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VEDÂNTA PHILOSOPHY

LECTURE BY

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ON

Religion of the Hindus

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"That which exists is One; wise men call It by various names.—*Rigveda*, *I. 164, 46.*

THE RELIGION OF THE HINDUS.

THE religion of the Hindus is as old as the first appearance of the Aryans on the fertile country of northwestern India. It is the unanimous opinion of all the Oriental scholars, that the forefathers of the Aryans who inhabited India were, in prehistoric times, the common ancestors of the Persians, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, and all of those who are now known as the descendants of the Aryan family. A modern orthodox Hindu, who lives on the bank of the Ganges, and dislikes to associate with a European calling him a "Mlechha," does not know that the so-called "Mlechla" has only a more distant blood-relationship to him than his own brother or sister, and that he differs from him only in manners, customs, and modes of living. The same Aryan blood flows to-day in the veins of a full-blooded German, Frenchman, Anglo-Saxon, or an American, who despises a Hindu because of his brown skin, or his religious beliefs, and calls him a "heathen," not knowing that the so-called "heathen" is of his own race and that he still upholds the unparalleled religious ideas of his ancient Aryan forefathers. An educated German, or a liberal-minded American of to-day, more

closely resembles in his mode of thinking, in his intellectual pursuits, in freedom of thought and in spiritual ideals, an educated Hindu of the present time, than he does a Jew or any other descendant of the Semitic race. However different a Hindu may appear to an American externally, it should always be remembered that both are descendants of the common Aryan stock.

The word "Hindu" is of comparatively later origin in the history of the Aryan family. It was at first used by the Persian invaders of India, but it has never been adopted by the Indo-Aryans themselves. The proper name of the nation which inhabits India is "Aryan." Even to-day, the so-called *Hindus* call themselves "Aryans." Their religion is neither Hinduism nor Brahmanism; these names do not mean anything to them, being given by foreigners, not by natives of India. They call their religion "Arya Dharma," that is, Aryan Religion, or the religion of the ancient Aryans; or "Sanâtana Dharma," the Eternal Religion. When the Persian invaders came to the northwest of India, they found the river Indus, in Sanskrit "Sindhu," and called that river "Hindu" instead, and those who inhabited the east side of that river, "Hindus." Afterwards their religion was called Hinduism by the Mohammedan and Christian invaders. The word Brahmanism is of a still later origin, being an invention of the Christian missionaries. It is the general belief in the West, that the ancient Hindus, or rather the Indo-Aryans, were uncivilized people, that they had no religion of any kind; but the students of the Rig Veda, which is now considered by

scholars as the oldest revealed scripture of the world, are well aware of the fact that the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic period, at least 2000 B.C., were highly civilized and most advanced in the understanding of the spiritual, moral, and physical laws which governed the phenomenal world.

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

Those impersonal descriptions of the laws which they discovered were handed down from generation to generation by memory, long before the art of writing was known to the world; they are therefore called in Sanskrit "Shruti," meaning that which is heard. Later, when they were collected together, they were also called "Veda," which means wisdom. By this word, Veda, was not meant any written book, but the collected wisdom of the ancient Seers of Truth; and as their religion stands upon the Veda, or the collected wisdom of the past ages, it is called Vedic Religion, more properly "Vedânta Religion."

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

spiritual laws which govern the higher life of the soul.

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

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

As early as 1500 years before the Christian era, when the sons of Israel were worshipping their tribal god Jahveh in the form of a bull,* or calf, and were appeasing his wrath by bloody sacrifices, nay, by shedding human blood upon his altar, and were gradually outgrowing the sun-worship, Kewan or Saturn-worship, tree and serpent-worship, and were struggling for a monotheistic conception of one moral ruler of nature; at this early date the Aryans of India realized

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* See notes at the end.

one all-pervading Supreme Spirit as the Creator, Preserver, and moral Ruler of all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. When Zoroaster in Persia was preaching the dualistic concept of two spirits, the creator of good and the creator of evil, as two separate beings, the Aryan sages in India were proclaiming before the world that there were not two creators, but One, Who was above both good and evil. "That which exists is One; wise men call It by various names." (Rig Veda, I, 164, 46.)

