

SOME PROBLEMS OF LIFE

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
FOREWORD	5
PROBLEMS OF ETHICS	9
PROBLEMS OF SOCIOLOGY	32
PROBLEMS OF RELIGION	72
SOME DIFFICULTIES OF THE INNER LIFE	117

FOREWORD.

AN attempt is made in the following pages to discuss some of the Problems of Life and Mind that exercise the brains and wring the hearts of thoughtful people. These problems will be studied with the aid of the light thrown upon them by Theosophy, that Divine Wisdom which enlightens us just so far as we are able to receive it. There is no idea in my mind so ambitious as that of solving these problems : I only seek to offer to my fellow-students some thoughts that have been helpful to myself and may also be serviceable to others.

Theosophy, from its very nature, cannot form a new religion, a new church, or even a sect separate and apart. It is a unifier, not a divider ; an explainer, not an antagonist. Whenever a Theosophist is aggressive, combative, denunciatory, he is failing in his high mission, for the "wisdom that cometh from above is first pure then

peaceable." He is bound to be tolerant even with the intolerant, knowing that no evil can be destroyed save by its opposite good. Hence in seeking solutions for life's problems he does not vehemently assail the solutions already suggested, but seeks to distil from each any trace of truth it may contain. In all the schools of thought around us, ethical, sociological, scientific, and religious, some aspect of the truth is being set forth, and the fact that its exponents regard it as the whole truth does not lessen the intrinsic value of the particular fragment they present. Any view which has been held by large numbers of people, for long periods, over wide areas, recurring time after time, showing a perennial life, has in it some truth which preserves it; it is the duty of the Theosophist to seek for this truth and to bring it to light, freeing it from the errors which have enveloped it. Whenever human hearts and lives attach themselves to any view, they are not attracted by the errors which compose its form but to the truth which is its life. The failure to appreciate this distinction between the life and the form which temporarily envelopes it has given rise to the bitterness of controversy, to the extremes of intolerance that we find in the history of thought. The Divine Wisdom which includes all truth cannot be hostile to any fragment of itself, whatever may be the transitory form in which it is set. The student of the Divine Wisdom, then, must recognise and revere it under every veiling form, as Isis recognised and reverently gathered

up the torn fragments of the body of Osiris the beloved. Thus may the errors which belong to Time fall away, while the Eternal Truth endures, manifesting itself with ever-increasing fulness.

In our study, then, of the problems which surround us, we must search diligently in each school of thought for the truths which it is seeking to express, for the facts in nature which underlie its teachings. If this search be conducted successfully, the various schools will to a great extent be unified, Theosophy synthesising their different fragments. Quarrels arise because each school regards its partial truth as the whole, denying the truths of its neighbours while affirming its own. Peace will brood over the world when all schools concern themselves with the duty of outlining as perfectly as possible the aspects of truth which they perceive, and refrain from censuring as falsehoods those aspects which are invisible from the standpoints they severally occupy. "Men are usually right in that which they affirm, wrong in that which they deny," once quoth a philosopher, and his remark might be printed in golden letters over the desk of every student.

ANNIE BESANT.

PROBLEMS OF ETHICS.

THE problems of Ethics are concerned with the relations which exist between man and man, between nation and nation, and between man and the non-human world. Ethics has been called the Science of Conduct, therefore the Science of Relations, and its aim is to regularise and render harmonious the relations between an individual and his fellows, human and non-human. A man is not an isolated unit, but a part of an organic whole ; Ethics considers him as such a part, and lays down the laws by which that whole may accomplish its orderly evolution.

Every system of Ethics, if incomplete, may be brought in a final analysis under one or other of three heads—authority, intuition, utility. Any one of these three offers itself as a separate foundation on which a system of Ethics may be erected, and only a complete system

recognises the value of each of the three, and sets each in its place as a corner-stone in the pyramid of conduct.

Those who base Ethics on authority appeal to some revelation given by a divine Being, or to some teachings of highly developed men, sages of the past, whose knowledge was greater than that of their contemporaries or of subsequent generations, and who spoke with the authority derived from that knowledge. These teachers—Prophets, Rishis, Magi, call them by what name we may—were men who knew the worlds beyond the physical, and laid down definite precepts out of their wide experience; these precepts were submissively accepted by the nations among whom they lived, they themselves being regarded either as directly inspired by God, or as sharing the divine nature. All the Scriptures of the world, the Bibles of our race, serve, each to the believers in it, as the foundation of morality, each laying down a certain code of ethics; this code is regarded as of direct and binding authority, not depending on reason but on the possession by the teacher of higher knowledge, whether that knowledge were due to his inspiration by some divine Being or to his own evolution into Deity.

The second great ethical school declines to submit itself to any external authority, and founds itself on the existence in man of an interior faculty akin to Deity—intuition. Intuition is variously defined; some identify it with conscience, and declare that conscience is the voice of God speaking in the human soul; others,

shrinking from so extreme a position, and admitting that conscience is liable to error, and varies with the evolution of the individual, regard intuition as a faculty belonging to the spiritual nature, thus as being inherently superior to the physical, emotional, and intellectual natures, and therefore the proper guide of conduct.

The third school of Ethics bases morality on utility, appealing to reason as the authority which judges the facts and tendencies of life, traces the results of actions, and deduces from them a moral code, seeking to found its precepts on the generalised experience of the race. This school has many divisions, but they all found themselves ultimately on experience, and regard conscience as the product of evolution, as the moral instinct.*

However various may be the ethical opinions found among men, they may all, in the final analysis, be reduced to these three: the authority appealed to is (*a*) divine, of the nature of a revelation; (*b*) spiritual-human, depending on intuition; (*c*) rational-human, based on the recording of experience and the logical deduction of rules of conduct therefrom.

In studying these three great ethical systems it is necessary to consider the attacks made on each of them by their opponents, as well as the principles relied on by

* Instinct has been defined as accumulated racial experience, and this is a true definition, whether we consider it, with the materialists, as transmitted by the modification of the organism, or with the Theosophists, as stored in the group-soul, the over-soul of a group.

those who accept them. We shall seek in each for an aspect of Truth, which will contribute to the elucidation of ethical problems, seeing in each a value which may not rightly be overlooked or discredited. Each affords a partial guide for conduct, and treating them theosophically we can unify them, antagonistic as they have been held to be, and as their supporters believe them to be.

(a) What is revelation? It is a teaching generally given in the early days of a race, in order to mark out a path for a humanity not yet sufficiently evolved and trained to rely safely for guidance on either its intuition or its reason. The object of this authoritative declaration is the rendering of progress more rapid than it would be were the race left to make experiments unaided in matters of right and wrong. Many blunders would be made, many blind alleys entered, in the vague gropings of primitive man, driven by the imperious instincts of his animal nature, without experience to guide or reason to restrain. We may put aside all the aspects of revelation which deal with the inner constitution of man, with the relation of Deity to the universe, and with other weighty matters—aspects found in the great Scriptures of the world; we will confine ourselves to those parts of revelation which deal with morals, for it is against these that attacks are levelled by those who assail revelation as a foundation for an ethical system, and who refuse to the world's Scriptures any place in building up a sane morality. Every student is struck,

when he considers any of the earlier codes of morality—nay, it is not necessary to be a student to be startled by it—by the presence of precepts which to him are immoral, not moral. Yet, if he accept occult teaching, he believes that the Scriptures containing these precepts were given by men who possessed very lofty and wide knowledge, men of the noblest morality, of very high spiritual development. Further, he comes across such precepts in books that contain hints as to God and man fragrant with pure and sublime spirituality, so that they give a painful jar to the mind intent on higher things. True, some of them might, nay would, be ejected by the analytic hand of critical scholarship, and would stand confessed as interpolations of later date. But however far historical criticism may go, that criticism, guided by occult knowledge and not merely by scholarship, must confess the salient fact that these ancient Scriptures contain teachings from men who were giants, spiritually and morally, above the men of the present as they were far above the men of the past. Fragments at least of their teachings have come down to us in these Scriptures, no matter how much of alien matter may have crept into them in the efflux of time and by the ignorance of successive generations. And among these teachings are some of the precepts which jar on us as unsuitable to their noble surroundings and as unworthy of the great instructors from whose lips they fell.

To solve this problem aright we must grasp the necessary corollaries of evolution, and place clearly

before the mind some of the conditions inevitably bound up with the growth of a race from moral nescience to moral perfection. In far-off antiquity we see an infant humanity strong in its passions, but weak in its reasoning powers, plunging wildly at the entrance to the path of morality. It begins in blind ignorance of all distinctions between right and wrong. The first training could be but in broad principles, and withal these very principles must not press too harshly on the hitherto uncurbed animal nature. Many an action that would be a step backwards for us now was a step forwards for it then. On the infinite ladder of progress each rung is trodden in its turn, and we call the rungs below us "evil" and the rungs above us "good." Evil and good are relative : they appertain to progress, to growth. Our good of yesterday is our evil of to-day, and our good of to-day will be our evil of to-morrow. In the world there is a steady purpose that may be seen in the light of the history of human evolution. Souls in their infancy, ignorant of right and wrong as we now recognise them, gradually learn by experience, and looking backwards over the growth of humanity, we see that saints and sages have trodden the path up which these souls in their turn are climbing. We perceive that men are living in the world and are treading this long ascent in order that the soul may evolve. This soul is to be a self-conscious and self-moving intelligence ; it is to develop a will that is free, which shall learn to choose the highest. This will is never to be coerced into choosing the best, but is to be

left free to take what it will, under the sole condition that having taken it shall keep, having chosen it shall abide by its choice. As we watch the evolution of this growing intelligence we find that it is learning to choose between that which makes for progress, and that which makes for retardation. We perceive that the very things which at one stage helped it on its way upwards at a later stage pull it backwards, and, persisted in, would hold it in a lower state of being. When a soul is at a very low stage of evolution there is many an action that is right for it, because it carries it a step onwards, that becomes wrong for it after that step has been taken. Lifting forces are right, down-dragging forces are wrong. This study leads us to the conclusion that what is "right" at any period of the world's history is that which aids in lifting the soul into a higher condition than that in which it is at the time, and thus works in harmony with the divine will for the growth of the soul, helping it to become nobler, purer, wiser, more rational. That which is "wrong," on the other hand, is anything which goes against the current of evolution, anything which keeps the soul stationary or drives it backward against the upward tendency of the whole. "Evil" is the setting of the will of a part against the will of the whole, the separating oneself from the purpose of the world and going against it instead of helping it on. The kosmos is evolving from the inorganic to the organic, from nescience to omniscience, and any part of it which dislocates itself from its connections, which puts itself into antagonism to

that movement, which for its separate purposes strives to delay the coming of that

Far off divine event

To which the whole creation moves,

commits sin, embraces evil, weds itself to death.

Let us take a few cases in which commands were given which jar on modern thought. We may imagine a race given to cannibalism, commanded to take the flesh of animals as food ; assuredly a step forward would be taken by the substitution of animal for human flesh. As soon as the nation had entirely outgrown the eating of men and slaughtered animals only for food, the teacher would try to gradually lead it away from that barbarous custom by allowing the use of flesh only in connection with religious services, permitting to be used as food only the flesh of animals offered as sacrifices, and encompassing these sacrifices with burdensome conditions so as to restrict their number. To put together the slaughter of animals in sacrifice respectively to certain deities and to man's palate may strike many as a strange and incongruous juxtaposition. Yet some, not all, of the commands with respect to animal sacrifices were given for this very purpose. Among people who slaughtered all kinds of living things for food, it was an advance to restrain their killing to certain times and seasons, to surround it with rigidly enforced ceremonies. If, as in some cases, a man was not allowed to kill an animal without a year of preparation during which no flesh might be taken, if he might only eat flesh which had been offered

in sacrifice, it is easy to see that such a man was being weaned from flesh-eating, and was learning to break off an evil habit. During his year of preparation the habit of living on flesh would be conquered, and the very restrictions surrounding the final ceremony would tend to make him reverence sentient life and regard its sacrifice as a solemn act, not lightly to be performed. Although to the modern mind the sacrifice of animals as a religious act appears to be brutal and degrading, one cannot but ask oneself whether it marks a lower stage of national morality to slay animals only for sacrifice than to slay them wholesale for the gratification of the palate; whether the rare holocausts in Solomon's temple, for instance, were more degrading to the public conscience than the daily slaughterings in Chicago. The restrictions which in some civilisations of the past surrounded the slaying of the brute would press heavily on our modern western civilisations, and those ancient nations were at least learning that recklessness of animal life was a sin. People who disfigure their streets with the bleeding carcasses of animals hung up to attract buyers should not look down too contemptuously on the ancient temple.

So with other points of conduct, which, rightly condemned to-day, were yet in the past sanctioned, even commanded by ethical teachers. Polygamy, for instance, introduced relations between the sexes far better than the promiscuity which preceded it. Among people at the lowest stage of sexual relations polygamy

was a step upwards and therefore was right, not wrong. When the soul evolves, polygamy gives place to monogamy. As a rising from promiscuity polygamy was an advance; as a sinking from monogamy polygamy would be a degradation.

Such cases show us in what sense morality is, and must be, relative for evolving souls, and we see that any teacher who understands human nature, and who is more anxious to help his younger brothers than to express his own full thought, may rightly, in training a people, give ethical precepts that would now be degrading in practice. Looking at ancient ethical codes in this way, we can solve many of the difficulties that press on believers in their own Scriptures; the recognition of the principle of relativity in morals makes the way clear, and we understand that ethics is an advancing science, evolving with the evolution of the soul. We see that we must not swathe the limbs of the present with many of the bands useful in the past; that while the sublime spiritual truths contained in them give the world's Scriptures an eternal value, many of their precepts belong to a stage now outgrown. We must not dwarf the conscience and drug the moral sense by defending as perfect, because within the limits of a "revelation," precepts which were good for their own age but would be mischievous in ours. We make the Bibles of our race clogs instead of wings if we treat past commands as now binding, or if we explain them in a non-natural sense because they shock the more highly developed

moral instinct which is the very result of that moral training through which our souls have passed. Enough if such precepts were ahead of the moral practice of their time, if they struck notes higher than the people could themselves utter, if they put before them an ideal not so lofty as to be impossible to strive after, though sufficiently lofty to exercise over them an elevating power. Unless we can thus throw ourselves backward in thought into those times of ignorance, we shall fail to grasp the meaning and the wisdom of the teachers, and may cast aside other teachings of inestimable value because they are mingled with instructions suitable for their own age, though not for ours. For let it never be forgotten that the very books which contain passages that now jar on us contain also ethical precepts of a character so sublime that while we are now able to recognise their exalted beauty we stumble feebly along the lower stages of the road of which they are the goal. The use of a revelation is to set before a race knowledge it is as yet unable to compass for itself, knowledge of dangers from which it warns, of possibilities which it holds out as encouragement. A revelation is the knowledge of the elder brothers placed at the service of the younger, one of the most effective means of lifting the world, of hastening the evolution of the soul.

(b) Repelled by these moral difficulties which surround revelation and may even be said to be inseparable from all revelations given to a primitive people, many of the

most thoughtful and cultured people of our day reject it altogether as of authority, and regard conscience as the direct arbiter in morals; some go so far as to declare that it is the voice of God in man, and ought to be obeyed as a divine authority. This ethical school has been effectively attacked by the blunt pointing out of the fact that conscience is a very variable quantity—varying with civilisation, with intellectual development, with public opinion, with the general tradition and training of a nation. Further, that conscience in one man contradicts conscience in another, so that a person acting conscientiously may do things which another person as conscientiously condemns. Thus conscience speaks with many voices, yet always preserves the note of authority, of imperious command, and tortures with remorse the man who disobeys. When a man listens to conscience he feels himself to be listening to something that comes from outside or beyond himself, something that does not argue but asserts, that does not plead but commands. This voice, with its imperious “Do this,” “Avoid that,” seems by this very imperiousness to claim unquestioning obedience, and this has led to the ascription to it of divine authority. Yet if—as is clear from a study of the facts of human history—it sometimes commands crimes, we cannot rightly describe it as the voice of God. The inquisitor was sometimes conscientious when he racked and burned his brother man for the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of others who might be inclined to follow that heretical

brother; he acted with a clear conscience, honestly believing himself to be doing service both to God and to man. Yet we can scarcely admit that in his case conscience was an infallible guide, or regard it as the voice of God speaking in the human soul.

The question, then, arises: What is this conscience which arrogates to itself such supreme authority, speaking as though it ought to be obeyed without challenge? Here Theosophy steps in and explains the genesis of conscience, and hence the limitations that surround it in the evolving—the not yet evolved—man. According to theosophical teaching the human soul, or intelligence, is a growing and developing quality, evolving by the experience gathered in life after life. Born into the world utterly ignorant and therefore without knowledge of good or evil, the soul at first could not recognise any difference between right and wrong. At that early period every experience was useful simply as experience, and everything encountered in life had some new lesson to impart to the infant soul. Whether an action were right or wrong, in our sense of the terms, it was equally useful to the soul, for only by the results which followed could knowledge of law be obtained. It was found that happiness followed some actions—those that were in harmony with the laws of nature—and that misery followed others—those that were in contravention with these laws; by these results the soul slowly learned to distinguish between the actions that made for progress and those which made for retardation. As the soul

passed through incarnation after incarnation, it gathered a large store of these experiences of actions and their results: these experiences were increased by those reaped in the intermediate world, wherein the soul sojourned for awhile after leaving the earth, and found that suffering followed on the heels of the physical yielding to the impulses of the animal nature. Continuing its pilgrimage and arriving in the heavenly world, the soul rested and looked back over these varied experiences, and cast up the ledger of the concluded life-cycle. Certain classes of actions had led to happiness and growth, other classes to unhappiness and delay. The first classes, it decided, were those which it was desirable to repeat, while the latter should be entirely avoided. When the time had arrived for the return to earth, and the soul was employed in making for itself a new mind, it wove into this new mind the conclusions on desirable and undesirable actions to which it had come when reviewing its previous earth-life. Some of these were clear and definite: "That course of action led to sorrow, this course to joy; performing that deed I reaped misery, performing this I found content and peace. In the future I will avoid that, and I will do this." These decisions it implants in the mind it is forming, to be utilised in the coming life, and when it comes into the world in a new body these conclusions appear as innate ideas. The events from which the conclusions were drawn remain in the memory of the soul but are not imprinted on the mind; for the latter

the conclusions themselves are enough, and they form a summary sufficient for guidance, unencumbered with a mass of unnecessary and burdensome detail. These conclusions form what we call conscience, or moral instinct, which responds at once to external impacts; when the parents or the teacher tell the child, "This is right, that is wrong," the mind of the child promptly acquiesces in the statement, if it fall within the limit of the registered results of its own experience; if it do not, the mind of the child remains bewildered and unconvinced, and withholds the inner assent although it may yield an outer obedience. Here comes in the value of education; the innate ideas may lie latent, if not aroused and brought out by external stimulus, however promptly they may respond to that stimulus when it is applied. Further, the weaker among them are strengthened when a statement of results is made externally beforehand, and the results follow the course of action described.

