The masculine is pure and the feminine is turbid; the masculine moves and the feminine is still. The radical (Purity) descended, and the (turbid) issue flowed abroad, and thus all things were produced (i. 2).

This passage is particularly interesting from the allusion to the active and receptive sides of Nature, the distinction between Spirit, the generator, and Matter, the nourisher, so familiar in later writings.

In the *Tào Teh Ching* the teaching as to the Unmanifested and the Manifested comes out very plainly:

The Tào that can be trodden is not the enduring and un-

changing Tào. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. Having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; having a name, it is the Mother of all things. . . . Under these two aspects it is really the same; but as development takes place it receives the different names. Together we call them the Mystery (i. 1, 2, 4).

Students of the Kabbalah will be reminded of one of the Divine Names, "the Concealed Mystery." Again

There was something undefined and complete, coming into existence before heaven and earth. How still it was and formless, standing alone and undergoing no change, reaching everywhere and in no danger (of being exhausted). It may be regarded as the Mother of all things. I do not know its name, and I give it the designation of the Tào. Making an effort to give it a name, I call it the Great. Great, it passes on (in constant flow). Passing on, it becomes remote. Having become remote, it returns (xxv. 1-3).

Very interesting it is to see here the idea of the forthgoing and the returning of the One Life, so familiar to us in Hindu literature. Familiar also seems the verse:

All things under heaven sprang from It as existent (and named); that existence sprang from It as non-existent (and not named) (xl. 2).

That a universe might become, the Unmanifest must give forth the One from whom duality and trinity proceed:

The Tào produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced all things. All things leave behind them the Obscurity (out of which they have come), and go forward to embrace the Brightness (into which they have

emerged), while they are harmonized by the Breath of Vacancy (xlii. 1).

"Breath of Space" would be a happier translation. Since all is produced from It, It exists in all:

All-pervading is the great Tào. It may be found on the left hand and on the right. . . It clothes all things as with a garment, and makes no assumption of being their lord;—It may be named in the smallest things. All things return (to their root and disappear), and do not know that it is It which presides over their doing so;—It may be named in the greatest things (xxxiv, 1,2).

Chwang-ze (fourth century B. C.) in his presentation of the ancient teachings, refers to the spiritual Intelligences coming from the Tào:

It has Its root and ground (of existence) in Itself. Before there were heaven and earth, from of old, there It was securely existing. From It came the mysterious existence of spirits, from It the mysterious existence of God (Bk. vi., Pt. i., Sec. vi. 7).

A number of the names of these Intelligences follow, but such beings are so well known to play a great part in the Chinese religion that we need not multiply quotations about them.

Man is regarded as a trinity, Tàoism, says Mr. Legge, recognizing in him the spirit, the mind, and the body. This division comes out clearly in the *Classic of Purity*, in the teaching that man must get rid of desire to reach union with the One:

Now the spirit of man loves purity, but his mind disturbs it. The mind of man loves stillness, but his desires draw it away. If he could always send his desires away, his mind would of itself become still. Let his mind be made clean, and his spirit of itself becomes pure. . . . The reason why men are not able

to attain to this is because their minds have not been cleansed, and their desires have not been sent away. If one is able to send the desires away, when he then looks in at his mind it is no longer his; when he looks out at his body it is no longer his; and when he looks farther off at external things, they are things which he has nothing to do with (i. 3,4).

Then, after giving the stages of indrawing to "the condition of perfect stillness," it is asked:

In that condition of rest independently of place, how can any desire arise? And when no desire any longer arises there is the true stillness and rest. That true (stillness) becomes (a) constant quality, and responds to external things (without error); yea, that true and constant quality holds possession of the nature. In such constant response and constant stillness there is the constant purity and rest. He who has this absolute purity enters gradually into the (inspiration of the) True Tào (i. 5).

The supplied words "inspiration of" rather cloud than elucidate the meaning, for entering into the Tào is congruous with the whole idea and with other Scriptures.

On putting away of desire is laid much stress in Tàoism; a commentator on the *Classic of Purity* remarks that understanding the Tào depends on absolute purity, and

The acquiring this Absolute Purity depends entirely on the Putting away of Desire, which is the urgent practical lesson of the Treatise.