In the fourteenth century B.C., when Moses was reforming the immoral, lawless, nomadic tribes of Israel by giving them the ten commandments in the name of Jahveh; at that ancient time, the ethical teachings of the Vedic sages were already perfected, and almost all their followers were well established in the practice of the moral and spiritual principles of the Vedas. It was at this time that the sublime teachings of the immortal Bhagavad Gitâ, the "Song Celestial" as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it, were proclaimed by Krishna, the Christ of India.

At a period when thinkers among the Semitic tribes were trying to explain the origin of the human race, as well as that of the universe, and were collecting the fragments of the mythological stories of creation which were scattered among Chaldeans, Phœnicians, Babylonians, and Persians; at that time the minds of the Aryan philosophers of India were firmly established in the doctrine of the evolution of the universe out of one eternal Energy, called in Sanskrit "Prakriti," and the evolution of man from

lower animals was taught for the first time. Prof. Huxley admits this when he says: "To say nothing of Indian Sages, to whom Evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born."

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

During the Babylonian captivity, which took place between 536 and 333 B.C., when the sons of the house of Israel were borrowing from the Parsees their ideas of heaven and hell and were modifying their imperfect monotheistic conception of Jahveh from a tribal god into a god of the universe by giving him the attributes of Ahura Mazda; when they were adopting the Persian conception of angels, archangels, and a host of intermediate celestial beings; when they were beginning to accept the Persian idea of the resurrection after death; at that time the glory of the Aryan religion was established and shown to the world by the advent of Buddha, the greatest religious reformer that the world has ever known. He taught that heaven and hell existed only in our minds, that the

worship of an extra-cosmic personal god was not the highest form of belief, and that the belief in angels and archangels was a kind of superstition.

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

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

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

It is for this reason that very few can correctly describe the religion of this mighty nation of philosophers, or indicate exactly what it teaches. Here you may ask: "If there be so much diversity of opinion, how can there be any harmony?" But this was answered by the ancient Vedânta philosophers who taught that there was unity under the variety of religious thoughts, and in this unity lay the harmony between these apparently contradictory beliefs. The religion of the Indo-Aryans cannot be judged from outside. When a foreigner goes to India and looks about, he finds statues of some great sage, or he finds symbolic figures in temples that he does not understand, and he instantly jumps to a conclusion that the Hindus have no religion, and calls them idolators and worshippers of false gods. Imbued with the idea that the tribal god of the house of Israel was the only true God, and being brought up in a school where

fanaticism and bigotry are the criteria of spiritual culture, unless they are unusually free from narrowness and prejudice, these foreigners are very apt to fall into entire misconception of Hindu life and ideals. Especially is this often true of Christian missionaries, who are frequently persons of strongly bigoted views, which unfit them to be fair and impartial observers. They can only look at things from one narrow standpoint, and so fail to see truly and correctly.

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

a god he worships? Why do you judge him *ex parte*, before hearing the Hindu's side of the question?

Truth is the standard of a Hindu, the worship of Truth is his religion, and the attainment of Truth is his ideal. Truth is that which is not confined by any name or any form. Here I wish to make clear whether or not the Hindus are idolators. There is no such thing as idol-worship among the Hindus. When you go to India and visit a temple, there you may see a priest sitting before a statue of Krishna, or Buddha, or Râma, or of some great Incarnation, Prophet or Teacher. The so-called idols are either such statues, or else are merely symbols. They are understood as such by every Hindu. Do you know what they represent? They are symbols of the Divine Energy, of the attributes of God, or of abstract ideas, hard to grasp without some outward form. The priest who sits before the statues of those who were living beings at one time, shows his reverence to these great spiritual Masters. If you go to this priest and ask his conception of God, you will hear him say: "God is omnipotent, infinite. His spirit pervades the whole universe. He is beyond all forms and names. He is the Soul of our souls; in Him we live, through Him we exist, and without Him there cannot be anything." Is this idolatry? What kind of idolatry is this? It is very easy for anybody to say that it is a worship of a false god, or of an idol, but if a person will look beneath the surface and enquire of the Hindus themselves, they can easily discover how mistaken are such assertions. If the Hindus are idol-worshippers be-