Regarding the nature of conscience in this way, we arrive at an understanding of its limitations. When anything comes before the soul similar to its past experiences, the registered decision asserts itself and the "voice of conscience" is heard; but when new circumstances arise, and no registered decision is available, conscience is dumb, and the man is compelled to rely wholly on the judgment then formed by the reason. Such a judgment will be largely influenced by the atmosphere in which he lives, by the customs and

traditions of his time, by the prepossessions arising from racial and religious prejudices and from his own personal idiosyncrasies.

As the soul develops and gains fuller and fuller control over its vehicles, it is able to utilise more fully the experiences of the past, and to draw upon its memory for help beyond the well-digested conclusions registered in the mind as innate ideas of right and wrong. When it seeks to influence the lower vehicles, its communications must always have in them the note of authority, for the mind-consciousness can only know that some thought or impulse comes to it from a hidden and unexplained source, and there is nothing to approve to the reason that which is yet felt to possess compelling power.

When we study the subject from this standpoint it is easy to see why conscience, lacking experience, should make wrong decisions and give wrong commands, and we can accept the fact with equanimity, since the very experience of the sorrowful results that accrue from the mistake will give the soul wider knowledge, and thus ensure a wiser decision under similar circumstances in the future. Further, we see that the saying that a man should follow conscience is true, for even supposing the dictate of conscience be mistaken in any given case, it is none the less the best available judgment possessed by the individual, and its faultiness being due to insufficiency of experience it will be partly corrected by the results of the obedience rendered. The soul grows

in the dark hours when a problem of action is presented to it that it is unable to solve. For the fairly moral person no difficulty arises in making the choice between the clearly wrong and the clearly right; to see is to decide. The problems which rack our brains and wring our hearts are those which arise when, standing before two courses of action, both seem right or both seem wrong, so that duty appears to be divided. The theosophist, finding himself in such straits, understands why he is thus groping in the darkness, and sets to work to do his best with a calm and steady mind—the result of knowledge. He puts before himself as fully and clearly as possible the two courses of action and their probable results, and brings to bear upon them his best powers of reason and judgment; he tries to eliminate as far as possible “the personal equation,” to ignore the bearing of the alternative courses on his own wishes or fears, likes or dislikes, and to free himself from bias and prejudice; he then, with the whole force of his heart, wills to do the better of the two, seeking the illumination of spiritual intelligence; having thus done his best, he chooses, and fearlessly advances along the selected path. He may have chosen amiss, but even then, his intention being pure, that good intent will prevent the arising of any very serious harm; he will suffer for his mistake, and will thus increase his knowledge and be able to choose more wisely in the future, but the powers which “make for righteousness” will use his pure will to neutralise the

results of his intellectual blunder. Results are guided more by motives than by actions, for the force liberated by a high motive is more potent than that generated by action, and will produce more good than the mistaken method will produce harm. Further, the motive works upon character, while the action only brings results on the physical plane. Thus, trusting to the Law, relying on the Law, we may act fearlessly even when darkness enshrouds us, for we know that the Law to which we commit ourselves will break in pieces our mistakes, while conscience will grow wiser through the exercise of our highest faculties, and will become stronger by the very conflicts through which it passes.

Conscience then—or moral intuition, as it is sometimes called—is not an infallible guide, but it has a place in directing our conduct; it does not decide between right and wrong without experience, but yields at any time the decisions arrived at by the study of experience by the soul. Thus understanding it we can use it, without being greatly troubled when it fails us at the hour of our sorest need, and in these cases of failure we must fall back on our best judgment to form a decision, abiding contentedly by the results.

(c) Let us consider utility as affording the basis for ethics, and see how far this ground commends itself to our reason. The formula often given, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," needs, as every thoughtful utilitarian declares, some explanation for its due application. The nature of the happiness meant

must be defined, both as to quality and quantity of duration ; the higher must not be sacrificed to the lower ; nor the lasting to the transient. Utilitarianism stated partially and without due discrimination lays itself open to effective attack as selfish and calculating, but put as the theosophist might put it, in the deep and wide sense, it is sound and philosophical. It should mean that if we act in accordance with law we must be acting for ultimate happiness ; that ultimate happiness and ultimate right are inseparable, since we live in a world of law ; that in this world, where every law is an expression of the divine nature, obedience to law in bringing about harmony must necessarily bring about happiness, and must at the same time be identical with the highest good. When we see that the law of the world is a law of progress, that we are evolving towards a more perfect condition, that the divine will is bringing about the perfection of all, that in perfection there can be no disharmony and therefore no suffering ; when this is seen, we see also the underlying truth of utilitarianism beneath the partial expression, and that in the ultimate analysis there is no distinction between virtue and happiness. We are often blinded to this important truth by the fact that in the process of evolution the following of virtue repeatedly brings pain, and this must be until the lower nature is wholly transcended, until we have wholly outgrown the brute in us, and let "the ape and tiger die." We gradually learn that nature incessantly demands pleasure—*i.e.*, harmonious and adapted co-operation—but that when the

pleasure is attached to the possession of a form that breaks into pieces, such pleasure is followed by pain ; we learn that in following the lower pleasures we are grasping at things which pierce us in the grasping, that such pleasures are delusive, and that all that is against the law—and therefore “wrong”—must inevitably lead to pain. We learn that we are the higher, not the lower, nature, and must transfer our centre of consciousness from the animal self to the divine Self ; that we are not the body, as many think, nor the mind, as more highly developed people imagine, but the Self which is unity, in which all live and move. Evolution emphasises, strengthens, makes strong and defined the individual in order that he may become a centre of consciousness able to endure as a centre amid the keenest and strongest vibrations after the protective scaffolding of the individuality has been removed. The progress of man is from consciousness to self-consciousness through all the stages of selfishness and self-assertion, until self-consciousness can persist without losing memory and identity and all that is valuable as giving stability, while casting aside the limits that prevent interpenetration of numberless self-consciousnesses ; nay, it is to expand to all-consciousness without losing its centre, expanding and contracting at will. In the course of this progress each man learns by sad and bitter experience the infrangible unity of all beings, finding that nothing that injures one can be good for any, that that which brings happiness to all can alone bring happiness to each. Not the happiness of the

greatest number but the happiness of all is necessary for the happiness of one.

Oneship is not in the lower but in the higher, not in the body or the mind but in the spirit, the divine, the eternal life. Virtue and happiness are ultimately the same, because virtue is that which serves the life of all, not the separated life, and it is virtue merely because it aids evolution and is lifting the many towards the One. If in utilitarianism anything less than unity be postulated, if any point be set up short of that eternal oneness which is hidden in us and is being brought into manifestation, then the system is incomplete. No system can be really rational unless it be spiritual in its foundation and recognise the one Spirit as the life in all.

These three systems then, of authority, of intuition, of utility, contain truth and should be mutually helpful; they are complementary, not antagonistic, and each brings its useful lesson for the teaching of man. No system of ethics can be sound if it do not recognise the *evolving* life of the soul as its foundation and inviolable law as the condition of evolution. These two fundamental principles, so familiar to us as reincarnation and karma, are the basis of ethics, and without these no ethical problem can be solved.

One divine Life, given as a seed for the life of man; that seed growing by reincarnation, the infolded powers of the Spirit becoming the unfolded powers of the man made God—such is the secret of evolution. Those who in the early days of humanity gave to it revelation dealt

with the early stages of the human soul, stimulating its growth; those who appealed to intuition recognised the growing soul which possessed a harvest of experience; those who spoke of happiness and virtue as one—if they knew the inner truth of their teaching—were grasping after the oneness of all things and the perfect happiness that lies only in the development of all. Thus the human soul develops out of ignorance into partial knowledge, out of partial knowledge into divine life, where the highest good is the highest bliss. On one or other stage of that ladder every one of us, readers mine, is standing; the problems we meet in daily life belong to our stage of growth, and we solve them by knowing and by living. Sometimes a wiser and an older soul brings its experience to the helping of the younger, and by speaking out its knowledge for the guidance of the less advanced makes their evolution more rapid; the very proclamation of a law makes the recognition of that law the easier. Such souls are the Revealers, and all such teachings are of the nature of revelation. For such helping divine Teachers, liberated souls, remain among us, bearing the burden of the flesh; by their spoken words they quicken our nascent intuition, and by this revelation of truth aid us to climb more swiftly towards the light. From that Brotherhood has ever come revelation, the revelation of fragments of the Divine Wisdom. They send out their disciples as messengers, who repeat the truths they in humbleness have learned, in order that the world may evolve more rapidly. But never let it be forgotten

that we progress more by living than by studying. As we destroy separateness and live compassion our eyes will be opened to the visions of ideal beauty. Now, as ever, is it true that only those who do the will shall know of the doctrine, and in no age of the world more than in the present has it been possible for man to be truly "taught of God."

PROBLEMS OF SOCIOLOGY.

Few questions, perhaps only those that are connected with religion, rouse as much hot feeling as those of sociology. Enthusiasts of any school can see no good, can scarcely admit common honesty, in enthusiasts of another. Folly or knavery, deliberate or invincible ignorance, is held to be the only conceivable explanation of views in antagonism to those cherished by the speaker. "Of course, no decent person can be a socialist," says one. "Of course, no humane person can be anything but a socialist," says another. And so on, with all the pairs of opposites into which sociology is divided.

Needless to say that here, as everywhere, the extremist is in the wrong, and truth lies in the golden mean. The great schools of sociological thought are none of them based on a fundamental error, but each on a partial

truth ; each manifests an aspect of the truth, necessary for social well-being, and denies other aspects of the truth because of the limitations of its exponents. The heat shown by the combatants may very well be excused in view of the importance of the issues at stake ; for sociology is concerned with the external happiness of people everywhere, with their condition, their welfare, their comfort, their daily lives. Some, moved strongly by sympathy with the suffering before their eyes, will plunge headlong along any road that promises immediate relief ; others, further-sighted and recognising hidden dangers, oppose vehemently all reform, lest while bringing a transient good it should result in deeper ill. These two tendencies lie deep in human nature, and by their interplay work for gradual evolution. Separated, as they generally are in action, they are wont to precipitate social catastrophes. Looking at human history, we often find it difficult to say which of these two classes—those who would have change at all hazards, or those who would stand on the old paths at all hazards—have most contributed to revolutions ; whether these have been brought about mostly by the violent advocacy of those desiring change, or by the stubborn obstinacy of those who refused in any fashion to alter with the changing circumstances of man. If the two forces could be united in harmonious co-operation, progress would be at once rapid and safe, but while our limitations remain as narrow as they are at present, the hasty action followed by reaction, the forward rush

and hasty retreat, are likely still to alternate in social affairs.

No persons in whom heart and brain are developed can look at modern social conditions without recognising the intellectual ineptitude and the moral obliquity that have brought modern nations to their present pass. Not order but disorder, not government but anarchy, face us on every side, and we find everywhere unrest and discontent, the eloquent witnesses to the failure of modern civilisation. The air is full of confused murmurs, of inarticulate complainings, and despite the efforts of the unselfish and the growing sensitiveness of the social conscience, the hatred bred of a dull sense of injustice faces the repression bred of suspicion. The brotherhood which is a fact in nature is daily contradicted and defied in social life, and the friction generated by disregard of natural law threatens to burst into flames which will consume society, and leave the ground clear for another attempt to build a civilisation, or possibly, if men be sufficiently evolved, for the construction of a system ordered in accordance with facts.

All are agreed that the present state of things is unsatisfactory, and the century has been rife with proposals for change. These may be classified under three heads: political, dealing with the external organisation of society; economic, dealing with the production and distribution of wealth, and hence with ownership of the means of production; and at the close of the century, Theosophical, dealing with the broad principles under-

lying all human relations. The politicians deal with the fabric of society, and political remedies can but concern themselves with externals that can be dealt with by legislation; none the less there must arise under this head a question of vast importance—the root of the authority swaying national affairs. A very large and increasing party, comprising many of the broadest-minded among the young thinkers of our time, entirely turns its back on politics, declaring that political arrangements are not at the root of the troubles of the day. These thinkers say that we shall never get rid of our troubles—poverty, ignorance, class antagonisms, recurrent strife between capital and labour—by working from the political standpoint; that below the political basis is the economic, and that politics can only deal with the surface of things. Let political arrangements be as good as the wit of man can devise, nevertheless with an unsound economic system misery must continue. A third party, small in numbers at present, says that even when we have reached the economic basis we have not yet touched the social bed-rock. They admit that economics go deeper than the questions which agitate the political world, but they allege that there is something that underlies both politics and economics, and that is human nature. They say that until human nature is understood, with its fundamental, ineradicable tendencies; until a study is made of man as man, both as an individual and in his social relations with his fellows, man in the past, the present, and the future, with

his weaknesses and his powers ; until this be done, we shall never be able to build a society which will endure. The people who talk in this strain are usually called Theosophists. All Theosophists certainly would agree in this, however much they may differ as regards present-day politics and economics. Whether or not they take part in political or social questions, they always hold these to be subsidiary to that which they regard as basic—a wide view of humanity as composed of souls evolving through vast ages of time under a definite law of growth. Hence they recognise the necessity for understanding the constitution of human nature and the conditions necessary for its evolution.

Yet theosophical teachings lend themselves with peculiar force to the elucidation of the very problems that politics and economics propound. The theosophical view of life must profoundly modify the atmosphere through which these problems are seen, since it presents men as evolving souls—under whatever political and economic condition they may at any one time be born—coming back to this world over and over again, inheriting their past and building their future while living in their present. Looking further backwards and further forwards than any political or economic system, theosophical teachings deal with man as an evolving entity, creating his future environment by his present activities, and modifying his present surroundings according to his place in the scheme of evolution. Theosophy applies the principle of evolution to society in a more radical

fashion than does any school of thinkers, seeing in society not only an evolving organism—as do many others—but an evolving organism made up of souls, each one of which is also evolving. Those who see each man evolving during millions of years must necessarily look on all political and economic schemes as partial and temporary—as local and parochial, if the phrase may be permitted. Any political and economic system can but represent a passing phase in the vast evolution of humanity. Hence the Theosophist tends to a peaceful attitude of mind towards the different conflicting parties in the State; he is not inclined to rush wildly with one or the other, but sees that each embodies a principle necessary for the well-being of the whole, serving as a temporary vehicle for a fundamental tendency in human nature. He sees that the solution of problems will lie in the wise blending of principles and methods that are now in antagonism to each other, so that the total experience of humanity may be utilised in the social structure.

It may be well to remark, in order to avoid mistake, that theosophical teachings with reference to sociology have not yet been clearly formulated, and that any attempt to state them will certainly be coloured by the idiosyncrasies of the particular thinker concerned. The most that can just now be done is to indicate certain salient points and to make a tentative effort to apply these broad principles to present-day problems; with the help afforded by the history of the past, as we

learn it from theosophical teachings, and the revelation of the occult side of nature in those same teachings, it should be possible to shed some light on the conditions necessary for a satisfactory solution, and to see the place and working of the tendencies now in collision that should be brought into harmony. The conservative and the liberal in politics, the socialist and the individualist in economics, severally represent necessary factors in social evolution, and the man who could utilise them all putting each into his own place and holding all in balanced stability, would be a veritable saviour of society. This was done of old, we have learned, by the King Initiates, who in far-off ages gave to humanity its earliest lessons in social construction, and it may be—nay, the time shall surely come—that in another Golden Age it will again be done, in a fashion suited to more highly evolved souls and to a humanity grown out of infancy into manhood. Society must again be based on recognition of the fundamental laws of brotherhood, reincarnation, and karma, for these alone can unite progress with order, assign social functions with justice and ensure abundance of material goods with propriety of distribution. Ignorance of these facts has brought about anarchy; knowledge will give right government and the content that springs from justice.

Let us consider, first, the political problem: What should be the government of a nation, what its external organisation? A large body of thoughtful people though far less in number now than in the early days

of the century, concern themselves mainly with politics, regarding political order as the chief factor in national happiness. In considering the political aspect we will exclude the economic from view for a time, for the sake of clearness, and confine ourselves to the fashion of the instrument with which the law works in the nation. We are not here concerned with details, such as the political parties of any given time, or the way in which two or more sets of people may struggle for the direction of the government of a country; our study lies with the fundamental question of national organisation: "Where is the root of government, the source of authority?" This question must be answered in principle in one of two ways; however much the answer may be hedged about with qualifications, it can be ultimately reduced to a basic idea—that of monarchy or of democracy. At present among ourselves authority is supposed to grow from two roots, a limited monarchy and a limited democracy—a manifest compromise, a transitional state. Under monarchy come all the varieties of personal rule, wherein the ruler is ruler by virtue of some quality pertaining to himself, some inherent natural qualification acknowledged by the ruled as giving him sovereignty over them. Under democracy come all the varieties of national organisation based on some system of the election of the government by the governed, those in which the root of power lies in the ruled, not in the ruler. The executive may be called a monarch, a president, a dictator, a council, or anything

else, but he or it wields merely a delegated authority derived from the subjects, and resumable in the last resort by those who gave it.

Most people would probably say, at this point, that no discussion can arise in the present day between the principles of monarchy and democracy thus defined, and certainly very few persons would now accept the basic idea of monarchy, and frankly say that they believed in the "Divine Right of Kings." Yet, considering the part played by this idea in the history of the world, its endorsement by religion, and its acceptance by the wisest and best of our race in the past, its origin cannot be without interest. It comes down to us from the days of Lemuria and Atlantis, when perfected men belonging to an earlier humanity dwelt among our infant races and guided their earliest steps. They ruled the nations without question, in virtue of their manifest and unchallenged superiority, as a father rules his children; by their wisdom, compassion, and justice they enthroned the idea of monarchy in the hearts of men, and knit together in their minds religion and royalty, being in very truth to their peoples the representatives of God upon earth, embodying in their rule so much of the divine order as was suitable to the place and the time. There was no doubt in the minds of any as to the innate difference between the primitive kings and the nations that they ruled; they gave to the people their arts, their sciences, and their polity; they were at once their teachers and their guides; they built the outer fabric of

the nation, and nursed its dawning life. From those heroic figures of antiquity, encircled still with the magic of their deeds enshrined in myth and poem, there has come down an ideal of kingship in which the king was greater, wiser, nobler, diviner, than the people over whom he ruled, when his valour was their buckler and his wisdom their enlightener, where selfishness played no part, self-seeking held no place, when he gave himself and his life to the people, toiled that they might rest, waked that they might sleep, fasted that they might eat, when kingship meant supreme self-surrender in order that the nation might be guarded, taught, and raised.