The *Tào Teh Ching* says:

Always without desire we must be found,
If its deep mystery we would sound;
But if desire always within us be,
Its outer fringe is all that we shall see (i.3).

Reincarnation does not seem to be so distinctly taught as might have been expected, although passages are found which imply that the main idea was taken for granted and that the entity was considered as ranging through animal as well as human births. Thus we have from Chwang-ze the quaint and wise story of a dying man, to whom his friend said:

"Great indeed is the Creator! What will He now make you to become? Where will He take you to? Will He make you the liver of a rat or the arm of an insect?" Szelai replied, "Wherever a parent tells a son to go, east, west, south, or north, he simply follows the command. . . . Here now is a great founder, casting his metal. If the meal were to leap up (in the pot) and say, 'I must be made into a (sword like the) Moysh,' the great founder would be sure to regard it as uncanny. So, again, when a form is being fashioned in the mould of the womb, if it were to say, 'I must become a man, I must become a man,' the Creator would be sure to regard it as uncanny. When we once understand that heaven and earth are a great melting-pot and the Creator a great founder, where can we have to go that shall not be right for us? We are born as from a quiet sleep and we die to a calm awaking" (Bk vi., Pt. i., Sec. vi.).

Turning to the Fifth, the Aryan Race, we have the same teachings embodied in the oldest and greatest Aryan religion—the Brâhmanical. The eternal Existence is proclaimed in the *Chhândogya-panishad* as "Oneonly, with out a second," and it is written:

It willed, I shall multiply for the sake of the universe (vi. ii. 1, 3).

The Supreme Logos, Brahman, is threefold—Being, Consciousness, Bliss, and it is said:

From This arise life, mind, and all the senses, ether, air, fire, water, earth the support of all (*Mundakopanishad*, ii. 3).

No grander descriptions of Deity can be found anywhere than in the Hindu Scriptures, but they are becoming so familiar that brief quotation will suffice. Let the following serve as specimens of their wealth of gems:

Manifest, near, moving in the secret place, the great abode, herein rests all that moves, breathes, and shuts the eyes. Know That as to be worshipped, being and non-being, the best, beyond the knowledge of all creatures. Luminous, subtler than the subtle, in which the worlds and their denizens are infixed. That this imperishable Brahman; That also life and voice and mind. . . . In the golden highest sheath is spotless, partless Brahman; That the pure Light of lights, known by the knowers of the Self. . . . That deathless Brahman is before, Brahman behind, Brahman to the right and to the left, below, above, pervading; this Brahman truly is the all. This the best (*Mundakopanishad*, II. ii. 1, 2, 9, 11).

Beyond the universe, Brahman, the supreme, the great, hidden in all beings according to their bodies, the one Breath of the whole universe, the Lord, whom knowing (men) become immortal. I know that mighty Spirit, the shining sun beyond the darkness. . . . I know Him the unfading, the ancient, the Soul of all, omnipresent by His nature, whom the Brahman-knowers call unborn, whom they call eternal (*Shvetâshvataropanishad*, iii. 7, 8, 21).

When there is no darkness, no day nor night, no being nor non-being (there is) Shiva even alone; That the indestructible, That is to be worshipped by Savitri, from That came forth the ancient wisdom. Not above nor below, nor in the midst, can He be comprehended. Nor is there any similitude for Him whose name is infinite glory. Not with the sight is established His form, none may by the eye behold Him; they who know

Him by the heart and by the mind, dwelling in the heart, become immortal (*ibid.*, iv. 18-20).

That man in his inner Self is one with the Self of the universe—"I am That"—is an idea that so thoroughly pervades all Hindu thought that man is often referred to as the "divine town of Brahman,"* the "town of nine gates,"† God dwelling in the cavity of his heart.‡

In one manner is to be seen (the Being) which cannot be proved, which is eternal, without spot, higher than the ether, unborn, the great eternal Soul. . . . This great unborn Soul is the same which abides as the intelligent (soul) in all living creatures, the same which abides as ether in the heart; § in him it sleeps; it is the Subduer of all, the Ruler of all, the sovereign Lord of all; it does not become greater by good works nor less by evil work. It is the Ruler of all, the sovereign Lord of all beings, the Preserver of all beings, the Bridge, the Upholder of the worlds, so that they fall not to ruin (*Bṛihad-āraṇyakopaniṣad*, IV. iv. 20, 22, Trs. by Dr. E. Röer).