cause they show respect to their spiritual Masters, like Krishna or Buddha, why should not the Christians be called idolators when they show respect to Christ, kneeling down before his statue or picture? If the Hindu is idolatrous because he concentrates his mind upon some religious symbol, like the cross, or triangle, or circle, why should not the same term be applied to the Christian when he thinks of the crucifix or keeps it on the altar? Did the Hindus get the cross or triangle from the Christians? History affirms that the cross existed in India as a religious symbol centuries before Christ was born; but a Hindu never denounces any other religion, nor finds fault with any other worship or conception of God, however childish or anthropomorphic it may be.

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

You have been told that the Hindus are immoral, that they are the most immoral nation on earth; and I am ashamed to say that some of my countrymen and women, having enlisted themselves as Christian converts, have told you in this hall, no longer ago than last Spring, that the Hindus were immoral, that they had no ethics, no religion. Being hypnotized,

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

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

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

Dr. J. H. Barrows, who was the secretary of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, after visiting India for three months, returned to New York and gave a course of lectures. In one lecture I heard him say: "The Hindus have no ethics, no morality, no science, no philosophy, no religion; whatever they have got they have learned from Christian missionaries." On the contrary, any fair-minded student of the Hindu thought will notice at the outset that the philosophy and religion of the Hindus are based entirely upon the highest standard of ethics and morality. Prof. Max Müller says "we find ethics in the beginning, ethics in the middle, and ethics in the end." No human being can become truly spiritual unless he or she reaches moral perfection. Moral perfection is the beginning of spiritual life or spiritual evolution; and spiritual perfection consists in the manifestation of divinity and the emancipation of the soul from the bondages of ignorance and selfishness, which are the causes of sin and wickedness. A truly spiritual man

is master of himself and possesses perfect control over his animal nature. No man who is a slave to his passions, desires, and animal propensities, however highly ethical he may appear in society, can be called truly moral, not to mention spiritual.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The religion of Vedânta may be called the "Science of the Soul." As modern science does not deal with dogmas and does not insist upon belief in the authority of any person or book, but depends entirely upon correct observation and experience of the facts

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

In India religion and philosophy are one. Religion is the practical side of philosophy and the latter is the rational side of religion. They are inseparably connected. Therefore when we speak of Vedânta philosophy, we mean both religion and philosophy at the same time. Although there have been many other

philosophies in India, still Vedânta includes the fundamental principles of all of them.

The ancient thinkers in India, after studying the phenomena of the universe, started many theories to explain the origin of the phenomenal world of which the Atomic theory of Kanada and the Evolution theory of Kapila still remain unsurpassed by similar scientific theories of the nineteenth century. Nearly four thousand years ago the Hindu philosophers came to understand that the world was not created out of nothing, but was the result of the evolution of one eternal Energy, which is called in Sanskrit *Prakriti*, in Latin, *Procreatrix*. In one of the Upanishads we read of a sage who was explaining the mystery of Creation to his son. He said: "My dear child, some people say that this world has come out of nothing, but how can something come out of nothing?" It has often been said that the doctrine of Evolution is the marvel of modern times, and that it was unknown in the past ages; but those who have studied more closely are aware that it was well known to the Hindus and that there are clear evidences of it among the Greeks. Well has it been said by Sir Monier Williams that "The Hindus were Spinozites more than 2000 years before the existence of Spinoza; Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like evolution existed in any language of the world."—("Hinduism and Brahminism.") Standing upon the firm rock of the evolution

theory, the Hindus explained the mysteries of the universe, solved the problems of life, and arrived at a conclusion which has not yet been reached by the scientists of to-day. The evolutionists of ancient India did not arrive at the fatalistic conclusions of many of the modern evolutionists of the West. On the contrary, they maintained that the individual soul is not brought into evolution by any cosmic force or extra-cosmic being, but that it creates its own destiny and moulds its own fate, by its own desires, tendencies, and actions. It is free to desire and to act in accordance with its desire. Each individual soul is a storehouse of infinite powers and possesses unlimited possibilities. Souls were not created out of nothing nor by the will of any being, but are eternal, beginningless and endless. At present they appear, however, as subject to the law of causation. The Hindus applied the law of causation to the moral and spiritual nature of individuals. In Sanskrit it is called "Law of Karma." By this law they explained why one man is born with good tendencies and another with evil ones.