When our own Aryan race was segregated, its Manu was naturally its king, and in his direct line were incarnated the mighty souls who carried on his work under his immediate supervision. The purest physical heredity, maintained by these great souls, afforded suitable encasement of flesh for these early monarchs, and the physical heredity remained when, in process of time, Initiates of lower rank incarnated in his family to continue the royal duties. Thus the divine right of kings became wedded to the idea of hereditary birth-right, and for tens of thousands of years the connection of the two was maintained—a view quite intelligible as a tradition from these earlier times. The King-Initiate did not become possessed of “divine right” because he was born in a given family; but having in himself the necessary qualities, he took birth in that given family as

the recognised and convenient method of obtaining the fealty of the nation, and the conditions suitable for training the new body and mind in which he was to function during that incarnation. An experienced and highly developed soul was chosen as ruler of a nation by the great spiritual hierarchy that guides the evolution of humanity; *there* lay the recognised root of supreme authority, that hierarchy being the vehicle of the Logo in the department of His realm we call our world. Hence such a soul came as ruler, dowered with the right divine to rule, delegated by the hierarchy that was the expression of the ruling life of the Logos, chosen for his fitness, his capacity, developed through hundreds of incarnations in all the ascending grades of a past humanity. The taking birth in a particular family was merely a convenient way of publicly designating the chosen ruler, so that the kingship might pass from one personality to another without confusion, jar, or strife. To the people for many ages that birth gave the right to rule them, they knowing not the facts behind the veil; only a tradition was handed down of a golden age when kings were gods, and the hereditary kings of late millenniums traced their ancestry back to some divine King; Son of the Sun, Son of Heaven—some such name was the proudest of their royal titles, until in the efflux of time the title was regarded as a superstition, the fact on which it was based being lost in the night of the past. As the souls that incarnated in the Âryan race to finish their human evolution passed on into loftier

regions, less developed souls stood at the head of humanity, and gradually, as the karma of the race accumulated, there was less and less direct interference by the Great Ones. The nursling had become the child on his own feet.

Less removed from their subjects in development, and not having yet outgrown the human weaknesses of selfishness, ambition, and pride, the kings began to use their unrestricted powers for their own advantage instead of for their people's good. Losing touch with their superiors in the invisible world, they lost the sense of responsibility to them, and gradually came to regard themselves as independent, and as arbitrary "lords over God's heritage." Then the people, misruled, began first to rebel against and later to limit the authority of their kings—feeling, truly enough, that monarchs who used their unbounded power to ensure enjoyment for themselves instead of welfare for their people, were no longer true incarnations of divine right. In Europe, the disappearance of the idea of reincarnation and karma intellectually involved the disappearance of the idea of hereditary divine right, while its practical destruction was brought about by the wickedness or mediocrity of the kings themselves. And yet if the idea of monarchy be admitted at all, we are brought logically to the view that the king must derive his authority from some invisible spiritual superior, who delegates to him the administration of a department in the divine world-government, and to that end invests him with the authority necessary for the

effective carrying on of the administration. There is an impassable gulf between the hereditary being ruling a nation for life and the minister elected by the nation to a certain post, with power revocable at will. A monarch who is not a monarch; a ruler who does not rule; a supreme head (in name) of a nation who at every point of activity is precluded from action; such a personage may be a most useful and admirable functionary, worthy of all respect, but his office is in a transitional condition and cannot permanently exist. He is too great not to be greater; too small not to be smaller. If he be "king by the grace of God" he should have the power and the responsibility of kingship as well as its name; if he be "king by the will of the people," holding his office by virtue of an election by the nation—an election declared and revocable by some assembly representing the nation—and deprived of all reality of power, the title of king is somewhat too splendid for the limited reality.

If we look back some thirty years, we shall find in England a fairly strong party representing the republican ideal. Any one who took a share in the political movements of that time will remember that a definite feeling in favour of republicanism was very widely spread, more especially among the manual workers, who displayed distinctly anti-monarchical sentiments. That feeling—as popular waves of feeling often are—was due to causes that had not in them the elements of permanency, and that have for the most part disappeared during the last

twenty years. Philosophic republicans there have always been, and they will continue to be, but we are concerned here with practical problems rather than with academical debates. The popular feeling which showed itself against the heir to the crown was chiefly due to what we are bound to admit was the lamentable example of reckless extravagance and carelessness of life shown by the then young man who stood highest on the steps of the throne. This feeling has subsided as years have brought dignity and sobriety in public life. Another thing that has contributed to make republicanism in England a practically dead issue is the obvious failure of that system alike in France and in the United States. In the latter country the failure is the most marked. The interference with private life, greater there than here; the increasing wars between capital and labour, waged with a terrible bitterness unknown in older lands, and with a violence on both sides that shocks humanity; the poverty which holds in its grip a huge population surrounded by natural advantages; the corruption and police oppression that are rotting municipal government; the withdrawal from public life of the most thoughtful and refined people, in consequence of the intolerable conditions connected with it, conditions such that the very name of "politician" has become a reproach; all these and other causes have brought about a complete disillusion as to republicanism in action, whatever arguments may be adduced for it theoretically by those who believe in human equality.

Men who twenty years ago were concerned in questions of government have now for the most part passed on into questions of economics, and declare that whatever may be the form of government, it is a sound economic system which is needed to make a nation prosperous, contented, and happy.

We may then put aside the issue as between monarchy and republicanism, as not coming within practical purview. And as though to mark its unreality there stands the wonderful celebration of the year 1897, acclaiming the conclusion of the sixty years of rule by our present monarch. Every one admits—no matter what may be his personal opinions or prejudices—that we witnessed an unexampled uprising of sentiment in every part of the English-speaking world, an uprising that submerged for the time every other feeling. England and all her colonies were swept by one wave of enthusiastic devotion to the sovereign who sits on the throne of this vast empire, and all observers were struck by the strength and the passion of the sentiment, the hold it had on the popular heart, the transfiguring effect on the object of that devotion. The truth is that, deep in the heart of nations, despite all the crimes that evil kings have wrought, there lives a passionate desire to look up and see as the Head of the nation one human being who incarnates all it has of greatness, of glory, and of power, who stands as its symbol to the world. This tendency in human nature seems to be ineradicable, and its strength is witnessed by its survival through all strain

of royal crimes. History testifies to the fact that extremity of misery and despair has ever been needed to goad a nation into revolt.

Rebellion is not the natural tendency of the human brain and heart. Man desires with a passionaté longing to be taught, to be guided, to be ruled, as is shown by the pathetic inextinguishable loyalty of the masses to one man after another who rises into power on their shoulders. But man also demands that the one who claims to teach shall be able to teach ; that the one who stands as guide shall be able to guide ; that the one who is crowned as ruler should be able to rule. In this country, amid our political parties, there is no one man who stands out as leader, whom all would unitedly acclaim as great, who incarnates the ideal of a nation's Head. Were it possible that in a royal House a man should be born with the genius of a Ruler, with the power to awaken popular enthusiasm, with the brain to guide the nation, and the heart to love the people with a wise and all-embracing tenderness, seeing their sufferings, understanding the causes, and applying with a firm unflinching hand the sufficient remedies, then should we see what loyalty means in the heart of a nation, and the power that such a one would wield, amid glad assent, to eradicate wrongs and establish better conditions, with all the concentrated force and directness of an individual will, guided by a keen intellect and a noble heart. Government would no longer be a series of compromises arrived at by decisions depending on the varying strength of parties, but a

clear rational application of definite principles to definite ends.

In our own days the study of economics is leading many into various forms of Socialism. These forms are all democratic, and are based, explicitly or implicitly, on the assumption of the basic rights of man, and the counting of heads. The majority of heads is to fix the form of government, no matter what the contents of the heads may be. Empty ones, if the hands connected with them can scratch a cross on a ballot-paper, are to count as much as full ones, the drunken profligate is to balance the noblest sage. Truly it is said that under a proper system there would be no empty heads and no drunken profligates ; but the proper system is yet to be established, and social derelicts are meantime to have an equal hand in making it, and to form part of the materials out of which it is to be constructed. "The sovereign people" cannot logically exclude any. This is the rock on which democratic socialism must split. It is the condition of success in all compulsory or voluntary groupings of men for the attainment of an object, that the head of the association shall be superior in faculty, knowledge, and grip of the whole situation to those who compose the active constituents of the working body ; if he cannot rule and they cannot obey, disaster is certain. Hence the manifold failures in co-operative production. The head of a business, the captain of a ship, the general of an army, the principal of a college, the father of a family—each of these must be superior to his subordinates in the

matter in hand, else chaos results. Only in a democratic State are the ruled supposed to elect the ruler, an equal to govern equals.

It is argued that a man might be elected to a position of authority and be vested with full power during the period of his official status ; it is, however, very difficult for the official superior to impose a strict discipline on and to control effectually those to whom he is ultimately responsible, and by whom he may be ejected ; the prompt obedience necessary to success is also not easily yielded by those in whose hands is the power of throwing off their chief. Even were these difficulties overcome, greater ones remain behind ; in voluntary associations trust must be given to the elected officer, while he must be ruled by a sense of keenest honour to do his duty to the full ; these qualities are lacking both in men and their chosen leaders for the most part, as is evidenced by the bitter suspicions of his fellows, that have broken many a labour leader's heart after fettering his energies for years, and by the failures in integrity among officials that have so hampered trade organisations. Trust and high honour are among the noblest and rarest of human qualities at the present stage of evolution, yet without the general diffusion of these democratic Socialism must fail.

If we look at governing bodies belonging to the State—such as socialistic communities would organise—we see staring us in the face the hideous difficulty of corruption. Men elected to office are continually found using their office for personal gain. In democratic

America municipal and other public bodies are sinks of corruption, and there is scarcely any attempt to hide the fact that officials must be bribed when any undertaking is in question with which they are able to interfere. Where are we to find the men who may be trusted with office and will not turn it to their own ends? Such men are found where office is accepted for love of country and from traditional sense of obligation to the public service, but—until human nature be changed—such qualities are not to be found often in those who seek elective office as a means of livelihood.

That a noble form of Society is possible in which all the forces of the State shall be organised to subserve the general good, and in which all the plenty and happiness for which Socialists are rightly yearning shall be realised, is indeed a truth, as we shall presently see. But it will not be what we now call democratic, for democracy runs counter to the all-compelling laws of nature.

The fundamental error on which this system is based is the idea that "men are born equal," the keynote of the "declaration of the rights of man," which was the legacy of the last century to the present. Truly if men were born into this world but once, this fundamental error ought in justice to be a natural truth, and each man should be as good as any one else, and have equal rights in the community. If the soul be newly created when it comes into the world in a new body, or if, as some think, man is only a body; if every one now living in England was born for the first time during the present century

and will pass away from earth for ever when the grave closes over his head or the fire consumes his body ; if our only experience of earthly life lies in this brief space which stretches from the cradle behind us to the grave in front of us ; then we might expect that one man should not be innately wiser or better than another, one fitted to rule, another only fitted to obey.

As we know by observation, men are not born equal but very unequal ; some with tendencies to virtue, others to vice ; some with genius, others with narrowest intellect. Never can a stable society be built if we start by disregarding nature, and treat as having right to equal power the ignorant and the wise, the intellectual and the stupid, the criminal and the saintly ; on that uneven ground no edifice that will endure can ever be based. Yet if man be born but once, it would be unjust to build on any other foundation ; for it would be a shocking injustice to subordinate one man to another, save by his own free choice, if both come freshly to the world, neither having learned anything, nor struggled, nor experienced, in former lives. In such case it would seem as though every one had an equal right to everything, and should have his equal turn at governing among the rest ; ignorance should have as great a voice in the guiding of a nation as wisdom, and a free fight and free scramble should give each man his chance in so irrational a world.

Nor are matters mended if "equal" be translated to mean "should have equal opportunities," for to give

equal opportunities to the unequally equipped is to condemn the weaker to perish in the struggle for existence. We have, in our selfishness, left the weaker as a prey to the stronger, instead of training the stronger to regard his strength as imposing on him heavier responsibilities—among which are the helping and protecting of the weaker. Our economic system is one of free combat, with the inevitable “Woe to the vanquished.” In former days it was a battle of bodies, now it is chiefly a battle of minds, but a battle none the less. We have learned that a man must not use his muscles to plunder his neighbour ; we have yet to learn that he must not use his brains to the same end. It is no more right to trample on others because we are cleverer, smarter, shrewder than they, than in the days that are called barbarous it was right for a man to use his strength to rob, to crush, to enslave. The free combat that we call “civilisation” is not a state that can endure. I am not denying the necessity of passing through this stage in evolution, in order that the individual may be developed, but am looking to the next stage, for which we may rightly begin to work.

No one with a human heart in him can go through one of our great cities, seeing the condition of thousands of our people, realising the hopelessness of them for those who are born into them, without feeling a bitter pain, even if he think the state of things to be without remedy. To see into what surroundings children are born, how they grow up, how their parents live and die—

these things are enough to break the heart if it be not wise enough to understand, and strong enough to labour. And I, for one, cannot have harsh condemnation for words, however wild, and schemes, however ill-considered, that spring from suffering, misery, and starvation, embittered by ignorance alike of causes and of ends. I have seen too much of the life of the poor, of the wearing anxiety and blinding pain, of the brutalisation and crushing out of hope and energy, to feel aught but tenderest compassion for their woes and sympathy with the motive that underlies all honest efforts for their relief. The wildest words are often but cries of pain, half-inarticulate, born of the blind feeling that something is wrong and of ignorance how to change, of the despair that grows out of patience long outworn and breaking hearts that find no help in man or God.

The worst of all is that this is of modern development and belongs especially to western lands ; it is not of more than a century and a quarter's growth, and dates from the substitution in general use of machinery for handicrafts. The huge aggregations of population brought about by the methods of production are the superficial cause of much of the degradation ; another of these causes is the crushing out of individual faculty. In the older days those who were employed in supplying objects needed by the community were men who, to a great extent, had joy in their work, the joy of the creator in his finished product. The craftsman of days not long gone by was an artist in a humble way, and his faculties

were drawn out by the effort to invent, to improve, to adorn his work. Looking back even a couple of hundred years to the things in common use amongst us, we find everywhere traces of the individual hand and fancy. Farmhouses are still found where treasures of oaken tables, dressers, chests, &c., have come down in the family for generations, and these things in common use are eagerly bought up by connoisseurs, though but the work of ordinary craftsmen, often of "farm-hands," who in the long winter's evenings—as still in Norway and Sweden—would carve rough copies of flowers and twisted stems, adding a leaf or a bud or a tendril as the whim suggested itself, or some onlooker put in his word.

It is not, of course, possible to turn back the wheels of time and bring back the era of handicraft, even though it was more conducive to widespread comfort and development than the era of machinery in which we live. Machinery is here, and is here to stay, and we must adapt our society to the new conditions. As yet we have taken no steps to meet the difficulties caused by it, nor to make up for the deprivations imposed by it on manual workers employed on it. More and more in our modern life the man who tends a machine is becoming a machine himself, a flesh and blood lever of the thing of steel and iron. He is deprived of the joy of the artist and becomes an automaton, turning out millions of fragments, say the heads of pins, but never an entire thing in which he can take delight or pride, into which he can put himself, which makes him feel himself to be a living man

and not a mere hand to produce. The brains of a large number of those from whom the bulk of the nation is born are thus being partially atrophied and the physical development of the workers is injured.

Not without incurring a national Nemesis may a nation allow millions of its workers to be thus arrested in their growth. Into the lower physical types born of parents thus stunted can only come souls of low development, for nations, like individuals, reap that which they sow. If men's faculties are no longer, under modern conditions, cultivated *in* their labour as they used to be, then the enormous increase of the powers of production due to machinery must be utilised to give more leisure to the machine-workers, so that their faculties may be cultivated *outside* their labour. The English workman of the past was more of a *man* than is his compeer of to-day, and if we would not see the nation composed of souls of lower types it is necessary to redress the balance. The stunting of the mind in mechanical work is the justification of the cry for shorter hours of labour, and should be met by the co-operation of all classes of the commonwealth in bringing them about. It is not labour that takes the heart out of a man, but the dwarfing, stunting, deadening labour to which so many myriads are now condemned. Where such labour is necessary it should be brief, and should be balanced by the cultivation of faculties at other times. Otherwise our system tends to the dissolution instead of to the evolution of society.

The Theosophist, believing in reincarnation and

karma, is able to see the roots of our social troubles and their remedy, and to work patiently in sure dependence on the law. He sees that the ideals of society must be changed, and that the Socialists are aiming at a right end—the general happiness—by mistaken methods. And he finds in the history of the past social conditions brought about, and for a time superintended, by Adepts, that they realised the most beautiful dreams of the idealist Socialist, while the basis and the methods were entirely different from those of the modern schools. Ere considering these, let us see the ideals which are created by a belief in reincarnation and karma.

Reincarnation implies the evolution of the soul, and when evolution is recognised equality is seen to be a delusion. Evolution is as a ladder up the steps of which humanity is climbing, and all men do not stand on the same rung. As evolution is a matter in which time plays the greatest part—at any rate until a late stage of growth—difference of stage in evolution implies difference of time during which the evolving entity has been climbing up the ladder. In other words souls, while eternal in their essence, are of different ages in their individuality, and herein lies the fundamental natural truth on which a stable human society must be based. For the ideal then of organisation based on the mutual contracts of individuals of equal age, each born with equal rights, we must substitute the ideal of a family, the members of which are of different ages, each born into duties dependent on the faculties they bring with them. The

family, not the chartered company, is to be the ideal of the State ; the discharge of duties, not the enforcing of rights, is to be the keynote of the individual life.