When God is regarded as the evolver of the universe, the three-fold character comes out very clearly as Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahmâ, or again as Vishnu sleeping under the waters, the Lotus springing from Him, and in the Lotus Brahmâ. Man is likewise threefold, and in the *Mândûkyopaniṣad* the Self is described as conditioned by the physical body, the subtle body, and the mental body, and then rising

* *Mundakopaniṣad*, II. ii. 7.

† *Shvetashvataropaniṣad*, iii. 14.

‡ *Ibid.*, ii.

§ The "ether in the heart" is a mystical phrase used to indicate the One, who is said to dwell therein.

out of all into the One "without duality." From the Trimûrti (Trinity) come many Gods, connected with the administration of the universe, as to whom it is said in the *Brihadâraṇyakopaniṣad*:

Adore Him, ye Gods, after whom the year by rolling days is completed, the Light of lights, as the immortal Life (IV. iv. 16).

It is hardly necessary to even mention the presence in Brâhmanism of the teaching of reincarnation, since its whole philosophy of life turns on this pilgrimage of the Soul through many births and deaths, and not a book could be taken up in which this truth is not taken for granted. By desires man is bound to this wheel of change, and therefore by knowledge, devotion, and the destruction of desires, man must set himself free. When the Soul knows God it is liberated.* The intellect purified by knowledge beholds Him.† Knowledge joined to devotion finds the abode of Brahman.‡ Whoever knows Brahman becomes Brahman.§ When desires cease the mortal becomes immortal and obtains Brahman.||

Buddhism, as it exists in this northern form, is quite at one with the more ancient faiths, but in the southern form it seems to have let slip the idea of the Logic Trinity as of the One Existence from which They come forth. The Logos in His triple manifestation is: the First Logos, Amitâbha, the

* *Shvetash*, i. 8. † *Mund.* III. i. 8. ‡ *Ibid.*, III. ii. 4.

§ *Ibid.* III. ii. 9. || *Kathop.* vi. 14.

Boundless Light; the Second, Avalokiteshvara, or Padmapâni (Chenresi); the Third, Mandjusri—"the representative of creative wisdom, corresponding to Brahmâ."* Chinese Buddhism apparently does not contain the idea of a primordial Existence, beyond the Logos, but Nepaulese Buddhism postulates Âdi-Buddha, from Whom Amitâbha arises. Padmapâni is said by Eitel to be the representative of compassionate Providence and to correspond partly with Shiva, but as the aspect of the Buddhist Trinity that sends forth incarnations He appears rather to represent the same idea as Vishnu, to whom He is allied by bearing the Lotus (fire and water, or Spirit and Matter as the primary constituents of the universe). Reincarnation and Karma are so much the fundamentals of Buddhism that it is hardly worth while to insist on them save to note the way of liberation, and to remark that as the Lord Buddha was a Hindu preaching to Hindus, Brâhmanical doctrines are taken for granted constantly in His teaching, as matters of course. He was a purifier and a reformer, not an iconoclast, and struck at the accretions due to ignorance, not at fundamental truths belonging to the Ancient Wisdom:

Those beings who walk in the way of the law that has been well taught, reach the other shore of the great sea of birth and death, that is difficult to cross (*Udânavarga*, xxix. 37).

Desire binds man, and must be gotten rid of:

It is hard for one who is held by the fetters of desire to free

* Eitel's *Sanskrit Chinese Dictionary*, *sub voce*.

himself of them, says the Blessed One. The steadfast, who care not for the happiness of deires, cast them off and do soon depart (to Nirvâna). . . . Mankind has no lasting desires: they are impermanent in them who experience them; free yourself then from what cannot last, and abide not in the sojourn of death (*ibid.*, ii. 6, 8).

He who has destroyed desires for (worldly) goods, sinfulness, the bonds of the eye of the flesh, who has torn up desire by the very root, he I declare, is a Brâhmana. (*Ibid.*, xxxiii 68).