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

The religion of Vedânta does not teach the worship of many gods, but of one God, who is called by

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

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

Some people say that the Hindus got the idea of the Fatherhood of God from Christian sources. But those who have read the Vedic literature, or even the Bhagavad Gitâ have found therein many passages where God is addressed as the Father of the universe. "O Lord, Thou art the Father of the universe both animate and inanimate. Thou art worshipped by all. None is equal to Thee in the triple world. Who then

can excel Thee, O Thou of power incomparable?" (Bhagavad Gitâ, ch. xi., v. 43.)

In the second stage, God appears as immanent in the universe; as the one stupendous Whole of which we are but parts. Then He is the Mother of the universe as well as the Father; or, in other words, He is then the material as well as the efficient cause of all phenomena. The idea of the Fatherhood of God is not considered by the Hindus to be the highest, because it makes Him extrà-cosmic or outside of the world and as efficient cause only. In this concept nature coexists with God as the material cause of the universe. But when we comprehend that nature is nothing but the divine energy and inseparable from the Supreme Being, then He becomes the Mother of the universe as well as Father. This is called qualified non-dualistic conception.

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

The Hindus say that the dualistic belief in a personal God with a human form and human attributes is the expression of the spiritual childhood of the soul. From dualism the soul rises through qualified non-dualism to monism. Each of these stages of spiritual development is true in itself, and necessary, as are childhood, youth, and maturity in the physical

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body. It is good to be born and brought up within the limits of a church creed as a dualist, but it is not good to remain there all through life, and he who does so has failed to outgrow the stage of spiritual childhood. Growth is life and stagnation is death. Therefore Vedânta recognizes the importance of spiritual growth in religion.

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

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

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

The religion of the Hindus has made them peace-loving and humane, and it is because of their religious

ideas that the Hindus have never invaded any other country. They are not afflicted with the insatiable greed for power, wealth, and territorial possession, which is so strong among Christian nations.

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

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

lends a helping hand to the followers of all sects and creeds who seek his spiritual help, sends good thoughts and blessings towards all, prays for all, and recognizes the unity of purpose in all the variety of sects and creeds.

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

NOTES.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is a well-known fact that the book of Genesis

was not written by Moses, but by some priest during the period of Jewish exile in Babylonia. Professor Kuenen says: "It is true, he (the author of the book of Origins) is a *priest*, and as such is deeply attached to the Jahveh-worship, the ceremonies, and the privileges of the priesthood. . . . The author of the book of Origins was not the first in Israel to narrate history, from the creation of the world to the settlement of the people in Canaan. The course which he had to follow, therefore, had been pointed out to him by his predecessors and especially by the author of the second Creation narrative and the accounts connected with it." (Vol. II, pp. 157-159.)

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

On the subject of immortality Dr. Kuenen says: "The Israelite's ideas of the human body and soul and their mutual relation hardly admitted any other notion of man's existence after death than that of resuscitation, i.e., of the miraculous restoration of the

body into which the spirit returned. As soon as Jahveh takes back the breath of life, man and beast die. But that spirit does not live on, at all events not independently or individually. . . . Let it be taken into consideration, however, that the hope of a resurrection from the dead also existed among the Persians. . . . Does it not become extremely probable, therefore, that Parseeism was not entirely foreign to the rise and the first growth of the Jewish dogma? Must we not also assume here that the germs which lay hidden in Judaism were fertilized by contact with a religion in which they had arrived at maturity?" (Rel. of Is., Vol. III, p. 43.)

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

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