As evolution of the soul comes to be recognised as a factor which must enter into the organisation of society, the corollary that evolution is by law will also be accepted—karma will accompany reincarnation. Then the faculties with which a man is born will mark his stage in evolution, and will therefore determine his position in the State. And as the law guides the soul into the environment it has rendered necessary by its past actions, so in a State that was a living natural organism instead of a legal machine, souls would be as normally guided to the social grade fitted for the working out of the results of their past and their own further evolution, as in the building of the human frame the necessary materials are guided to where nerve or bone is required. Abnormal cases would appear, owing to the complexity of the causes generated by the past, but could be met, as we shall see, by special methods.

From this way of regarding the State, as an organisation based on natural laws and intended to aid and further the progress in evolution of every soul entering into it, certain principles of conduct will flow. In the family the heaviest burdens are borne by the elders and not by the children ; the youngest are carefully trained, tenderly guarded, shielded from trouble, anxiety, and undue strain. If food run short, it is not the children who are first stinted ; if anything be lacking, the elders

bear the suffering and strive to let the children feel no want. Their greater strength is regarded as imposing on them responsibilities and duties, not as giving the right to plunder and oppress. These principles are to be worked out in the solution of social problems, and we may now turn to the question of their practical application in sociology.

In the early systems of sociology, imposed by authority on infant races by their Initiate Rulers, all that modern Socialism aims at for the benefit of the masses—and far more—was definitely secured. Provision was made for the abundant production of all the necessities of life, for the training of varied types of mind to the best advantage, for the full evolution of all the faculties brought by each with him into the world, and for the direction of the energies of each into the channel best fitted for their utilisation and development. The conception of the social scheme was due to the divinely illuminated wisdom of perfected men, and its administration was confided to the most advanced souls of our own humanity, working in graduated order under the immediate direction of the King-Initiate. The basic principles of this scheme may be thus stated: government is a task demanding the highest human qualities, spiritual and intellectual, and to be rightly carried on must be undertaken in the spirit of entire self-abnegation and of devotion to the common weal, the highest being most completely the servant of all; the more highly developed the man the more highly placed

should he be in the social order, and the heavier therefore his responsibilities; further, the smaller will be his personal demand on material resources, his nature expanding itself chiefly in the mental and spiritual worlds, and being related to the material for service rather than for enjoyment; the governing class should therefore consist of the wisest, the purest, the most self-denying of the nation, those who can see the farthest and who ask for themselves the least, who have their hearts set on the common good, who count no labour heavy that promotes the general growth and happiness, who seek nothing but give everything, who are wise by ages of experience, and who having learned the lessons of the world are able to apply them to the circumstances of the day. The first duty of the government is to maintain in comfort, prosperity, and suitable conditions for progress, the less developed types, needing for their happiness abundance of material goods; these things are requisite alike for their evolution and their contentment, and the smaller their resources within themselves the larger are necessarily their demands on the outer world. Abundance can only be provided by labour, and to avoid waste of energy the labour must be carefully organised, directed into the most fruitful channels, and guided to the most efficient co-operation. This can only be done by those who have the whole field under their eyes, and can thus dispose of the available energies to the best advantage. The undeveloped must yield labour and obedience in exchange for comfort and absence of

material care ; by this labour and obedience their mental and moral qualities are evolved and trained, fitting them in later birth to take a higher position in the State.

Avoiding details, which varied at different times and places, the general scheme placed the responsibility for the organisation and direction of labour within a given area on the officials administering the area ; each governmental unit formed part of a larger unit, and training in the smaller units prepared for the administration of the larger ; famine or any scarcity of the comforts of life, discontent, uneasiness, crime, ignorance—these things being regarded as due to the fault of the administrators, each ruler was called to account by his immediate superior for the prevalence in his district of any of these evils, rightly regarded as evitable. The ruler was there to direct labour, to ensure education, to equalise distribution, to repress violence, to decide disputes, to keep order, to promote happiness ; if he could not do these things he was unfit to rule and must give place to a better man. He might be the ruler of a village, of a town, of villages and towns aggregated into a province, of provinces grouped into a viceroyalty, but whatever the size of his district, he was responsible for its good government ; and all were thus held responsible, from the pettiest village official up to the highest governors holding directly from the monarch, the monarch answering to the occult hierarchy only. He appointed some as his viceroys over grouped provinces, these in turn appointed the rulers of provinces, and these again the

subordinate officials, and so on to the end of the ladder ; thus was ensured a graduated and orderly administration, which served at once as a government machinery and a training ground for the evolving souls who constituted it, its highest and most responsible members being Initiates. It will be observed that this whole system made the lower and less evolved subordinate to the higher and more evolved throughout ; each rendered obedience to his superiors and received it from his inferiors, and the responsibility of each was to those above him, never to those below. Hence "rights" had no place, "duties" only were recognised, but these duties imposed on the more evolved the obligation to provide for the less evolved everything that could conduce to their growth, their happiness, and their improvement. All was given, nothing was snatched, and consequently there was order and contentment instead of struggle.

— The land belonged to the monarch, but was divided as to control into definite portions, assigned to the different classes. One half was set aside for the producers engaged in active work and for their families ; the second half was again divided, one portion of it going to the monarch, and supporting the whole governing class, and such imperial charges as the defence of the nation, the keeping up of internal communications, and similar necessities for the people as a whole ; the administration of justice, like the rest of the work of this governing class, entailed no direct charges, all the officials being supported from this land. The second portion of the

half of the land went to the priesthood, who formed a class apart, side by side with the governing class, and were charged with the public education; the whole of this education, again, for children and youths, entailed no direct charges, the priests being the teaching class of the nation; this land further supported all sick and incapable persons, and all—outside the governing class—who had passed middle age, generally fixed at about forty-five. The period of labour extended over only about twenty-five years; before it, the youth was educated, and after it his time was given to the leisurely development of whatever faculties he had evolved. The admirable organisation of labour rendered it so productive that this ample leisure could be secured to all the producing class, thus ensuring their definite evolution in each life-period. The half of the land used for the governing and priestly classes was cultivated by the manual workers, this labour being their contribution to the State. Among the institutions maintained by the land of the priesthood in each province were central agricultural colleges and experimental farms, where professors and students were constantly engaged in the scientific study of agriculture; it was their duty to improve the methods of cultivation, to make experiments in cross-breeding plants and animals, to search for new ways of utilising natural forces, of enriching the soil, &c. Any discovery was tested on these government farms, and all the information gathered was circulated among the cultivators by popular teachers; improved breeds of cattle, grains and

seeds were distributed through the province, and all that science and trained intelligence could devise was placed at the general service, being freely imparted to the workers. Agricultural work was further assisted by the publication throughout the year of the best times for the various field and garden operations, astronomy and astrology being utilised for the prediction of the changes of the weather, early and late seasons, favourable and unfavourable magnetic conditions, &c. All this work was demanded from the official class as their contribution to the State, even more rigidly than labour was exacted from the manual workers, for the pressure of opinion and the accepted code of honour prevented dereliction of public duty. One principle of administration was significant of the spirit in which the business of the nation was carried on: in times of scarcity of grain, the land of the priests was first sown, then that of the people, lastly that of the king and officials; if irrigation failed, the water was supplied in the same order. The children, sick, aged, and superannuated, considered as the weakest members of the national household, were those whose needs were the first to be supplied; burdens must fall on the elder and the stronger, not on the feeblest.

The products of a district were gathered into central granaries and storehouses for distribution as needed, the methods of distribution varying much with time and place. In good seasons the surplus products were stored for use in times of scarcity—a custom we find

surviving in Egypt in historical times. This centralising of the products of a district and their careful distribution enabled the results of improved cultivation and of mineral discoveries to be shared among all, the whole family, as it were, profiting by any advance. Further, a competence was assured to each and harassing anxiety as to the means of subsistence was unknown—that anxiety which breeds desperation in the undeveloped soul, and renders impossible the evolution of higher qualities.

Education was universal, but was adapted to the life that was to be led; reading and writing were not, as now, considered indispensable, but all who showed capacity for study were instructed in these instruments of learning and were then sent on from the primary to the secondary schools; thus children born into any class could rise out of it if they brought with them into the world capacities fitting them to rise, *but not otherwise*. The bulk of the population were trained in technical schools for agriculture or handicrafts, according to their tendencies, the capacities of the child deciding his walk in life, but a sound knowledge of his work was always imparted to him, so that he might perform his duties intelligently and with pleasure. The children of the governing and priestly classes, together with the pick of the working population, boys and girls, received a careful educational training, specialised to meet individual tendencies after the broad and deep foundation had been laid. Religious, moral, and physical education was universal, varying in

character according to the capacities and future work of the pupil, and no pains were spared to develop to the utmost the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties of those destined to guide and rule the community; above all were they trained to regard duty as all-compelling, and self-abnegation and hard work as the inevitable accompaniments of high station; this austere training and this rigorous exaction of duty from the young who were to be highly placed may be found recounted both in fourth and fifth race literature, and those who fancy that ancient rulers were mere luxurious idlers might well correct their ideas from the extant accounts. The hours of work for the labourer were short, his life was free from anxiety, and he was discharged from hard work ere old age overtook him; but the ruler must work as long as any needed him, all the responsibility of the welfare of the community weighed on him, and death alone lifted from his shoulders the burden of duty to his people.

Looking back to that ancient time and comparing it with the present, we naturally ask why so noble a system faded away, and why man passed into a state of struggle. As souls less highly evolved succeeded to the post originally held by the Divine Kings and the Initiates of various grades, the powers wielded by the rulers were prostituted to selfish purposes instead of being devoted to the common good. Rulers failing in their duties, discontent took birth among the peoples, tyranny bred hatred, and oppression begot rebellion.

Was this a necessary stage in human evolution? It would seem so. Man in his early days was child, not man; he was in the nursery and the school, and the troubles of his manhood lay in the future. Between the stage when humanity was an infant, guided, taught, and trained by divine Teachers and their immediate pupils, and the stage of divine Manhood when each shall have the law within him instead of without him, there stretches a long and weary struggle, a time of hopes disappointed, of efforts continually frustrated, of attempts breaking down, of experiments and failures. This is a time of transition, like that of early manhood, and humanity is like the young man or woman who thinks that he can set everything right in a moment, that the wisdom of the ages is as nothing beside his keen insight, that only the sloth and stupidity of his elders stand in the way of the abolition of every abuse and the righting of every wrong. Everybody else has failed, but he will succeed; he will solve in a moment the problems of ages, and in a few years the world will be happy. So the surging democracies of modern days are very young; one moment all will be right if we get rid of a king; next moment all is saved if an Established Church be crushed; yet again, happiness is secured if capitalists be destroyed. All superficial enough truly, as we see as experience ripens and we recognise that our difficulties are rooted in the lack of development in our own natures. Yet may it not be that through these very struggles, these shiftings of power, these experi-

ments in government, these failures of the ignorant, the experience may be gained which shall again place the hand of the wisest on the helm of the state, and make virtue, self-sacrifice, and high intelligence indispensable conditions for rule? Passengers do not take turns on the bridge of the ship to navigate the ocean; the skilled workman does not entrust his delicate machine to the loafer; the crossing-sweeper is not called in to perform a delicate surgical operation. And it may be that by failure and by social revolutions, if by no other way, we may learn that the guiding of a nation, politically and economically, is not best done by the ignorant or even by amateurs, but demands the highest qualities of head and heart.

In economics also it is probable that this stage of competition and misery was necessary for the evolution of individuality, and that man needed to grow first by combat of bodies and then by combat of brains, by the constant claim of the individual to plunder according to his powers and his opportunities. None the less it is true that this stage shall be outgrown, and we shall learn to substitute co-operation for competition, brotherhood for strife. But we can only outgrow it by cultivating unselfishness, trust, high character, and sense of duty, for we must improve ourselves ere the body politic of which we are constituent parts can be healthy.

But how to find a motor power to bring about such changes? While steadily disciplining and training ourselves, we can place before our fellows ideals which shall

be so wise, so well considered, that they shall win the allegiance of the intellect as well as satisfy the cravings of the heart. We must change our estimate of the relative value of things, and substitute intellectual and spiritual wealth for material riches as a standard of social consideration. May it not be possible to influence public opinion to value men and women for greatness in intellect and virtue, in self-surrender and devotion, and not for wealth or luxury?—making the multiplicity of material wants the recognised mark of inferior development, and simple and pure living hand in hand with richness of the higher nature the title to honour. May not the wealthy learn that it is an essentially infantile view of man to value him by his show instead of by his worth, by the number of his material wants rather than by the grandeur of his spiritual aspirations? Wherever the ideal is the possession of material goods combat must be the social condition, since material goods perish in the using, and possession by one excludes possession by another. Intellectual, artistic, spiritual wealth increase in the sharing, each who shares adding to the store. This is the fundamental reason why progress towards peace and contentment must be towards intellectuality, artistic development, and spiritual life, and not towards material splendour and the vulgarity of outer ostentation. These are for the undeveloped, the others for the developed. And inasmuch as the ignorant will copy the more advanced and the lowly the highly placed, the example must be set by those who lead the social and intellectual

world. Moreover they would themselves gain by the change in so far as they lead luxurious lives, for the pampering of the body is even more fatal to the growth of the higher nature than is the stern discipline of poverty. Man need demand from the outer world no more than absence of harassing anxiety; sufficiency, not luxury; beauty and harmony, not ostentation; leisure, not exhausting toil; time and opportunity to develop the God in him, not the overfeeding of the animal.

Further, we must have faith in humanity and appeal to what is best in man, not to what is worst. It is not true that it is necessary to build society on selfishness and to rely on selfish instincts. That which is deepest in man is not the animal, and to mould society for the brute that man is outgrowing is to build on a sinking foundation. It is a curious illustration of this that even with men of poor moral development honour is more compelling than law, and social opinion than legislation. A man will ruin himself to pay a "debt of honour" while he seeks to evade a debt enforceable by law—a perverted sense of duty, truly, but still eloquent of the important truth that more can be done by appealing to a sense of obligation imposed by the social opinion surrounding a man than by compulsion of an impersonal law. If the sense of honour, of duty to a class, can be expanded to include the nation, we shall have at work in our midst the most binding form of obligation. Duty will become the keynote of life, each asking "What do I owe?" instead of "What can I successfully demand?"

It seems possible that in the future we may arrive, even by the slow method of failure, at some scheme of government in which the wisest shall hold the reins of power, and obedience shall be gladly rendered to recognised superiors ; and at some economic system in which wealth shall be distributed according to needs. Then the maxim will be acted upon—noblest of all maxims when given by love, not grasped by hate—“ From every man according to his capacities ; to every man according to his needs.” That which has been the battle-cry of men maddened by suffering shall become the axiom of distribution in the rational human family.

Most certainly the putting forward of such ideas as are here suggested will not change social conditions in a moment, but no permanent improvement can be wrought in sudden fashion. Yet are they on the line of progress, of the upward evolution of man. The majority of men on the earth to-day are men of the fourth race, but the fifth race—the keynote of which is individualism—is leading human development. The dawn of the sixth race is yet afar in the future, and of that the keynote will be unity not individualism, brotherhood not combat, service not oppression, spirit not intellect. And the birthmark of the spirit is the longing to pour itself out in sacrifice, never asking what it can take but only what it can give. The fundamental unity of mankind is the central truth of the coming race, and the nation which first grasps and practises that great conception will lead the future, humanity falling into line behind it. Those

who see it, who teach it, may fail for the moment, but in their failure is the seed of inevitable success.

It is for us who are Theosophists, who hold as truth the spiritual unity of mankind, to put our belief into practice by teaching peace, brotherhood, the drawing together of classes, the removing of antipathies, the recognition of mutual duty ; let the strongest do the best service, the wisest the loftiest teaching ; let us all be willing to learn and ready to share ; so shall we hasten the dawn of a better day, and prepare the earth to receive the coming race.

PROBLEMS OF RELIGION.

To the true Theosophist every man's religion is a sacred thing, and he would not consciously jar on the feelings of any ; for whether a statement of religious truth be adequate or inadequate, crude or well-considered, it is sacred for the one who accepts it as embodying his special ideal. We may rightly use our keenest intelligence and our most patient thought in searching for the wisest and most adequate presentations of things spiritual ; but on the other hand we do well to remember that spiritual truths are so many-sided that the utmost the intellect can do at one time, is to present a single aspect of such a truth. Even when that aspect is given in a crude form, it but shares the crudity of all intellectual statements of spiritual truths, the difference between the crude and the polished being but a difference of degree, not of kind. We might put side by

side, for instance, the crudest idea of God that might be obtained from the most ignorant costermonger and the subtlest conception formed by the loftiest philosopher, and might be struck by the wide discrepancy ; yet if that same subtle conception could be compared with the adoring thought of a lofty spiritual Intelligence, able to live consciously in the splendour of the Logos, we might realise that any thoughts of God that can express themselves through the physical brain can only represent degrees of inaccuracy, grotesque in their inadequacy. Even the greatest of spiritual Seers must fail when he seeks to lisp in mortal numbers the glory of the Vision that blinds his raptured gaze ; much more then, when we are dealing with the ideas of Deity formulated by half-developed men and women like ourselves, may we learn humility and charity in criticising—if we must criticise—our brother's faith. It is wiser to seek, even in the strangest view, for a faint suggestion of an aspect that we may have missed, than to use our critical fangs to rend in pieces an idea which is helping some human soul to rise, and is evolving in some undeveloped intelligence the germs of aspiration and worship.

Therefore in dealing with some of the Problems of Religion, I shall seek at least to deal with them reverently, careful to avoid jarring on human feelings, and mindful of the maxim, "Nothing that is human is alien to me." In indicating the lines along which, in the light of Theosophy, solutions seem possible, I would not force on any reader ideas which are unacceptable to

his own reason and intuition, for the thought on religion which a man originates is far more helpful to him than the parrot-repetition of words that do not represent his individual conception of truth.

There are five problems of religion which stand out as of perennial and universal interest, and while each might well demand a volume for itself for adequate treatment, it may not prove useless to present them with brevity, showing how the theosophic method is at once suggestive and illuminative ; for very often in religion, as in ethics and sociology, it reconciles the adherents of opposing schools by harmonising concepts that are superficially discordant, proving them to be facets of the same truth when their mutual relations are seen. These five are as follows : the nature of God in manifestation ; the existence and growth of the human soul ; freewill and necessity ; the place of prayer in the religious life ; the atonement.