And a Brâhmana is a man "having his last body,"* and is defined as one

Who, knowing his former abodes (existences), perceives heaven and hell, the Muni, who has found the way to put an end to birth (*Ibid.*, xxxiii. 55).

In the exoteric Hebrew Scriptures, the idea of a Trinity does not come out strongly, though duality is apparent, and the God spoken of is obviously the Logos, not the One Unmanifest:

I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the Lord that doeth all these things (*Is.*, xlvii. 7).

Philo, however, has the doctrine of the Logos very clearly, and it is found in the Fourth Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word [Logos] and the Word was with God and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made (*S. John* i. 1, 3).

In the Kabbalah the doctrine of the One, the Three, the Seven, and then the many, is plainly taught:

* *Udânavaṛga*, xxxiii. 41

The Ancient of the Ancients, the Unknown of the Unknown, has a form, yet also has not any form. It has a form through which the universe is maintained. It also has not any form as It cannot be comprehended. When It first took this form [Kether, the Crown, the First Logos] It permitted to proceed from It nine brilliant Lights [Wisdom and the Voice, forming with Kether the Triad, and then the seven lower Sephiroth]. . . . It is the Ancient of the Ancients, the Mystery of the Mysteries, the Unknown of the Unknown. It has a form which appertains to It, since It appears (through it) to us, as the Ancient Man above all, as the Ancient of the Ancients, and that which there is the Most Unknown among the Unknown. But under that form by which It makes Itself known, It however still remains the Unknown (Isaac Myer's *Qabbalah*, from the *Zohar*, pp. 274, 275).

Myer points out that the "form" is "not 'the Ancient of ALL the Ancients,' who is the Ain Soph."

Again:

Three Lights are in the Holy Upper which Unite as One; and they are the basis of the Torah, and this opens the door to all. . . . Come, see! the mystery of the word. These are three degrees and each exists by itself, and yet all are One and are knotted in One, nor are they separated one from another. . . . Three come out from One, One exists in Three, it is the force between Two, Two nourish One, One nourishes many sides, thus All is One (*ibid.*, 373,375,376).

Needless to say that the Hebrews held the doctrine of many Gods—"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods?"*—and of multitudes of subordinate ministrants, the "Sons of God," the "Angels of the Lord," the "Ten Angelic Hosts."

Of the commencement of the universe the *Zohar* teaches:

* *Ex.* xv. ii.

In the beginning was the Will of the King, prior to any existence which came into being through emanation from this Will. It sketched and engraved the forms of all things that were to be manifested from concealment into view, in the supreme and dazzling light of the Quadrant [the Sacred Tetractys] (Myer's *Qabbalah*, pp. 194, 195).

Nothing can exist in which the Deity is not immanent, and with regard to Reincarnation it is taught that the Soul is present in the divine Idea ere coming to earth; if the Soul remained quite pure during its trial it escaped rebirth, but this seems to have been only a theoretical possibility, as it is said:

All souls are subject to revolution (metempsychosis a'leen o'gilgoolah), but men do not know the ways of the Holy One: blessed be It! they are ignorant of the way they have been judged in all time, and before they came into this world and when they have quitted it (*ibid.*, p. 198).

Traces of this belief occur both in the Hebrew and Christian exoteric Scriptures, as in the belief that Elijah would return, and later that he had returned in John the Baptist.

Turning to glance at Egypt, we find there from hoariest antiquity its famous Trinity, Ra, Osiris-Isis as the dual Second LOGOS, and Horus. The great hymn to Amun-Ra will be remembered.

The Gods bow before Thy Majesty by exalting the Souls of That which produceth them . . . and say to Thee: Peace to all emanations from the unconscious Father of the conscious Fathers of the Gods. . . Thou Producer of beings, we adore the Souls which emanate from thee. Thou begettest us, O Thou Unknown, and we greet Thee in worshipping each God-

Soul which descendeth from Thee and liveth in us (quoted in *Secret Doctrine*, iii. p. 486).

The "conscious Fathers of the Gods" are the LOGOI, the "unconscious Father" is the One Existence, unconscious not as being less but as being infinitely more than what we call consciousness, a limited thing.

In the fragments of the *Book of the Dead* we can study the conceptions of the reincarnating of the human Soul, of its pilgrimage towards and its ultimate union with the LOGOS. The famous papyrus of "the scribe Ani, triumphant in peace," is full of touches that remind the reader of the Scriptures of other faiths; his journey through the underworld, his expectation of re-entering his body (the form taken by reincarnation among the Egyptians), his identification with the LOGOS.

Saith Osiris Ani: I am the great One, son of the great One; I am Fire, the son of Fire. . . . I have knit together my bones, I have made myself whole and sound; I have become young once more; I am Osiris, the Lord of eternity (xliii. 1, 4).

In Pierret's recension of the *Book of the Dead* we find the striking passage:

I am the being of mysterious names who prepared for himself dwellings for millions of years (p. 22). Heart, that comest to me from my mother, my heart necessary to my existence on earth. . . . Heart, that comest to me from my mother, heart that is necessary to me for my transformation (pp. 113, 114).

In Zoroastrianism we find the conception of the One Existence, imaged as Boundless Space, whence arises the LOGOS, the creator Aûharmazd:

Supreme in omniscience and goodness and unrivalled in splendor; the religion of light is the place of Auharmazd (*The Bundahis, Sacred Books of the East*, v. 3, 4, v. 2.)

To him in the Yasna, the chief liturgy of the Zarthustrians, homage is first paid:

I announce and I (will) complete (my Yasna [worship] to Ahura Mazda, the Creator, the radiant and glorious, the greatest and the best, the most beautiful (?) (to our conceptions), the most firm, the wisest, and the one of all whose body is most perfect, who attains his ends the most infallibly, because of His righteous order, to Him who disposes our minds aright, who sends His joy-creating grace afar; who made us and has fashioned us, and who has nourished and protected us, who is the most bounteous Spirit (*Sacred Books of the East*, xxxi. pp. 195, 196).

The worshipper then pays homage to the Ameshaspends and other Gods, but the supreme manifested God, the Logos, is not here presented as triune. As with the Hebrews, there was a tendency in the exoteric faith to lose sight of this fundamental truth. Fortunately we can trace the primitive teaching, though it disappeared in later times from the popular belief. Dr. Haug, in his *Essays on the Parsis* (translated by Dr. West and forming vol. v. of Trübner's Oriental Series), states that Ahuramazda—Aûharmazd or Hôrmazd—is the Supreme Being, and that from him were produced

Two primeval causes, which, though different, were united and produced the world of material things as well as that of the spirit (p. 303).

These were called twins and are everywhere present, in Ahuramazda as well as in man. One pro-

duces reality, the other non-reality, and it is these who in later Zoroastrianism became the opposing Spirits of good and evil. In the earlier teachings they evidently formed the Second Logos, duality being his characteristic mark.

The "good" and "bad" are merely Light and Darkness, Spirit and Matter, the fundamental 'twins' of the Universe, the Two from the One.

Criticising the later idea, Dr. Haug says:

Such is the original Zoroastrian notion of the two creative Spirits, who form only two parts of the Divine Being. But in the course of time this doctrine of the great founder was changed and corrupted, in consequence of misunderstandings and false interpretations. Spentômainyush [the "good spirit"] was taken as a name of Ahuramazda Himself, and then of course Angrômainyush [the "evil spirit"], by becoming entirely separated from Ahuramazda, was regarded as the constant adversary of Ahuramazda; thus the Dualism of God and Devil arose (p. 205).

Dr. Haug's view seems to be supported by the *Gâtha Ahunavaiti*, given with the other Gâthas by "the archangels" to Zoroaster or Zarathustra:

In the beginning there was a pair of twins, two spirits, each of a peculiar activity; these are the good and the base. . . . And these two spirits united created the first (the material things); one the reality, the other the non-reality. . . . And to succor this life (to increase it) Armaiti came with wealth, the good and true mind; she, the everlasting one, created the material world. . . . All perfect things are garnered up in the splendid residence of the Good Mind, the Wise and the Righteous, who are known as the best beings (*Yas.* xxx. 3, 4, 7, 10: Dr. Haug's Trans., pp. 149-151).