First let us take up the problem of problems, that of the existence of God and the conceptions of Divinity formulated by man. There is one fundamental principle that must be recognised in approaching this problem—the unity of existence. If God and man be regarded as basically different, a mighty unspanned gulf stretching between them, then the problem of the divine existence and of man's relation thereto seems to frown upon us as defying solution. But if God and man be seen as of one essence, humanity as an offshoot of the one Tree of Life, and as one of myriad offshoots, sub-human and super-

human—one radiant arch of beings, each instinct with divine life—then the question as it affects man appears as by no means a hopeless one. The West, tending to the former conception—that of a fundamental difference of nature between “the Creator and the created”—has swung between the unacceptable extremes of crude, anthropomorphic Monotheism and philosophic Agnosticism; the East, founding its religions on the second conception—that of unity—has contentedly accepted a religious Pantheism as intellectually necessary and as emotionally satisfying. Pantheism in the West has hitherto been an exotic, and has appealed strongly only to the highly intellectual; its God has remained a cold abstraction, intellectually sublime but emotionally chill. In the East, Pantheism, while asserting as clearly as possible the One Existence, meeting all intellectual difficulties by the affirmation of the universality of that Existence—God is everything and everything is God—yet passed naturally into the recognition of endless gradations of Beings expressing very various measures of the divine Life, some so lofty in their nature, so vast in their power, so far-reaching in the range of their consciousness, that they include every element that Christian Monotheism has found necessary for the satisfaction alike of the intellect and of the heart.

It is apparent in reviewing Christian Monotheism that any one who approaches the study of the divine Existence from the standpoint of the intelligence is sure ultimately to land himself in Pantheism; if he does not openly

reach it, it is because he shrinks from formulating the logical conclusion from his premises. No better example of the inevitableness of this conclusion can be found than the Bampton Lectures of the late Dean Mansel; following purely metaphysical lines, he saw himself led more than once into the "dreary desolation of a pantheistic wilderness," and so passionately did his heart revolt against a view that robbed him—as he misconceived Pantheism—of his Father in heaven, that he flung aside the irresistible conclusions of his logic and took refuge in the dicta of revelation, as a shelter from the arid glare of an empty sky and a barren land. The Eastern Pantheism—which, as already said, posits a universal existence in which all beings are rooted, and accepts to the fullest the belief that in God "we live and move and have our being"—recognises also that the divine Life manifests itself in modes of existence which bridge over the gulf between man and God manifesting as God. It acknowledges mighty Intelligences who rule the invisible and visible worlds, the presiding Gods who guide the order of nature and watch over the destinies of men, the agents of the supreme Will in every department of life, the fitting objects of reverence and of worship. Just in proportion as the existence of these great Beings is recognised and enters practically into human life—whatever may be the name given to them—is religion strong against the attacks of Agnosticism and unbelief. For these ranks of spiritual Beings, rising in ascending hierarchies till they culminate in the supreme God of the

system to which they belong, give to men intelligible ideals of divinity, which rise as they rise, expand with the expansion of their consciousness, and meet at every stage of evolution the craving of the human heart for some superior Being far above itself, whom it can love, trust, reverence, worship, appeal to for aid when human help is far. It makes possible and real the "Father in heaven" for the child and the peasant as well as for the philosopher, presenting for adoration the concrete Being with enlarged faculties and powers that the heart is ever seeking. The just arguments of the metaphysician and the logician, against the existence of a God at once infinite and personal, have shattered themselves time after time against the immovable conviction of the spirit in man that it is akin to, is the offspring of, some mighty divine Being, and man has doggedly refused to surrender his conception of such a Being—however illogical it might be—until a higher conception was offered including everything he was seeking in the lower.

This view of the life-side of the kosmos is one that in no way outrages reason or transcends possibility; on this the statement of an avowed Agnostic may help us: "Looking at the matter from the most rigidly scientific point of view, the assumption that, amidst the myriads of worlds scattered through endless space, there can be no intelligence, as much greater than man's as his is greater than a black beetle's; no being endowed with powers of influencing the course of nature as much greater than his, as his is greater than a snail's,⁴ seems

to me not merely baseless, but impertinent. Without stepping beyond the analogy of that which is known, it is easy to people the cosmos with entities, in ascending scale, until we reach something practically indistinguishable from omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. If our intelligence can, in some matters, surely reproduce the past of thousands of years ago, and anticipate the future, thousands of years hence, it is clearly within the limits of possibility that some greater intellect, even of the same order, may be able to mirror the whole past and the whole future; if the universe is penetrated by a medium of such a nature that a magnetic needle on the earth answers to a commotion in the sun, an omnipresent agent is also conceivable; if our insignificant knowledge gives us some influence over events, practical omniscience may confer indefinitely greater power.”* This possibility of the learned Agnostic is known as truth by the Seer, and moreover it represents the life-side as corresponding with the form-side delineated by science. For the worlds around us are at various stages of evolution and are grouped in an ascending order. Our own planet is part of a group of planets, having their common centre in the sun; our solar system is part of a group of systems, having their common centre in a distant star; probably

* *Essays upon some Controverted Questions*, by T. H. Huxley, p. 36, ed. 1892. It is not pretended that Dr. Huxley believed that things *are* so; wise men, he thought, would say “not proven,” and be agnostics.

that group of systems, again, has a common centre with other similar groups of systems, and so on and on. Thus the universe is seen as made up of departments, each successive unit forming a section in a wider department—graded hierarchies of forms. The analogy of nature thus leads us to look for similarly graded hierarchies of living Intelligences, guiding the forms, and we are thus brought face to face with the Gods.

Occultism teaches us that over each department in nature there presides a spiritual Intelligence; to put the matter in a more concrete form, over our solar system presides a mighty Being, the LOGOS, the manifested God of that system. He would be called the Father by the Christian, Ishvara by the Hindu, Allah by the Muhammedan. His consciousness is active at every point in His kosmos; His life sustains it, His power guides it, everywhere within it He is present, strong to help, mighty to save. Dimly we know that beyond Him there are yet greater Ones, but for us it is easier to conceive of the Power that maintains our system, to whom we are definitely related, than of the vaster Consciousness which includes myriad systems within His realm. Each LOGOS is to His own universe the central object of adoration, and His radiant ministers are rightly worshipped by those who cannot rise to the conception of this central Deity. As the intelligent beings within His kingdom rise higher on the ladder of evolution, their ideal of God enlarges, deepens, and expands; at each point of their growth their ideal shines alluringly

above them—narrow enough at the lowest point to meet the needs of the most limited intelligence, vast enough at a higher to task the intellect of the profoundest thinker. Thus a conception of Deity may be found which is intelligible to the child, to the ignorant, to the undeveloped, and which is to them inspiring, consoling, and sublime. If a lofty conception were offered to them, they would merely be dazzled by it, and they would be left without anything to which their hearts could cling. The idea that satisfies the philosopher would convey nothing to the ignorant, the words that express it would to him be meaningless; he is told of a Being in terms that convey to him the chill void of an immeasurable space, and he is practically forced into Atheism; he is given nothing under pretence of giving him everything, for a thought that he cannot grasp is to him no thought at all.

What is needful to man in his conception of God? A Being that satisfies his heart and compels the homage of his intelligence, that gives him an ideal that he can love and worship, and towards which he may aspire. It is more important that a man should realise some One before whom his heart can expand in loving adoration than that his concept should be philosophically satisfactory and metaphysically correct. The spiritual nature is to be stimulated into activity; the soul is to be helped in its growth; the spark, which is the essence of the divine Fire on the altar of the heart, must burn up into the Flame whence it came forth and towards which it

endlessly aspires. The attitude of love, of worship, of aspiration, is necessary for the growth of the soul, and if the lips falter, if the words be halting, if the infant soul can only utter the broken lisplings of its infancy, does the Supreme Love despise its offspring because the expression of the filial love is clumsy and the thought inarticulate? "As one whom his mother comforteth" does the young soul feel the clasping of the everlasting Arms, and while the form in which Deity is clothed may be that of a subordinate God, the life that thrills through is a manifestation of the one Life, the one Love.

The Roman Catholic Church has met the varieties of human need by presenting for the worship of her children not only the "Blessed and glorious Trinity," but the mighty Archangels and Angels—the "Gods" of the Ancient Wisdom and of Eastern Faiths—and the sweet human familiar image of Mother Mary and her infant Son. Hence the vast power wielded by the Church over the ignorant, who are comforted in their daily struggles and homely lives by the vision of these celestial visitants; the humble countrywoman can whisper her troubles into the ear of the gentle nursing Mother, and feel assured of womanly sympathy; the child can smile up into the face of his Guardian Angel and sink peacefully to sleep beneath his veiling wings. It is noteworthy that the Roman Catholic Church holds the learned while attracting the ignorant, satisfies the philosopher while consoling the peasant. And this is because she adapts her teaching to her pupil, and does not offer the stone of

an abstract idea to those who crave the bread of a concrete presence. Moreover, by thus giving intelligible objects for the worship of the unevolved she guards from degradation the sublime concepts of Deity that the advancing soul demands. The all-pervading mighty presence of God omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and the gracious divine Motherhood of the Virgin immaculate, remain as deep spiritual verities in nature, unvulgarised by the cramping materialising of the undeveloped mind. The Holy of Holies is kept unpolluted, while the thronging multitudes find all they need in the outer courts. Only those who have been anointed with the chrism of spirituality may pass within the veil, and see the dazzling glory of the Shekinah lightening the most holy Place.

THE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL.

LET us next consider the problem concerning the existence of the soul, entering a region where the pinions of thought flag less than in that where they essayed to soar into the existence of God. Men ask, "Is there a soul?" "I am a soul," answers the spiritually enlightened philosopher. But how can we make this answer effective for the thousands of educated men and women who to-day doubt the very existence of the soul?

Let it be clearly understood from the outset that their doubt is not the outcome of a wish to doubt, still less of

a desire to live licentiously—as some bigoted folks imagine ; it arises from the play of the mind on facts around them, and from the exigencies of an intellect that they cannot honestly escape ; they cannot accept ideas about the soul that appear to them to be illogical and imbecile, and prefer to grope in the twilight of Agnosticism rather than be false to their conception of truth. And verily such scepticism is nearer the kingdom of God than the easy-going repetition of a formula that is not the expression of the speaker's thought. It is the fashion among many religious people to speak harshly of unbelief ; they have never faced the problems which the unbeliever has faced and has tried to solve. They have never endured the bitterness of despair that overwhelms the mind and heart ere the man who has once believed can say that he believes no longer, and that in the deeper loyalty to truth he must surrender loyalty to creed. No one who has passed through that storm, who has entered into that darkness, can ever again feel aught but keenest sympathy with those who are enveloped in it and who prefer the nakedness of unbelief to the soiled garments of dishonesty. To every such soul, loyal to truth in this life or in any other, the sun shall arise in the darkness ; to every soul that refuses a light it knows to be false, and would rather live in the darkness than accept it, shall come the light of knowledge and faith conjoined ; it matters little whether in this brief span of life it come or not, provided that under all stress of unbelief the soul remains loyal to truth and to

righteousness and keeps unstained its faith in virtue and its love to man.

In seeking to help such as these to solve the problem of the existence of the soul, it is useless to adduce metaphysical arguments, for these have been tried and rejected ; it is useless to appeal to an intuition which for the time is clouded, and the voice of which has been disregarded as likely to be mistaken. We must meet the sceptic on the only ground that for the time being he recognises as secure, and submit certain elementary arguments based on experiment ; these while they will not prove the existence of the soul—that will come at a later stage—will carry the student into the position of acknowledging a super-physical consciousness, a consciousness not dependent for its activity on the normal physical conditions, but in direct conflict with them. The first difficulty that we have to surmount is the idea that the consciousness normally working in the brain is dependent upon that brain for its existence, that thought is the result of nervous activity and cannot work apart from it. To overcome this difficulty we need not prove the existence of the soul, with all the wide connotations of that word ; by leaving the student to prove for himself that consciousness can function despite the paralysis of its physical organ and outside physical limitations of time and space, we enable him to reach a position where other lines of proof will lie open before him, and he can take these up one after the other till he

finds himself face to face with the knowledge of the soul.

The first step is to see that the consciousness of a man includes much that is not normally present in his waking hours, and that there are many "layers of consciousness" that emerge from obscurity when the avenues of the senses are closed and the outer world is excluded. Further, that the more complete the exclusion, the larger appears to be the content of consciousness. The action of consciousness when the body is sleeping may form the first object of study. A first idea of the range of this study may be gathered from such works as Du Prel's *Philosophy of Mysticism*, and Sully's *Illusions, Delusions, and Hallucinations*. Dreams should be classified (see Leadbeater's *Dreams*), and special note should be taken of cases where authors obtain suggestions and plots in dream, as R. L. Stevenson with *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; his own account of his "Brownies" may be read with advantage. Many people can solve problems asleep that baffle them awake, and the student might on this head experiment on himself. The extreme rapidity of dream-consciousness should be studied, the succession of states of consciousness enormously exceeding in speed any rate of vibration of which physical nervous matter is capable. The curious results of suggestion during sleep may be tried, resulting in the proof that conduct may be controlled by a part of the consciousness which does not show itself during waking hours.

From sleep the student may pass to the consideration of abnormal conditions resembling it in the exclusion of the outer world, such as trance, delirium, and the excitation of consciousness sometimes preceding death. Mozart and Tennyson bear witness to a state familiar to each of them, transcending the normal and setting at naught its limits of time ; from this state Mozart brought back some of his noblest inspirations. Drowning men, brought back to waking consciousness, have testified to having seen, as in a picture, the whole of their past lives. Dying men have been recorded as speaking languages forgotten since childhood, and babbling of minute incidents of the past long sponged from the slate of waking memory. As we come face to face with these facts consciousness insensibly changes its aspect, and we see a vast ocean surrounding us, only a little of which trickles through our brains. Nothing seems to be lost ; it is pushed out of the brain by a stream of fresh impressions, but is not allowed to drift out of reach. It is somewhere in that ocean of consciousness that is ours, and yet not ours, that we must explore.

The trance condition may be most closely studied through mesmerism and hypnotism, and it is not necessary to enter here into a detailed examination of the experiments which may be studied in standard works and reverified by personal observation. Richet's *Études sur la Grande Hystérie*, Binet and Féré's *Animal Magnetism*, and Sinnett's *Rationale of Mesmerism*, may serve as a commencement, the last-named book giving

plentiful references to other works. It will suffice here to summarise the facts : suggestion can cause and prevent physical lesions, as burns and blisters ; it can make the senses respond to objects that exist only in thought, and dead to objects that normally stimulate them—as seeing and feeling an object where none is physically present, and seeing only empty space where a physical body is standing ; it can transfer a disease from one side of the body to the other, and from one person to another, and can heal it altogether ; it can impose at will the feeling of pleasure, pain, horror, wrath, love, hatred ; it can make an honest person steal, a kind person cruel ; it can wipe out memory, and do a myriad other things beside. That is, an outside consciousness can take possession of a brain and work it for its own ends, the real owner being meanwhile ejected. Further, in trance the real owner may show himself far more fully than he does when normally working through the brain ; memory is intensified both as to past events and present adhesive capacity ; reason becomes keener and subtler ; imagination takes flights it cannot reach when clogged in nervous matter ; power of expression appears and the halting tongue is eloquent ; latent faculty awakens and a factory girl rivals Jenny Lind. Nay, physical boundaries are transcended, and the entranced person diagnoses internal disease, the diagnosis being later confirmed by *post-mortem* investigation ; or he sees what is occurring hundreds of miles away, he reports a conversation held at a far distance. Space fails me even

to summarise the facts, but this matters not, for the student must read, must investigate for himself, in order that the force of the ever-accumulating evidence may play on his own mind, forcing him to the conclusion that but a small part of consciousness expresses itself through the brain.

Very important—but also very scanty—are the results obtained by hypnotising lunatics. Cases are on record in which, in the trance condition, the lunatic became sane, returning to his normal lunacy when he emerged from trance—or, as I should say, when he again began to try to function through the imperfect instrument of his brain. It is difficult to imagine more definite evidence that the brain is but the instrument of the waking consciousness than that obtained along this line, and it is much to be desired that doctors in charge of lunatics should collect facts in relation to them under the influence of mesmerism or hypnotism.

The student should next study the evidence for the appearance of “the double” apart from the physical body, the “phantasms of the living” as they have been called. Messrs. Gurney and Myers’ work on this subject will serve as starting-point, and each may collect evidence on this head for himself from his own circle of acquaintances. A few will find that they can themselves reach distant friends in this way by an effort of the will, but the experience will be rare. But if human evidence is to be held as worth anything, the fact that phantasms of the living do appear can be put beyond doubt, and this

means that consciousness can function far away from the physical body which it normally uses as its instrument.

The next stage is to show that the individual consciousness, thus found able to work outside the body during "life," survives "death." Here the phenomena classed as "spiritualistic" have their place as evidence, and no better work can be first studied than that in which Sir William Crookes records his own investigations. Any sincere and patient investigator may convince himself by personal experiment of the fact of individual survival, and apart from all *séances* and formal seekings there is evidence and to spare of volunteered communications, visible and audible, from those who had passed "beyond the veil" but for some reason strove to reach again their friends in the flesh.

When in this way a strong *primâ facie* case, to say the least, has been established for the separability of consciousness from its physical organ and for its survival after the death of that organ, the student may be willing to submit himself to the training and the discipline necessary to obtain a true knowledge of the soul's existence. The way of meditation, reaching the higher consciousness, is the path he must now tread, and he cannot be expected to enter on it until he thinks that there is a possibility of gaining the knowledge he seeks. The process is toilsome and laborious, and demands long perseverance ere much apparent progress is made; but scores upon scores, nay, hundreds upon hundreds, of men and women have pursued it both in the past and in

the present, and they bear witness to the results obtained by it. If complete control be gained over the mind, so that it can be directed unswervingly on a single point, and then, dropping that point, can remain poised and steady, the brain still, the senses asleep, then there arises above the horizon of the mind another kind of consciousness, recognised by the thinker as himself, but as himself in a higher condition of being. As he rises into this condition his powers suddenly enlarge, limitations vanish, a new and keener, subtler life pulses through him, he seems thought rather than thinker. Problems that puzzled him offer their solutions; questions that were unanswerable are answered simply and clearly; difficulties have vanished; all is luminous.