Here the three LOGOI are seen, Ahuramazda the first, the supreme Life; in and from him the "twins," the Second LOGOS; then Armaiti the Mind, the Creator of the Universe, the Third LOGOS.* Later Mithra appears, and in the exoteric faith clouds the primitive truth to some extent. Of him it is said

Whom Ahura Mazda has established to maintain and look over all this moving world; who, never sleeping, wakefully guards the creation of Mazda (*Mihir Yast.*, xxvii. 103; *Sacred Books of the East*, xviii.).

He was a subordinate God, the Light of Heaven, as Varuna was the Heaven itself, one of the great ruling Intelligences. The highest of these ruling Intelligences were the six Ameshaspends, headed by the Good Thought of Ahuramazda, Vohûman—

Who have charge of the whole material creation (*Sacred Books of the East*, v. p. 10, note).

Reincarnation does not seem to be taught in the books which, so far, have been translated, and the belief is not current among modern Parsis. But we do find the idea of the Spirit in man as a spark that is to become a flame and to be reunited to the Supreme Fire, and this must imply a development for which rebirth is a necessity. Nor will Zoroastrianism ever be understood until we recover the *Chaldean Oracles* and allied writings, for there is its real root.

* Armaita was at first Wisdom and the Goddess of Wisdom. Later, as the Creator, She became identified with the earth, and was worshipped as the Goddess of Earth.

Travelling westward to Greece, we meet with the Orphic system, described with such abundant learning by Mr. G. R. S. Mead in his work *Orpheus*. The Ineffable Thrice-unknown Darkness was the name given to the One Existence.

According to the theology of Orpheus, all things originate from an immense principle, to which through the imbecility and poverty of human conception we give a name, though it is perfectly ineffable, and in the reverential language of the Egyptians is a *thrice unknown darkness*, in contemplation of which all knowledge is refunded into ignorance (Thomas Taylor, quoted in *Orpheus*, p. 93).

From this the "Primordial Triad," Universal Good, Universal Soul, Universal Mind, again the Logic Trinity. Of this Mr. Mead writes:

The first Triad, which is manifestable to intellect, is but a reflection of, or substitute for the Unmanifestable, and its hypostases are: (a) the Good, which is super-essential; (b) Soul (the World Soul), which is a self-motive essence; and (c) Intellect (or the Mind), which is an impartible, immovable essence (*ibid.*, p. 94).

After this, a series of ever-descending Triads, showing the characteristics of the first in diminishing splendor, until man is reached, who

Has in him potentially the sum and substance of the universe. . . . "The race of men and gods is one" (Pindar, who was a Pythagorean, quoted by Clemens, *Strom.* v. 709). Thus man was called the Microcosm or little world, to distinguish him from the universe or great world (*ibid.*, p. 271).

He has the Nous, or real mind, the Logos or rational part, the Alogos or irrational part, the two latter again forming a Triad, and thus presenting the more

elaborate septenary division. The man was also regarded as having three vehicles, the physical and subtle bodies and the luciform body or *aúgoeïdes*, that

Is the "causal body," or karmic vesture of the soul, in which its destiny, or rather all the seeds of past causation are stored. This is the "thread-soul," as it is sometimes called, the "body" that passes over from one incarnation to another (*ibid.*, p. 284)

As to reincarnation:

Together with all the adherents of the Mysteries in every land the Orphics believed in reincarnation (*ibid.*, p. 292).

To this Mr. Mead brings abundant testimony, and he shows that it was taught by Plato, Empedocles, Pythagoras, and others. Only by virtue could men escape from the life-wheel.

Taylor, in his notes to the *Select Works of Plotinus*, quotes from Damascius as to the teachings of Plato on the One beyond the One, the unmanifest Existence:

Perhaps, indeed, Plato leads us ineffably through *the one* as a medium to the ineffable beyond *the one* which is now the subject of discussion; and this by an ablation of *the one* in the same manner as he leads to *the one* by an ablation of other things. . . . That which is beyond *the one* is to be honored in the most perfect silence. . . . *The one* indeed wills to be by itself, but with no other; but the unknown beyond *the one* is perfectly ineffable, which we acknowledge we neither know, nor are ignorant of, but which has about itself *super-ignorance*. Hence by proximity to this *the one* itself is darkened; for being near to the immense principle, if it be lawful so to speak, it remains as it were in the adytum of the truly mystic silence. . . . The first is above *the one* and *all things*, being more simple than either of these (pp. 341-343).