Does any one say that this state is a mere day-dream, in which the dreamer is at the mercy of his imagination? Surely the evidence of those who have experienced it is more valuable than the assertions of those who have never reached it, and their testimony is unvarying and covers thousands of years. This is one of the methods that has been pursued in the East for uncounted generations, and this practice has developed not mere dreamers, not mere poets—if poets are to be despised by scientists—but some of the keenest metaphysicians, the profoundest philosophers, that humanity has yet produced. The mighty literature of India—to say nothing of the sacred books of other lands—bears witness to its efficacy, for the writers of the noblest Indian works were men of meditation. It is not the

view of the enthusiast only, but the view of many of the keenest minds in Europe, that Indian thinkers offer solutions of psychological problems and theories of man and thought that deserve the most respectful consideration and the most careful study. Meditation, as the way to transcending mere brain consciousness, is recommended not only by the mystic but by the metaphysician, by intellects that plunge into the Ocean of Existence and swim where the majority drown. By it may be obtained the knowledge that man is a consciousness transcending physical conditions, and only when that consciousness is reached can the existence of the soul be proved by way of the intellect.

There is another way, the way of devotion, that reaches the goal attained by way of the intellect, and for many of us that way is more attractive, that road is more readily trodden. In that our meditation is directed to an Object adored and loved, and the passion of the soul for that high spiritual Being burns away every sheath that separates it from the object of its worship, until in union with Him it finds the certainty of its own immortality, knowing itself as self-existent since one with the One who is life. Then knowledge replaces faith, and the devotee, like the philosopher, knows himself eternal.

FREEWILL AND NECESSITY.

WHEN a problem has been under discussion for hundreds of years, and when it has been debated by the keenest

intellects with varied results, it seems arrogant to say that it may be solved by grasping three main factors in human evolution. Nevertheless, the Theosophist cannot well avoid this statement when he envisages the problem of freewill and necessity, for in the light of the identity of the divine and human natures, reincarnation, and karma, the difficulties will away and the solution presents itself as obvious. Without these three truths the problem can never be solved. There is a necessity which compels and guides us; there is a freewill which decides and selects. Thus stated, a paradox appears. How can a soul at once be free and yet compelled by an inexorable destiny?

“Man is made in the image of God.” In one form or another this allegation appears in every world-religion. It has been believed everywhere, at all times, and by all. It bears the hall mark of catholicity. In this truth lies hidden the reconciliation of necessity and freewill.

When we seek to study some of the attributes of the manifested God, we recognise among them that of Will. In fact, Will seems as though it were the supreme attribute of the Logos, and it represents to us the ultimate of force, all-pervading, all-directing, irresistible. Majestically free, Self-determined, it appears to us, moving all things to harmony and order but moved by none. We rest upon it in perfect confidence as on a rock that cannot be shaken, and the exquisite order and invariableness of nature are for us rooted in that steadfast all-compelling Will.

When we think of man as containing within himself the germs of all divine potencies, as the acorn contains within itself the potentiality of becoming the perfect oak-tree, we naturally seek in him the germ of this imperial will, since he must be in the divine image in the power of will as much as in anything else. We find in him the attribute of will, and see him exercising a power of choice ; but when we analyse this attribute and go below the surface of the apparently free choice, we find that the will is continually limited and hampered, and that the choice is pressed from every side by pre-determining forces which push it in one direction. The freedom is seen to be but apparent, the choice is perceived to be determined. And yet there remains an obstinate conviction that no argument, however logical and irresistible, is wholly able to dispel, that the activity of the will contains a factor not accounted for in the rigorous analysis of determinism, a subtle element that has escaped recognition by the keen scrutiny of the metaphysical chemist.

This conviction is strengthened by the observation that what we call will in man is a power in process of evolution, and is indeed still rudimentary in the majority. We cannot trace such a power at all in the mineral kingdom ; there the affinities and repulsions are fixed and stable, the preferences can be measured and their recurrence can be depended upon. In even the highest members of the vegetable kingdom selective action is exceedingly feeble, and can scarcely be said to show any

spontaneity. Given similar conditions, similar plants act in a similar way. So again in the animal kingdom there is a marked absence of spontaneity ; for the most part the actions of an animal can be calculated beforehand by any one who has made a study of the species to which it belongs, and experienced hunters utilise this regularity of action in pursuing and trapping their prey. Nevertheless we do observe occasional aberrations, especially in the higher animals, and in those, most of all, who have been much under the stimulating influence of man. When we come to study the less evolved members of the human family, we find that in them also there is comparatively little deviation from lines that can be laid down beforehand. They are played upon by forces the existence of which they do not recognise, and to which they unconsciously yield. They are moved to activity chiefly by the attractions and repulsions exercised over their desires by external objects ; hopes and fears pull and drive them, and since they are mainly moved by these pullings and pushings from outside, their lines of action can be predicted with a fair amount of certainty. None the less we observe that as we ascend in the scale of humanity, spontaneity of action becomes a less and less negligible factor, and that while with a very highly developed man we can prophesy with certainty as to a number of things that he will *not* do, it is practically impossible to predict what his action will be. And this becomes more and more apparent the more highly the man is evolved. The will of the saint, of the hero, shows

something of the imperial character of self-motion that we think of as characteristically divine.

For by "will" we mean the determination of force from the inmost centre of life, while by desire—which stands as the illusive reflection of will in the majority—we mean the determination of force from that which is outside that inmost centre, outside the inner immortal Man. In the lower types of mankind the motor energy is in the desires of the animal nature, imperiously demanding satisfaction and urging the man along the road leading to the objects which gratify those desires. For this reason the actions of the majority can be predicted with certainty, the objects which yield gratification being known and the desires which seek gratification being similar. The result of our study of evolution in general, then, leads us to the conclusion that this part of the divine image in us is one of the later outcomes of our growth, and that the characteristic of spontaneity is found to be marked in proportion to the degree of development.

If we turn our attention especially to the order of evolution of mental qualities, we shall arrive at a similar conclusion. Will does not manifest itself until after memory, comparison, reason, judgment, imagination, have reached a considerable amount of development. For a long period these growing mental faculties are yoked to the service of the desire-nature. They are the handmaids of *kāma*, and fly to obey the commands of desire. But at length a new figure rises slowly in the

- dim background of the mind, and after the mental faculties have completed their work on a given subject an authoritative voice comes forth from the mists which form the boundaries of the waking consciousness, and commands that a particular line of action should be followed. The council of mental faculties finds its premier, and authority silences dispute. Reason may sometimes challenge the orders of the will, but it finds itself compelled to yield, and there is in the will some strange energy welling out from the very fount of being which enthrones it as monarch over the realm of mind. Latest born, it yet asserts its pre-eminence, and all else bows down under its sceptre. But being yet in its childhood, it shows but little of its true majesty; only we can recognise in it the spontaneity of the Parent Will, the Will that rules the worlds.

If we betake ourselves to introspection, the will is the faculty which most resists our analysis. We cannot reach its root, which seems to pierce deeply into our life's centre. It appears to arise in a region veiled from our waking consciousness; to call all else to account, but to render account to none. We see that it is moving in chains, yet sense beneath those chains a living energy; the chains are not the generation of that living force, the determining causes are not the generator of the will.

So far, then, we see in will the directive energy which arises above or beyond the mind rather than in it, appearing at a late stage of human evolution, and being

in its essence identical with that majestic divine and self-moved Will which guides the universe.

So far we find ourselves coming to the conclusion that the will, in its essential nature, is free, being an offshoot in each man of the universal Will. How then has it come to be bound, and how are its chains forged? To these questions reincarnation and karma supply the answer.

It is not necessary here to deal with reincarnation in its details. It will suffice us to regard man as an evolving individual, in whose life-career births and deaths are recurring incidents. Birth is not the beginning of a life nor is death its ending; birth and death begin and end only a single chapter in the life-story; the story runs through many chapters and the plot is continuous throughout. As a man lives through a day, falls asleep for a night, and wakes again the next morning for a new day, so does the evolving individual experience again and again the morning of birth and the night-time of death, remaining the same continuing life, passing in unbroken continuity through births and deaths.

If to-day I incur a debt, and sleep unconscious of it, my debt faces me in the morning on my awakening. It is not cancelled by the passing of the night. Many days may pass, and the remembrance of the debt may fade away from my mind, but the day of reckoning arrives, and the creditor presents himself for payment, his claim being rendered none the less valid for my lapse of memory. Such debts are contracted by each evolving

individual, and they are rigidly collected when the payment falls due. Inexorable Destiny is at our door, and we cannot evade his claims. When we come to consider these debts of the past we find that we come into the world with the greater part of our destiny already fixed. We are born with a mentality and a desire-nature that have been built by us in the past, formed by the activities of the same individual who must inhabit his own past building in the present. Our character, our powers and our limitations, our faculties and our deficiencies, our virtues and our vices, these are the most potent factors in our destiny and they condition the whole of our present life. The same kind of life cannot be led by a man of narrow intelligence and vicious propensities, born in a miserable environment, and by a man of broad intelligence and virtuous inclinations, born amid the happiest surroundings. Each is compelled by necessity; the same output cannot fairly be demanded from each, nor can the one be blamed for being utterly inferior to the other. Necessity imposes lines of thinking, lines of acting, and the developing will is hampered by these at every turn. We are compelled by our past, by our thinkings and longings and desires in the lives that lie behind us, and only a very small part of our present is fashioned by our present will. Just as we may make a habit and that habit becomes a compelling force, so that we follow it unconsciously and have to exert much energy to change it; so are we pushed into thoughts and actions by the habits we have formed in the past and brought

with us into our present life. We call this heritage of the past our karma, and it is the determining force in our lives. I think in certain ways because I have made a habit of thus thinking; I act in certain ways because my thoughts have dug the channel along which my energies run. On every side necessity compels me, my will moves in self-forged chains.

Where then is freedom? Within the limits of these self-drawn obligations the captive will moves wearily; but still it is the living force, with its power of spontaneity, of initiative. He who made the present in his past is still here in the midst of his makings, no puppet but a living soul; he can change and modify that which of yore he formed, he can file the chains which he riveted on himself long ago. The products of his past thoughts are there, but *he* is still the Thinker, and even within the narrowest of limits he can still work, and widen, and modify, and break. The evolving God is there, albeit encased in the web woven by ignorance; he is still in the centre and there is free, while constrained without by the results of past follies and mistakes. Just in proportion as he grows, and by effort breaks his chains, will his freedom extend, until at last his past is outworn and he reaches divine liberty.

In ourselves, as in external nature, knowledge of law means power to achieve. The ignorant man is driven hither and thither by the laws of nature, a helpless piece of drift-wood on the stream of life. But the learned man, subject to the same laws, exercises his selective

power, balances one against another, and obtains his chosen object ; he works by fixed laws, but he throws his life-force with the law-forces that help his purpose, and neutralises those that antagonise him by the activity of other energies. In every part of nature we live and move amid fixed laws, fettered by our past and blinded by our ignorance ; in proportion as we outwear our past and change ignorance into knowledge, we become free. Power grows as vision clears, as we climb higher liberty increases, until finally we shall reach the centre where self-motion abides. We are constrained by necessity, but we are outgrowing it ; we are not yet free, but we are evolving towards freedom. The more nearly we approach the realisation of our divinity the freer we become, and when our separated wills, evolved and self-moved, merge harmoniously in the Parent Will, we shall experience that reality of freedom the dim presage of which made us cling to the belief in freewill. Here again the teachings of Theosophy prove to be our light-bearer, our Lucifer, star of the morning.

PRAYER.

THE question is continually asked : "Do you Theosophists believe in prayer?" and it may be helpful to some to study the subject of prayer in the light of occult knowledge, prefacing the study with the remark that the belief of Theosophists will vary according to their knowledge, and that no Theosophist save the writer is

committed to the statements that follow. The public does not yet realise that a Theosophist is not fitted with a ready-made suit of beliefs when he enters the Society, but is only supplied with materials from among which he may choose those which suit him, and must then proceed to fashion his garments for himself. The views that are here submitted are given simply as the views of a particular student, as materials for study.

The first thing necessary in considering the utility of prayer is to analyse prayer itself, for the word is used to cover various activities of consciousness, and they cannot be dealt with as though they formed a simple whole. We find prayers that are petitions for definite worldly advantages, for the supply of physical needs—prayers for food, clothing, money, employment, success in business, recovery from illness, &c. These we will group together as Class A. Then we have prayers for help in moral and intellectual difficulties and for spiritual growth—for the overcoming of temptations, for strength, for insight, for enlightenment. These can be grouped as Class B. Lastly there are the prayers that ask for nothing, that consist in contemplation and adoration of the Divine Perfection, in intense aspiration for union with God—the ecstasy of the mystic, the meditation of the sage, the soaring rapture of the saint. These we will call Class C.

The next thing that we must realise is the great ladder of living beings from the sub-human elemental to the Logos Himself, a ladder in which no rung is wanting. This occult side of nature is a fact, not a dream. All

the world is filled with living things, invisible to fleshly eyes. The astral world interpenetrates the physical, and crowds of intelligent conscious creatures throng round us at every step. Some are below man in intelligence and some soar high above him. Some are easily influenced by his will, others are accessible to his requests. In addition to these independent entities, the elemental essence of the three kingdoms is responsive to his emotions and his thoughts, and is swiftly shaped into forms whose very life is to carry out the feeling or the thought that ensouls them ; thus he can create at will an army of obedient servants who will range the astral world to do his pleasure. Yet again there are available human though invisible helpers, whose attentive ear may catch a cry for aid, and who gladly serve as veritable " ministering angels " to the soul in need. And to crown all there is the ever-present, ever-conscious life of the Logos Himself, potent and responsive at every point in His realm, of Him without whose knowledge not a sparrow falleth to the ground, not a dumb creature thrills in joy or pain, not a child laughs or sobs—that all-pervading, all-embracing, all-sustaining Life and Love, in which all live and move. As nought that can give pleasure or pain can touch the human body without the sensory nerves carrying the message of its impact to the brain-centres, and as there thrills down from those centres through the motor nerves the answer that welcomes or withdraws, so does every vibration in the universe, which is His body, reach His consciousness and draw thence responsive

action. Nerve-cells, nerve-threads, and muscular fibres may be the agents of feeling and motion, but it is the *man* that feels and acts ; so may myriads of intelligences be the agents, but it is the LOGOS that knows and answers. Nothing can be so small as not to affect that delicate omnipresent consciousness, nothing so vast as to transcend it. We are so limited that the very idea of such an all-embracing consciousness staggers and confounds us ; yet perhaps the gnat might be as hard bestead if he tried to measure the consciousness of Pythagoras.

It is impossible to deny the fact that prayers *are* answered, and that many can give out of their own experience clear and decisive cases of "answers to prayer." Moreover, many of these do not refer to what are termed subjective experiences, but to hard facts of the so-called objective world. A man has prayed for money, and the post has brought him the needed amount ; a woman has prayed for food, and food has arrived at her door. In connection with charitable undertakings, there is plenty of evidence of help prayed for in direct need, and of speedy and liberal response. On the other hand, there is also plenty of evidence of prayers left unanswered, of the hungry starving to death, of the child snatched from its mother's arms by death, despite the most passionate appeals to God. Any reasonable view of prayer must take into consideration these conflicting facts, must neither refuse to admit the answers nor evade the recognition of the failures to

obtain any. All facts must fall into their place in any true theory of prayer.

We will take separately our three classes of prayers, and we shall find that the occult lives in nature are the agents which bring about answers to prayer, the particular agents at work being those suitable to the kind of prayer put forth.

When a man utters a prayer of Class A, he may obtain an answer through one of several agencies. His concentrated thought and earnest will affect the elemental essence of the astral plane, and he creates a powerful artificial elemental, whose one idea is to bring about what its creator desires. This elemental, where the prayer is for money, food, clothing, employment, for anything that can be given by one man to another, will seek out a person able to give, and will impress on that person's brain the image of its creator and of his special need, this impression giving rise to the thought of sending the man help. "I thought of George Müller and his orphanages this morning," a rich man will say, "I may as well send him a cheque." George Müller's prayer is here the motor power, the artificial elemental is the agent concerned in bringing about the desired result, and the cheque, unasked for of man on the physical plane, comes as the "answer to prayer." The result could have been obtained as readily by a deliberate effort of the will, without any prayer, by a person who understood the mechanism concerned and the way to put it into motion. But in the case of most

people, ignorant of the forces of the invisible world and unaccustomed to exercise their wills, the concentration of the mind and the earnest desire necessary for success are far more easily reached by prayer than by a deliberate mental effort to put forth their own strength. They would doubt their own power, even if they understood the theory, and doubt is fatal in all exercise of the will. That the person who prays does not understand the machinery he sets going in no wise affects the result ; a child who stretches out his hand and grasps an object need not understand anything of the working of the extensor muscles, nor of the chemical and electrical changes set up by his movement in muscles and nerves, nor need he elaborately calculate the distance of the object by measuring the angle made by the optic axes ; he wills to take hold of the thing he wants, and the various parts of his body obey his will although he does not even know of their existence. So also is it with the man who prays, unknowing of the creative force of his thought or of the proceedings of the creature he has sent forth to do his bidding ; he acts as unconsciously as the child, and like the child grasps what he wants.

A prayer of Class A may also be answered in other ways than by the action of an artificial elemental. A passing disciple, or other helper at work on the astral plane, may hear his prayer and bring about the desired result. Especially is this likely to be the case when the utterer of the prayer is a philanthropist in need of aid for the carrying on of some beneficent work. The

helper will throw the thought of sending him the assistance he needs into the fertile soil of a charitable brain, and the result will follow as before. Sometimes, but I think more rarely, the will of the praying person affects a nature spirit, or elemental proper, and he actively exerts himself to bring about the wished for effect ; some people exercise a peculiar power over nature spirits of various kinds, and the "little people" will take much trouble in order to supply the needs of their favourites.

The failure of earnest and strongly-willed prayers to bring about the object aimed at seems to be due to the fact that they dash themselves against some kârmic cause too strong for them to turn aside or to modify to any appreciable extent. A man condemned by his own action in the past to die of starvation may hurl his prayers against that destiny in vain. The artificial elemental he has created by such prayers will find all its efforts futile ; no helper will come in his way to cause the desired relief to be sent to him ; no nature spirit will pay any attention to his cry. Where the relations that had existed in the past between the souls of parents and of a dying child necessitate in the present life the breaking of the tie at a particular period, the current of force set free by prayer will not avail to prolong the thread of the young life. Here, as everywhere, we are living in a realm of law, and forces may be modified or entirely frustrated by the play of other forces with which they come in contact. Two exactly similar forces might be applied to set in motion two exactly similar balls ; but

in one case no other force might be applied to the ball and it might fly to the mark aimed at, in the other a second force might strike the ball and send it entirely out of its course. And so with two similar prayers ; one may be kârmically unopposed, or even aided on its way by a kârmic force, while the second may be flung aside by a kârmic force far more energetic than the original impulsion. One prayer is answered, the other falls to the ground apparently unheeded ; in both cases the result follows the law.

Let us consider Class B. Prayers for help in moral and intellectual difficulties are efficacious both in action and reaction. They draw the attention of those servants of humanity who are ever-seeking to help the bewildered soul, and counsel, encouragement, illumination, are thrown into the brain-consciousness, thus giving the answer to prayer in the most direct way. Ideas are often suggested which clear away an intellectual difficulty, or throw light on an obscure problem, and the sweetest comfort is poured into the distressed heart, soothing its perturbations and calming its anxieties. This may be called the objective answer to such prayers, where the help of stronger and more advanced souls—of a disciple, an angel, a Master—is readily given in response to the cry for aid. But there is also a subjective answer, not so readily recognised, as a rule, by those who pray, that may be regarded as the reaction of the prayer itself on the one who offers it. His prayer truly places his heart and mind in the receptive

attitude, which makes it easy to render him objective aid, but it also opens the channel of communication between his higher and lower natures, and thus allows the strength and illuminative power of the higher to pour downwards into the brain-consciousness. The currents of energy which normally flow downwards, or outwards, from the Inner Man are as a rule directed to the external world, and are utilised in the ordinary affairs of life by the brain-consciousness for the carrying on of its daily activities. But when this brain-consciousness turns away from the outer world, and, shutting its outward-going doors, directs its gaze inwards ; when it deliberately opens itself to the inner and closes itself to the outer ; then it becomes a vessel able to receive and to hold instead of a mere conduit-pipe between the interior and exterior worlds. In the silence obtained by the cessation of the noises of external activities, the quiet voice of the soul can make itself heard, and the concentrated attention of the expectant mind enables it to catch the soft whisper from the Inner Self.

Even more markedly is this the case when the prayer is for spiritual enlightenment, for spiritual growth. Not only do all helpers most eagerly seek to forward spiritual progress, seizing on every opportunity offered by the upward-aspiring heart, but the longing for such growth liberates energy of a higher kind, the spiritual longing calling forth an answer from the spiritual realm. Once more the law of sympathetic vibrations asserts itself, and the note of lofty aspiration is answered by a note of its

own order, by a liberation of energy of its own kind, by a vibration synchronous with itself. The divine life is ever pressing against the limits which bind it, and when the upward-rising force strikes against those limits, the separating wall is broken through, and the life floods the soul.

When a man, becoming strong in spiritual aspiration, no longer seeks for gain nor looks to God for gift; when his sole longing is to resemble That which he adores, and his prayer becomes an act of contemplation and worship; then the result of the prayer is to draw an answer from the high spiritual region to which the thought of the suppliant aspires. The subtle vibrations of the spiritual realm play on the up-reaching soul, awakening the corresponding divine elements that lie latent within it, and these, thrilling into answer, flood the man with a new sense of power and make him realise something of the nature of divinity. Inasmuch as the Divine is everywhere, as in Him we live and move, that appeal to the Divine without us causes an activity which reacts on us, awakening the Divine within us, and this "God-with-us" imparts to the mind and heart the energy of the spiritual nature, making us conscious of our own divine power.

Thus we pass from the spiritual aspirations almost imperceptibly into the prayer which is pure worship, pure adoration, from which all petition is absent, and which seeks only to pour itself forth in sheer love of the Perfect, dimly sensed. Such prayers, grouped as Class

C, are the means of union between man and God, drawing the worshipper into the Being he adores. In these, the consciousness limited by the brain contemplates in mute ecstasy the Image it creates of Him whom it knows to be in truth beyond all imagining, and oft, rapt by the intensity of its love beyond those concrete limits imposed by the intellect, it soars upwards into the realm where limits are not, and feels and knows far more than on its return it can tell in words or clothe in intellectual form. Then in prayer the mystic gazes on the Beatific Vision, then the sage rests in the infinite calm of the wisdom that is beyond knowledge, then the saint is penetrated with the radiant purity in which God is seen. Such prayer irradiates the worshipper, and from the mount of such high communion descending to the plains of earth, the very face of flesh shines with supernal glory, translucent to the flame which burns within. Happy they who know the reality which no words may convey to those who know it not; those whose eyes have seen the King in His beauty will remember, and they will understand.

THE ATONEMENT.

There is a profound spiritual truth underlying the various doctrines of atonement that have been put forth from time to time by Christian churches. In all of them Jesus the Christ has been the central figure, and the atonement has been wrought by him.

In the early days of the Christian Church the death of Jesus was regarded as a payment made to Satan for the ransoming of mankind from his power. Mankind was in thrall to the devil in consequence of the Fall, and man was the "bondsman of the devil." To redeem that unhappy bondsman God gave His own Son, the ransom paid being his agonising death. The debt of man being thus discharged, he was liberated from the kingdom of darkness, and became the free-man of him who had paid his debt.

In later phases of Christian thought on this subject, a far darker doctrine arose. The sacrifice of suffering and death offered up by God the Son, incarnated as man, was declared to be offered to God the Father to appease his wrath and to expiate vicariously the sins of men. Human ingenuity devised the idea of a contract entered into in heavenly places between two Persons in the Godhead for the redemption of fallen men, and then followed all the painful presentations of divine wrath on one side and divine agony on the other, against which the conscience of more spiritually minded Christians has revolted in our own day. Many of the noblest Christian clergy have headed an ever-increasing school of thinkers which indignantly repudiates this harsh form of mediæval doctrine as at once blasphemous towards God, dishonouring to justice, and profoundly erroneous as to the relation between God and man. Men such as Mr. McLeod Campbell of the Scottish Church, as F. D. Maurice and F. Robertson of the English, are exponents

of a purer and truer teaching ; they see that the office of a Divine Man is not to create a new relationship between God and man, but to make manifest and vindicate a relationship already existing. Many devout persons have been so disgusted with these legal quibblings, in which one divine Person is angry and another propitiatory, one demanding and another paying—have felt it all to be so unreal, so unspiritual, that they have flung aside the whole doctrine of atonement with impatience, forgetting that even under the veil of repellent errors a truth may lie hidden that we cannot afford to lose. Such a truth there is in this doctrine of atonement, and it is this truth which has given the doctrine its hold over the hearts of men. Is it not strange, when we come to think of it, that a doctrine so narrow, unfair, and mistaken, has yet afforded an impulse to noble living to some of the purest and most self-denying among the children of men? In this very doctrine, that seems to us so repellent, many loving and gentle Christian souls have found their strongest stimulus to self-sacrifice, their surest foundation for saintly lives of wide-spreading beneficence. Where we find such incongruity between the verbal statement and the effect produced by it on high types of soul, we may be sure that such souls, by spiritual insight, have caught a glimpse of a truth which is veiled by the crude and erroneous presentation. What is this Truth?

As the human soul evolves, it continually enlarges its limits, the limits of the individualised consciousness,

embracing more and more within its bounds. The narrow and unevolved soul shows a lack of embracing sympathy, and this lack proves that the spiritual evolution has not yet begun. As we study human evolution we see the consciousness expanding and taking more within its scope ; first limited to the physical, it expands to include the astral ; expanding further, it includes the mental. In process of time the man passes through the first great initiation, and in Christian phrase "the Christ is born in him" ; in theosophical terminology, the consciousness begins to function on the buddhic plane, the plane of love, and bliss, and unity, the lower spiritual plane. Slowly "the Christ" grows, the consciousness works more and more in the spiritual world, and a new attitude becomes habitual. The man feels himself to be one with all around him, one with all that lives. He no longer feels himself to be separate, but to be one with all the lives amid which he moves. He does not lose hold of his own centre of consciousness, but in some strange, subtle way he interpenetrates all other consciousnesses and feels them as his own. He expands to contain all others, and makes no difference between "himself" and "them." In that spiritual realm he feels as others feel, thinks as they think, suffers as they suffer, joys as they joy ; verily, there are no "others," but all is himself. Every child of man is part of the life of this man ; they do not stand outside him to be sympathised with ; they are forms of him ; he is living, sinning, fearing, hoping, struggling, in every one of them. When that conscious-

ness is definitely established, the Christ has grown to manhood, and the consecration of the true baptism marks him as a manifested Son of God. Then he comes to the knowledge of his place in the world, his function in nature—to be a Saviour and to make atonement for the sins of the people. He stands in the inner heart of the world, the sanctuary of Buddhi, as a High Priest of humanity. He is one with all his brethren, not by a vicarious substitution, but by the unity of a common life. Are any sinful? he is sinful in them that his purity may purge them. Are any sorrowful? in them he is the man of sorrows; every broken heart is broken in his, every pierced heart in his heart is pierced. Are any glad? in them he is joyous and pours out his bliss. Are any craving? in them he is feeling want that he may fill them with his utter satisfaction. He has everything, and because it is his it is theirs. He is perfect; then they are perfect with him. He is strong; who then can be weak, since he is in them? He climbed to his high place that he might pour out to all below him, and he lives in order that all may share his life. He lifts the whole world with him as he rises; the path is easier for all men because he has trodden it.

Every son of man may become such a manifested Son of God, such a Saviour of the world. In each such Son is "God manifest in the flesh," the atonement which aids all mankind, the living power that makes all things new. Only one thing is needed to bring that power into manifest activity in any individual soul; the soul must

open the door and let him in. Even he, all-permeating, cannot force his way against his brother's will ; the human will can hold its own alike against God and man, and by the law of evolution it must voluntarily associate itself with divine action and not be broken into sullen submission. Let the will throw open the door, and the life will flood the soul. While the door is closed it will only gently breathe through it its unutterable fragrance, that the sweetness of that fragrance may win where the barrier may not be forced by strength.

This it is, in part, to be a Christ ; but how can mortal pen depict the immortal, or mortal words tell of that which is beyond the power of speech ? Tongue may not utter, the unillumined mind may not grasp, that mystery of the Son who has become one with the Father, carrying in His bosom the sons of men.

That is part of the glorious truth that is travestied in the doctrine of the atonement as it has been taught for many a century ; that the secret of the influence that, even in its erroneous forms, has proved so great an inspiration to many noble hearts. Even when error blinds the intellect, the vivifying power of that supernal love is felt, and souls, sensitive to spiritual influences, answer to its sweet compulsion, and, in their small measure also, they begin to share the joy of giving, of living the life that is love. A spiritual religion has no separated reward to offer, has no separated penalty to threaten. It can but say : " In so far as you love and serve, the Divine Life is finding a channel for expression

in you, and when you reach the higher world, expand to the wider consciousness, then also you will know what every saint has yearned for, what every Master has accomplished ; you will feel in you the Divine Life as your life, you will thus enter into the joy of your Lord."

SOME DIFFICULTIES OF THE INNER LIFE.

EVERY one who sets himself in earnest to the living of the Inner Life encounters certain obstacles at the very beginning of the pathway thereto, obstacles which repeat themselves in the experience of each, having their basis in the common nature of men. To each wayfarer they seem new and peculiar to himself, and hence give rise to a feeling of personal discouragement which undermines the strength needed for their surmounting. If it were understood that they form part of the common experience of aspirants, that they are always encountered and constantly over-climbed, it may be that some cheer would be brought to the cast-down neophyte by the knowledge. The grasp of a hand in the darkness, the sound of a voice that says: "Fellow-traveller, I have trodden where you tread and the road is practicable"—these things bring help in the night-time, and such a help-bringer this article would fain be.

One of these difficulties was put to me some time ago by a friend and fellow-wayfarer in connection with some counsel given as to the purification of the body. He did not in any way traverse the statement made, but said with much truth and insight that for most of us the difficulty lay more with the Inner Man than with his instruments; that for the most of us the bodies we had were quite sufficiently good, or, at the worst, needed a little tuning, but that there was a desperate need for the improvement of the man himself. For the lack of sweet music, the musician was more to blame than his instrument, and if he could be reached and improved his instrument might pass muster. It was capable of yielding much better tones than those produced from it at present, but those tones depended on the fingers that pressed the keys. Said my friend pithily and somewhat pathetically: "I can make my body do what I want; the difficulty is that *I* do not want."

Here is a difficulty that every serious aspirant feels. The improving of the man himself is the chief thing that is needed, and the obstacle of his weakness, his lack of will and of tenacity of purpose, is a far more obstructive one than can be placed in our way by the body. There are many methods known to all of us by which we can build up bodies of a better type if we want to do so, but it is the "wanting" in which we are deficient. We have the knowledge, we recognise the expediency of putting it into practice, but the impulse to do so is lacking. Our root-difficulty lies in our inner nature; it is inert, the

wish to move is absent; it is not that the external obstacles are insurmountable, but that the man himself lies supine and has no mind to climb over them. This experience is being continually repeated by us; there seems to be a want of attractiveness in our ideal; it fails to draw us; we do not wish to realise it, even though we may have intellectually decided that its realisation is desirable. It stands before us like food before a man who is not hungry; it is certainly very good food and he may be glad of it to-morrow, but just now he has no craving for it, and prefers to lie basking in the sunshine rather than to get up and take possession of it.

The problem resolves itself into two questions: Why do I not want that which I see, as a rational being, is desirable, productive of happiness? What can I do to make myself want that which I know to be best for myself and for the world? The spiritual teacher who could answer these questions effectively would do a far greater service to many than one who is only reiterating constantly the abstract desirability of ideals that we all acknowledge, and the imperative nature of obligations that we all admit—and disregard. The machine is here, not wholly ill-made; who can place his finger on the lever, *and make it go?*

The first question must be answered by such an analysis of self-consciousness as may explain this puzzling duality, the not desiring that which we yet see to be desirable. We are wont to say that self-consciousness is a unit, and yet, when we turn our attention

inwards, we see a bewildering multiplicity of "I's," and are stunned by the clamour of opposing voices, all coming apparently from ourselves. Now consciousness—and self-consciousness is only consciousness drawn into a definite centre which receives and sends out—is a unit, and if it appears in the outer world as many, it is not because it has lost its unity, but because it presents itself there through different media. We speak glibly of the vehicles of consciousness, but perhaps do not always bear in mind what is implied in the phrase. If a current from a galvanic battery be led through several series of different materials, its appearance in the outer world will vary with each wire. In a platinum wire it may appear as light, in an iron one as heat, round a bar of soft iron as magnetic energy, led into a solution as a power that decomposes and recombines. One single energy is present, yet many modes of it appear, for the manifestation of life is always conditioned by its forms, and as consciousness works in the causal, mental, astral, or physical body, the resulting "I" presents very different characteristics. According to the vehicle which, for the time being, it is vitalising, so will be the conscious "I." If it is working in the astral body, it will be the "I" of the senses; if in the mental, it will be the "I" of the intellect. By illusion, blinded by the material that envelops it, it identifies itself with the craving of the senses, the reasoning of the intellect, and cries, "I want," "I think." The nature which is developing the germs of bliss and knowledge is the eternal Man, and is the root

of sensations and thoughts ; but these sensations and thoughts themselves are only the transitory activities in his outer bodies, set up by the contact of his life with the outer life, of the Self with the not-self. He makes temporary centres for his life in one or other of these bodies, lured by the touches from without that awaken his activity, and working in these he identifies himself with them. As his evolution proceeds, as he himself developes, he gradually discovers that these physical, astral, mental centres are his instruments, not himself ; he sees them as parts of the "not-self" that he has temporarily attracted into union with himself—as he might take up a pen or a chisel—he draws himself away from them, recognising and using them as the tools they are, knows himself to be life, not form ; bliss, not desire ; knowledge, not thought ; and then first is conscious of unity, then alone finds peace. While the consciousness identifies itself with forms, it appears to be multiple ; when it identifies itself as life it stands forth as one.

The next important fact for us is that, as H. P. B. pointed out, consciousness, at the present stage of evolution, has its centre normally in the astral body. Consciousness learns to know by its capacity of sensation, and sensation belongs to the astral body. We sense ; that is, we recognise contact with something which is not ourselves, something which arouses in us pleasure, or pain, or the neutral point between. The life of sensation is the greater part of the life of the majority. For those below the average, the life of sensation is the whole life.

For a few advanced beings the life of sensation is transcended. The vast majority occupy the various stages which stretch between the life of sensation, of mixed sensation and emotion and thought in diverse proportions, of emotion and thought also in diverse proportions. In the life that is wholly of sensation there is no multiplicity of "I's" and therefore no conflict ; in the life that has transcended sensation there is an Inner Ruler, Immortal, and there is no conflict ; but in all the ranges between there are manifold "I's" and between them conflict.

Let us consider the life of sensation as found in the savage of low development. There is an "I," passionate, craving, fierce, grasping, when aroused to activity. But there is no conflict, save with the world outside his physical body. With that he may war, but inner war he knows not. He does what he wants, without questionings beforehand or remorse afterwards ; the actions of the body follow the promptings of desire, and the mind does not challenge, nor criticise, nor condemn. It merely pictures and records, storing up materials for future elaboration. Its evolution is forwarded by the demands made upon it by the "I" of sensations to exert its energies for the gratification of that imperious "I." It is driven into activity by these promptings of desire, and begins to work on its store of observations and remembrances, thus evolving a little reasoning faculty and planning beforehand for the gratification of its master. In this way it develops intelligence, but the

intelligence is wholly subordinated to desire, moves under its orders, is the slave of passion. It shows no separate individuality, but is merely the willing tool of the tyrannous desire "I."