The Pythagorean, Platonic, and Neo-Platonic schools have so many points of contact with Hindu and Buddhist thought that their issue from one fountain is obvious. R. Garbe in his work, *Die Sâmkhya Philosophie* (iii. pp. 85 to 105) presents many of these points, and his statement may be summarized as follows:

The most striking is the resemblance—or more correctly the identity—of the doctrine of the One and Only in the Upanishads and the Eleatic school. Xenophanes' teaching of the unity of God and the Kosmos and of the changelessness of the One, and even more that of Parmenides, who held that reality is ascribable only to the One unborn, indestructible and omnipresent, while all that is manifold and subject to change is but an appearance, and further that Being and Thinking are the same—these doctrines are completely identical with the essential contents of the Upanishads and of the Vedântic philosophy which springs from them. But even earlier still the view of Thales, that all that exists has sprung from Water, is curiously like the Vaidik doctrine that the Universe arose from the waters. Later on Anaximander assumed as the basis (ἀρχή) of all things an eternal, infinite, and indefinite Substance, from which all definite substances proceed and into which they return—an assumption identical with that which lies at the root of the Sâmkhya, viz., the Prakriti from which the whole material side of the universe evolved. And his famous saying πάντα ῥεῖ expresses the character-

istic view of the Sâmkhya that all things are ever changing under the ceaseless activity of the three gunas. Empedocles again taught theories of transmigration and evolution practically the same as those of the Sâmkhyas, while his theory that nothing can come into being which does not already exist is even more closely identical with a characteristically Sâmkhyan doctrine.

Both Anaxagoras and Democritus also present several points of close agreement, especially the latter's view as to the nature and position of the Gods, and the same applies, notably in some curious matters of detail to Epicurus. But it is, however, in the teachings of Pythagoras that we find the closest and most frequent identities of teachings and argumentation, explained as due to Pythagoras himself having visited India and learnt his philosophy there, as tradition asserts. In later centuries we find some peculiarly Sâmkhyan and Buddhist ideas playing a prominent part in Gnostic thought. The following quotation from Lassen, cited by Garbe on P. 97, shows this very clearly.

Buddhism in general distinguishes clearly between Spirit and Light, and does not regard the latter as immaterial; but a view of Light is found among them which is closely related to that of the Gnostics. According to this, Light is the manifestation of Spirit in matter; the intelligence thus clothed in Light comes into relation with matter, in which the Light can be lessened and at last quite obscured, in which case the Intelligence falls finally into complete unconsciousness. Of the highest Intelligence it is maintained that it is neither Light nor Not-Light, neither Darkness nor Not-Darkness, since all

these expressions denote relations of the Intelligence to the Light, which indeed in the beginning was free from these connections, but later on encloses the Intelligence and mediates its connection with matter. It follows from this that the Buddhist view ascribes to the highest Intelligence the power to produce light from itself, and that in this respect also there is an agreement between Buddhism and Gnosticism.

Garbe here points out that, as regards the features alluded to, the agreement between Gnosticism and the Sâmkhya is very much closer than that with Buddhism, for while these views as to the relations between Light and Spirit pertain to the later phases of Buddhism, and are not at all fundamental to, or characteristic of it as such, the Sâmkhya teaches clearly and precisely that Spirit *is* Light. Later still the influence of the Sâmkhya thought is very plainly evident in the Neo-Platonic writers; while the doctrine of the LOGOS or Word, though not of Sâmkhyan origin, shows even in its details that it has been derived from India, where the conception of Vâch, the Divine Word, plays so prominent a part in the Brâhmanical system.

Coming to the Christian religion, contemporaneous with the Gnostic and Neo-Platonic systems, we shall find no difficulty in tracing most of the same fundamental teachings with which we have now become so familiar. The threefold LOGOS appears as the Trinity; the First LOGOS, the fount of all life being the Father; the dual-natured Second LOGOS the Son, God-man; the Third, the creative Mind, the Holy Ghost, whose brooding over the waters of chaos brought forth the worlds. Then