Contest only begins when, after a long series of experiences, the Eternal Man has developed sufficient mind to review and balance up, during his life in the lower mental world between death and birth, the results of his earthly activities. He then marks off certain experiences as resulting in more pain than pleasure, and comes to the conclusion that he will do well to avoid their repetition; he regards them with repulsion and engraves that repulsion on his mental tablets, while he similarly engraves attraction on other experiences that have resulted in more pleasure than pain. When he returns to earth, he brings this record with him, as an inner tendency of his mind, and when the desire "I" rushes towards an attractive object, recommencing a course of experiences that have led to suffering, he interposes a feeble protest, and another "I"—consciousness working as mind—makes itself felt and heard as regarding these experiences with repulsion, and objecting to being dragged through them. The protest is so weak and the desire so strong that we can scarcely speak of a contest; the desire "I," long enthroned, rushes over the weakly-protesting rebel, but when the pleasure is over and the painful results follow, the ignored rebel lifts his voice again in a querulous "I told you so," and this is the first sting of remorse. As life succeeds life the mind

asserts itself more and more, and the contest between the desire "I" and the thought "I" grows fiercer and fiercer, and the agonised cry of the Christian mystic: "I find another law in my members warring against the law of my mind," is repeated in the experience of every evolving Man. The war grows hotter and hotter as, during the devachanic life, the decisions of the Man are more and more strongly impressed on the mind, appearing as innate ideas in the subsequent birth, and lending strength to the thought "I," which, withdrawing itself from the passions and emotions, regards them as outside itself, and repudiates their claim to control it. But the long inheritance of the past is on the side of the monarch it would discrown, and bitter and many-fortuned is the war. Consciousness, in its out-going activities, runs easily into the worn channels of the habits of many lives; on the other hand, it is diverted by the efforts of the Man to take control and to turn it into the channels hewn out by his reflections. His will determines the line of the consciousness-forces working in his higher vehicles, while habit largely determines the direction of those working in the desire-body. The will, guided by the clear-eyed intelligence, points to the lofty ideal that is seen as a fit object of attainment; the desire-nature does not want to reach it, is lethargic before it, seeing no beauty that it should desire it, nay, is often repelled by the austere outlines of its grave and chastened dignity. "The difficulty is that I do not *want*." We

do not want to do that which, in our higher moments, we have resolved to do. The lower "I" is moved by the attraction of the moment rather than by the recorded results of the past that sway the higher, and the real difficulty is to make ourselves feel that the lethargic, or the clamorous, "I" of the lower nature is not the true "I."

How is this difficulty to be overcome? How is it possible to make that which we know to be the higher to be the habitual self-conscious "I"?

Let no one be discouraged if here it be said that this change is a matter of growth, and cannot be accomplished in a moment. The human Self cannot, by a single effort, rise to manhood from childhood, any more than a body can change from infancy to maturity in a night. If the statement of the law of growth bring a sense of chill when we regard it as an obstacle in the way of our wish for sudden perfection, let us remember that the other side of the statement is that growth is certain, that it cannot be ultimately prevented, and that if law refuses a miracle it on the other hand gives security. Moreover, we can quicken growth, we can afford the best possible conditions for it, and then rely on the law for our result. Let us then consider the means we can employ for hastening the growth we see to be needed, for transferring the activity of consciousness from the lower to the higher.

The first thing to realise is that the desire-nature is not our Self, but an instrument fashioned by the Self

for its own using ; and next that it is a most valuable instrument, and is merely being badly used. Desire, emotion, is the motive power in us, and stands ever between the thought and the action. Intellect sees, but it does not move, and a man without desires and emotions would be a mere spectator of life. The Self must have evolved some of its loftiest powers ere it can forego the use of the desires and emotions ; for aspirants the question is how to use them instead of being used by them, how to discipline them, not how to destroy. We would fain "want" to reach the highest, since without this wanting we shall make no progress at all. We are held back by wanting to unite ourselves with objects transitory, mean, and narrow ; cannot we push ourselves forward by wanting to unite ourselves with the permanent, the noble, and the wide ? Thus musing, we see that what we need is to cultivate the emotions, and direct them in a way that will purify and ennoble the character. The basis of all emotions on the side of progress is love, and this is the power which we must cultivate. George Eliot well said : "The first condition of human goodness is something to love ; the second, something to reverence." Now reverence is only love directed to a superior, and the aspirant should seek one more advanced than himself to whom he can direct his love and reverence. Happy the man who can find such a one when he seeks, for such finding gives him the most important condition for turning emotion from a retarding force into a lifting

one, and for gaining the needed power to "want" that which he knows to be the best. We cannot love without seeking to please, and we cannot reverence without taking joy in the approval of the one we revere. Hence comes a constant stimulus to improve ourselves, to build up character, to purify the nature, to conquer all in us that is base, to strive after all that is worthy. We find ourselves quite spontaneously "wanting" to reach a high ideal, and the great motive power is sent along the channels hewn out for it by the mind. There is no way of utilising the desire-nature more certain and more effective than the making of such a tie, the reflection in the lower world of that perfect bond which links the disciple to the Master.

Another useful way of stimulating the desire-nature as a lifting force is to seek the company of any who are more advanced in the spiritual life than we are ourselves. It is not necessary that they should teach us orally, or indeed talk to us at all. Their very presence is a benediction, harmonising, raising, inspiring. To breathe their atmosphere, to be encircled by their magnetism, to be played on by their thoughts—these things ennoble us, unconsciously to ourselves. We value words too highly, and depreciate unduly the subtler silent forces of the Self, which, "sweetly and mightily ordering all things," create within the turbulent chaos of our personality the sure bases of peace and truth.

Less potent, but still sure, is the help that may be gained by reading any book that strikes a noble note

of life, whether by lifting up a great ideal, or presenting an inspiring character for our study. Such books as the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *Light on the Path*, *The Imitation of Christ*, are among the most powerful of such aids to the desire-nature. We are apt to read too exclusively for knowledge, and lose the moulding force that lofty thought on great ideals may exercise over our emotions. It is a useful habit to read every morning a few sentences from some such book as those named above, and to carry these sentences with us through the day, thus creating around us an atmosphere that is protective to ourselves and beneficial to all with whom we come into contact.

Another absolutely essential thing is daily meditation—a quiet half-hour in the morning, ere the turmoil of the day begins, during which we deliberately draw ourselves away from the lower nature, recognise it as an instrument and not our self, centre ourselves in the highest consciousness we can reach, and feel it as our real self. “That which is Being, Bliss, and Knowledge, that am I. Life, Love, and Light, that am I.” For our essential nature is divine, and the effort to realise it helps its growth and manifestation. Pure, passionless, peaceful, it is “the Star that shines within,” and that Star is our Self. We cannot yet steadily dwell in the Star, but as we try daily to rise to it, some gleam of its radiance illumines the illusory “I” made of the shadows amid which we live. To this ennobling and peace-giving contemplation of our divine destiny we may fitly rise

by worshipping with the most fervent devotion of which we are capable—if we are fortunate enough to feel such devotion—the Father of the worlds and the divine Man whom we reverence as Master. Resting on that Divine Man as the Helper and Lover of all who seek to rise—call Him Buddha, Christ, Shri Krishna, Master, what we will—we may dare to raise our eyes to the ONE from Whom we come, to Whom we go, and in the confidence of realised sonship murmur, “I and the Father are One,” “I am That.”

One of the most distressing of the difficulties which the aspirant has to face arises from the ebb and flow of his feelings, the changes in the emotional atmosphere through which he sees the external world as well as his own character with its powers and its weaknesses. He finds that his life consists of a series of ever-varying states of consciousness, of alternating conditions of thought and feeling. At one time he is vividly alive, at another quiescently dead; now he is cheerful, then morbid; now overflowing, then dry; now earnest, then indifferent; now devoted, then cold; now aspiring, then lethargic. He is constant only in his changeableness, persistent only in his variety. And the worst of it is that he is unable to trace these effects to any very definite causes; they “come and go, impermanent,” and are as little predicable as the summer winds. Why was meditation easy, smooth, fruitful, yesterday? why is it hard, irregular, barren, to-day? Why should that noble idea have fired him with enthusiasm a week ago, yet leave

him chill now? Why was he full of love and devotion but a few days since, but finds himself empty now, gazing at his ideal with cold, lack-lustre eyes? The facts are obvious, but the explanation escapes him ; he seems to be at the mercy of chance, to have slipped out of the realm of law.

It is this very uncertainty which gives the poignancy to his distress. The understood is always the manageable, and when we have traced an effect to its cause we have gone far on the way to its control. All our keenest sufferings have in them this constituent of uncertainty ; we are helpless because we are ignorant. It is the uncertainty of our emotional moods that terrifies us, for we cannot guard against that which we are unable to foresee. How then may we reach a place where these moods shall not plague us, a rock on which we can stand while the waves surge around us?

The first step towards the place of balance is taken when we recognise the fact—though the statement of it may sound a little brutal—that our moods do not matter. There is no constant relation between our progress and our feelings ; we are not necessarily advancing when the flow of emotion rejoices us, nor retrograding when its ebb distresses us. These changing moods are among the lessons that life brings to us, that we may learn to distinguish between the Self and the not-Self, and to realise ourselves as the Self. The Self changes not, and that which changes is not our Self, but is part of the transitory surroundings in which the Self is clothed and

amid which it moves. This wave that sweeps over us is not the Self, but is only a passing manifestation of the not-Self. "Let it toss and swirl and foam, it is not I." Let consciousness realise this, if only for a moment, and the force of the wave is spent, and the firm rock is felt under the feet. Withdrawing from the emotion, we no longer feel it as a part of ourselves, and thus ceasing to pour our life into it as a self-expression, we break off the connection which enabled it to become a channel of pain. This withdrawal of consciousness may be much facilitated if, in our quiet times, we try to understand and to assign to their true causes, these distressing emotional alternations. We shall thus at least get rid of some of the helplessness and perplexity which, as we have already seen, are due to ignorance.

These alternations of happiness and depression are primarily manifestations of that law of periodicity, or law of rhythm, which guides the universe. Night and day alternate in the physical life of man as do happiness and depression in his emotional life. As the ebb and flow in the ocean, so are the ebb and flow in human feelings. There are tides in the human heart as in the affairs of men and as in the sea. Joy follows sorrow and sorrow follows joy, as surely as death follows birth and birth death. That this is so is not only a theory of a law, but it is also a fact to which witness is borne by all who have gained experience in the spiritual life. In the famous *Imitation of Christ* it is said that comfort and sorrow thus alternate, and "this is nothing new nor strange unto

them that have experience in the way of God ; for the great saints and ancient prophets had oftentimes experience of such kind of vicissitudes. . . . If great saints were so dealt with, we that are weak and poor ought not to despair if we be sometimes hot and sometimes cold. . . . I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace or felt not some decrease of zeal." (Bk. II. ix. 4, 5, 7.) This alternation of states being recognised as the result of a general law, a special manifestation of a universal principle, it becomes possible for us to utilise this knowledge both as a warning and an encouragement. We may be passing through a period of great spiritual illumination, when all seems to be easy of accomplishment, when the glow of devotion sheds its glory over life, and when the peace of sure insight is ours. Such a condition is often one of considerable danger, its very happiness lulling us into a careless security, and forcing into growth any remaining germs of the lower nature. At such moments the recalling of past periods of gloom is often useful, so that happiness may not become elation, nor enjoyment lead to attachment to pleasure ; balancing the present joy by the memory of past trouble and the calm prevision of trouble yet to come, we reach equilibrium and find a middle point of rest ; we can then gain all the advantages that accrue from seizing a favourable opportunity for progress without risking a slip backwards from premature triumph. When the night comes down

and all the life has ebbed away, when we find ourselves cold and indifferent, caring for nothing that had erst attracted us, then, knowing the law, we can quietly say : "This also will pass in its turn, light and life must come back, and the old love will again glow warmly forth." We refuse to be unduly depressed in the gloom, as we refused to be unduly elated in the light ; we balance one experience against the other, removing the thorn of present pain by the memory of past joy and the foretaste of joy in the future ; we learn in happiness to remember sorrow and in sorrow to remember happiness, till neither the one nor the other can shake the steady foothold of the soul. Thus we begin to rise above the lower stages of consciousness in which we are flung from one extreme to the other, and to gain the equilibrium which is called yoga. Thus the existence of the law becomes to us not a theory but a conviction, and we gradually learn something of the peace of the Self.

It may be well also for us to realise that the way in which we face and live through this trial of inner darkness and deadness is one of the surest tests of spiritual evolution. "What worldly man is there that would not willingly receive spiritual joy and comfort if he could always have it? For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and the pleasures of the flesh. . . . But no man can always enjoy these divine comforts according to his desire ; for the time of trial is never far away. . . . Are not all those to be called mercenary who are ever seeking consolations? . . .

Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for nought? Rarely is any one found so spiritual as to have suffered the loss of all things." (Bk. II. x. 1; xi. 3, 4.) The subtle germs of selfishness persist far on into the life of discipleship, though they then ape in their growth the semblance of virtues, and hide the serpent of desire under the fair blossom of beneficence or of devotion. Few indeed are they who serve for nothing, who have eradicated the root of desire, and have not merely cut off the branches that spread above ground. Many a one who has tasted the subtle joys of spiritual experience finds therein his reward for the grosser delights he has renounced, and when the keen ordeal of spiritual darkness bars his way, and he has to enter into that darkness unbefriended and apparently alone, then he learns by the bitter and humiliating lesson of disillusion that he has been serving his ideal for wages and not for love. Well for us if we can be glad in the darkness as well as in the light, by the sure faith in—though not yet by the vision of—that Flame which burns evermore within, THAT from the light of which we can never be separated, for it is in truth our very Self. Bankrupt in Time must we be ere ours is the wealth of the Eternal, and only when the living have abandoned us does the Vision of Life appear.

Another difficulty that sorely bewilders and distresses the aspirant is the unbidden presence of thoughts and desires that are incongruous with his life and aims. When he would fain contemplate the Holy, the presence

of the unholy thrusts itself upon him ; when he would see the radiant face of the Divine Man, the mask of the satyr leers at him in its stead. Whence these thronging forms of evil that crowd round him ? whence these mutterings and whisperings as of devils in his ear ? They fill him with shuddering repulsion, yet they seem to be his ; can he really be the father of this foul swarm ?

Once again an understanding of the cause at work may rob the effect of its sharp poison-tooth, and deliver us from the impotence due to ignorance. It is a commonplace of theosophical teaching that life embodies itself in forms, and that the life-energy which comes forth from that aspect of the Self which is knowledge moulds the matter of the mental plane into thought-forms. The vibrations that affect the mental body determine the materials that are built into its composition, and these materials are slowly changed in accordance with the changes in the vibrations sent forth. If the consciousness cease to work in a particular way, the materials which answered to those previous workings gradually lose their activity, finally become effete matter and are shaken out of the mental body. A considerable number of stages, however, intervene between the full activity of the matter constantly answering to mental impulses and its final deadness when ready for expulsion. Until the last stage is reached it is capable of being thrown into renewed activity by mental impulses either from within or from without, and long after the man has ceased to energise

it, having outgrown the stage it represents, it may be thrown into active vibration, made to start up as a living thought, by a wholly external influence. For example : a man has succeeded in purifying his thoughts from sensuality, and his mind no longer generates impure ideas nor takes pleasure in contemplating impure images. The coarse matter, which in the mental and astral bodies vibrates under such impulses, is no longer being vivified by him, and the thought-forms erst created by him are dying or dead. But he meets some one in whom these things are active, and the vibrations sent out by him revivify the dying thought-forms, lending them a temporary and artificial life ; they start up as the aspirant's own thoughts, presenting themselves as the children of his mind, and he knows not that they are but corpses from his past, re-animated by the evil magic of impure propinquity. The very contrast they afford to his purified mind adds to the harassing torture of their presence, as though a dead body were fettered to a living man. But when he learns their true nature, they lose their power to torment. He can look at them calmly as remnants of his past, so that they cease to be poisoners of his present. He knows that the life in them is an alien one and is not drawn from him, and he can "wait with the patience of confidence for the hour when they shall affect" him "no longer."

Sometimes in the case of a person who is making rapid progress, this temporary revivification is caused deliberately by those who are seeking to retard evolution,

those who set themselves against the Good Law. They may send a thought-force calculated to stir the dying ghosts into weird activity, with the set purpose of causing distress even when the aspirant has passed beyond the reach of temptation along these lines. Once again the difficulty ceases when the thoughts are known to draw their energy from outside and not from inside, when the man can calmly say to the surging crowd of impish tormentors: "You are not mine, you are no part of me, your life is not drawn from my thought. Ere long you will be dead beyond possibility of resurrection, and meanwhile you are but phantoms, shades that were once my foes."

Another fruitful source of trouble is the great magician Time, past-master of illusion. He imposes on us a sense of hurry, of unrest, by masking the oneness of our life with the veils of births and deaths. The aspirant cries out eagerly: "How much can I do, what progress can I make, during my present life?" There is no such thing as a "present life"; there is but one life—past and future, with the ever-changing moment that is their meeting-place; on one side of it we see the past, on the other side the future, and it is itself as invisible as the little piece of ground on which we stand. There is but one life, without beginning and without ending, the ageless, timeless life, and our arbitrary divisions of it by the ever-recurring incidents of births and deaths delude us and ensnare. These are some of the traps set for the Self by the lower nature, which would fain keep its hold

on the winged Immortal that is straying through its miry paths. This bird of paradise is so fair a thing as its plumes begin to grow, that all the powers of nature fall to loving it, and set snares to hold it prisoner ; and of all the snares the illusion of Time is the most subtle.

When a vision of truth has come late in a physical life, this discouragement as to time is apt to be most keenly felt. "I am too old to begin ; if I had only known this in youth," is the cry. Yet truly the path is one as the life is one, and all the path must be trodden in the life ; what matters it then whether one stage of the path be trodden or not during a particular part of a physical life ? If A and B are both going to catch their first glimpse of the Reality two years hence, what matters it that A will then be seventy years of age while B will be a lad of twenty ? A will return and begin anew his work on earth when B is ageing, and each will pass many times through the childhood, youth, and old age of the body, while travelling along the higher stages of the path of life. The old man who "late in life," as we say, begins to learn the truths of the Ancient Wisdom, instead of lamenting over his age and saying : "How little can I do in the short time that remains to me," should say : "How good a foundation I can lay for my next incarnation, thanks to this learning of the truth." We are not slaves of Time, save as we bow to his imperious tyranny, and let him bind over our eyes his bandages of birth and death. We are always ourselves, and can pace steadfastly onwards through the

changing lights and shadows cast by his magic lantern on the life he cannot age. Why are the Gods figured as ever-young, save to remind us that the true life lives untouched by Time? We borrow some of the strength and calm of Eternity when we try to live in it, escaping from the meshes of the great Enchanter.

Many another difficulty will stretch itself across the upward path as the aspirant essays to tread it, but a resolute will and a devoted heart, lighted by knowledge, will conquer all in the end and will reach the Supreme Goal. To rest on the Law is one of the secrets of peace, to trust it utterly at all times, not least when the gloom descends. No soul that aspires can ever fail to rise; no heart that loves can ever be abandoned. Difficulties exist only that in overcoming them we may grow strong, and they only who have suffered are able to save.

THE END.

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